



Community Toolkit for Girls!

Congratulations -- You've begun the *Girls Scouts GOTO2040* journey to create a brighter future for your community!

When you think of the future, what do you imagine? When you think about the year 2040 (that's 27 years from now!) - what do you picture? How old will you be? Where might you live, and what will your community look like? This toolkit will help you understand what *Girl Scouts GOTO2040* is and how you can make a difference in the future of your community.

What is GOTO2040?

GOTO2040 is a regional plan to help nearly 300 communities in the Chicago region plan together for the future. Imagine if you had to build your community from scratch. Where would you put the schools and roads? Where would you put the parks and shopping malls? Of course, we're not starting from scratch, but communities need to plan for any changes they want to make. If we want our towns and cities to work well in the future, we need to plan now.

What is *Girl Scouts GOTO2040*?

The Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana have partnered with the people and organizations that developed GOTO2040 to create *Girl Scouts GOTO2040*, where you and other Girls Scouts can speak up and help shape the future of your community. What are you concerned about in your community? Are there enough parks to play in? If your family's car broke down, could you get to school, sports practice, or lessons on public transportation? Do you feel safe when biking or walking outside? These are the kinds of issues that you can impact by participating in *Girl Scouts GOTO2040*.

What is this Toolkit?

This Toolkit will help you:

1. learn the importance of planning to shape the future of your community;
2. identify an issue in your community to focus on; and
3. reach out to a leader in your community who can help you do something about the issue you choose.

As you use this Toolkit, you'll share your vision about how to make your community a better place to live, go to school and work. Through *Girl Scouts GOTO2040*, you can make a positive difference in your community – and the world!

Four Steps

Follow these four simple steps to complete this project:

1. Choose an issue based on the themes of GOTO2040. (Step 1 below lists the themes.)
2. Choose a public official who has the ability to make a difference on the issue you choose. (A public official is a person in your community who works in government and who either won an election or was appointed to their job).
3. Contact the public official.
4. Let us know how it goes!

This Toolkit has all the information you need to take these four steps.

Step 1: Choose an Issue

In the year 2040, what would you like your community to look like?

The GOTO2040 plan has four themes. As you read about these themes, think about your community – your neighborhood, village, city, or town.

Livable Communities (Daily Life)

Is your community a good place to live? Why or why not? What attracts people to your community? What would make your community a better place to live?

Human Capital (People)

Is your community a good place to work? Why or why not? Are businesses opening? Are they staying open, or do you see some closing? What attracts businesses to your community?

Regional Mobility (Transportation)

How easy is it for people to get around in your community, and to get to other communities? Think about your community's public transportation systems like buses, roads, and trains. Being able to get where you need to go is very important to the success of a community and quality of life.

Better Governance (Government)

Every community has some kind of government. Your community might have a mayor, village manager, commissioners, and/or aldermen. Does the government in your community work well? Does your community's government meet the needs of people in your community?

How do these themes relate to your life and community?

Which one do you find most interesting?

➤ **Think About What Issue You'd like to Focus On**

Think about these themes as they related to your community. Is there an issue in your community that you'd like to do something about? Maybe it's something that makes you feel excited – like the possibility of a new park or after school program. Or something that puzzles you – like litter in the streets. It could be something that has meaning to you or someone in your family, or an issue that you think is important to the future of your community.

Ask Yourself:

What do you like most about your community?
What would you change if you could?
What would make your community a better place to live, work, or go to school?
What role does transportation play in your community?
How is your community connected to the world?

Pick an issue to focus on, then...

➤ **Think About What Change You'd like to See on that Issue**

Once you pick your issue, think about what change you'd like to see on it. You may want to talk to a friend, parent, or other adult about it, or do some research on it.

Ask Yourself:

What action could you take on your issue to make a difference?
What might a public official do about the issue?
What might others in your community do to make a difference on this issue –
Kids? Adults?

For ideas about potential issues and actions you might take, check out the Bonus Section after Step 4.

Now that you've chosen your issue and what change you'd like to see – on to Step 2!

Step 2: Choose a Public Official

Once you have your idea about what change you'd like to see on your issue, you'll need to identify who you'd like to contact about it.

- One possibility is the mayor or manager of your city, town, or village. If you have a mayor, but don't know his or her name, go to the following website (ask your Troop Leader or a parent to help) <http://www.usmayors.org/meetmayors/mayorsatglance.asp> and enter the name of your city and state to find out who your mayor is. If you're not sure who leads your community's government, research it.
- Depending on your issue, other people you might choose are your town or city Planning Director or your Alderman.

You may have to talk to a few people to find out who can really make a difference on your issue.

Choose a public official to contact.

Good job! Now that you've picked a public official – on to Step 3!

Step 3: Contact the Public Official

Reaching out to the public official you choose is an important step in taking action. He or she makes many important decisions on behalf of you and your community. Two common ways to contact the official are to write to them (by letter or email) or to meet with them.

➤ Write your Public Official

Writing to the official you choose -- whether through email or letter -- is a great first step in raising awareness about your issue. As you write your letter or email, keep in mind:

- Specifically, what are you asking for? What change do you want to see?
- How can this person help you get the change you want?

Below are some ideas for your email or letter:

- **Greeting:** (title & last name) Dear Mayor Jones,
- **Introduce yourself**
 - My name is _____.
 - I'm a Girl Scout from Troop ____ in _____ (your town).
 - I'm in _____ grade at _____ school.
- **Tell him/her why and how you are involved**
 - I'm learning about the GOTO2040 Plan and how important it is to plan for the future of _____ (your town); or
 - I recently learned about the GOTO2040 Plan and its focus on _____ (Livable Communities or another of the four themes)
- **Tell him/her about the issue you chose and your thoughts and feelings about it**
 - I noticed that...or
 - I am concerned about... or
 - I understand that...or
 - I think that... or
 - I believe that...
- **Ask the public official to take action – what do you want them to do?**
 - I ask that you
 - I think our town should... (do what?)
 - I'm hoping that you will take leadership on this by _____(doing what?)...
 - Please _____ (do what).
- **Thank him/her:** Thank you for your attention to this important issue.
- **Next Steps:**
 - I'll call your office next week to follow up... or
 - I look forward to hearing from you about how we can work together on this.
- **Closing:** Sincerely, (your name). Include your contact information.

➤ **Meet With Your Public Official**

You may want to ask to meet with the public official. This is a great way to communicate your concerns in person.

Tips to Get You Started:

Here are a few helpful hints for connecting with public officials:

- **Be respectful.** Use their official title and last name. For example, their title might be Mayor, Commissioner, or Director.

- **Be prepared.**
 - Be sure you're prepared to talk about *Girl Scouts GOTO2040* and the issue you've selected.
 - Write down on a piece of paper the main points you want to make at your meeting, and bring the paper to the meeting with you.
 - Know what you are asking the official to do.
 - Think about whether you want to give the public official any information about the issue – perhaps a summary of your main concerns, or information you find online about the issue.
 - You may want to research the public official's biography online; it often includes helpful information about their careers, education, and families.
- **Be brief.** Many officials are very busy. You may only have 5 or 10 minutes to meet with them, so be ready to make your points about your issue. Find out how much time the official has for your meeting so you can use the time wisely.
- **Follow-up.** Always follow up with a thank you note. Include “action items” – what each of you said you'd do as next steps. Be sure to do what you said you'd do – and let the official know that you did it.

Consider bringing a small sign of appreciation to your meeting, like Girl Scout cookies or a card or drawing that you made.

➤ Attend a Council Meeting

Some towns and cities have a City or Village Council that meets monthly. Consider asking to be added to the agenda so you can present your ideas to council members and the mayor in person.

Step 4: Let Us Know How it Goes

We want to hear how things went! Did you meet with a public official? Did you write or email them? What happened as a result? What changed in your community? Perhaps things didn't go as you planned – we'd like to hear that too.

Please complete the attached form, or if you send an email, include:

- Your name
- Your contact information (address, phone number and/or email)
- Your troop number and troop leader
- The issue you chose
- Your idea about the issue – what change you wanted to see
- How you contacted your public official (letter/email/phone) – did you meet in person with them?
- What you asked the public official to do
- What was the result?

Please send this information to Bryn Reese by email at breese@girlscoutsgcnwi.org or by mail to Bryn at Girl Scouts Gathering Place, 20 S. Clark Street, 2nd Floor, Chicago, IL 60603. We look forward to hearing from you!

Go the Extra Mile!

Are you extra passionate about your issue? If you'd like to dive a little deeper into the GOTO2040 plan, think about ways to take further action. If you'd like to clean up a stream in your community, consider calling or visiting your local water board to find out more. If you'd like to organize a recycling awareness day, consider reaching out to environmental groups in your neighborhood for their insight. Talk with your troop leader about your ideas and how your troop might get involved.

It's your community! Make a difference!

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BONUS SECTION

Below are a few ideas of projects to consider – either with your troop or on your own. If you're working toward a Bronze, Silver or Gold award, you might find these ideas particularly interesting. Consider a project that brings *Girl Scouts GOTO2040* to life in your community.

Livable Communities (Daily Life)

- ❖ Organize an electronic recycling fair in your town or neighborhood. Help people recycle their old cell phones and computers!
- ❖ Work with other Girl Scouts to grow a raised garden in a box.

Human Capital (People)

- ❖ Consider starting your own business. (For example, you could: teach older people how to use a computer or email; start a lawn cutting business; or open a summer lemonade stand.)
- ❖ Start a blog that notifies people in your area about job openings.
- ❖ Organize a career fair at your school to help students find summer jobs or learn about careers.

Regional Mobility (Transportation)

- ❖ Organize a “Bus to Work and School Day” that encourages people in your community to take public transit
- ❖ Work with leaders in your community to improve and increase bike lanes, making bike riding fun *and* safe. Think about key destinations in your community. Can you get around town safely on your bike?

Better Governance (Government)

- ❖ Organize a voter registration drive at your high school for 18-year-olds
- ❖ Volunteer for a political campaign
- ❖ Run for student council at your school. No student council? Consider starting one!
- ❖ Encourage your town to survey kids about issues they think are most important in your community – and work with your town to create a plan to address the #1 issue.

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Please complete this form to let us know how things went. If you send an email, please include the information below.

You

Name: _____

City/State: _____

Contact Information: Phone number: _____

Email: _____

Troop Number: _____ Troop Leader: _____

Your Issue

What issue you chose: _____

What change you wanted to see: _____

Your Actions

How you contacted your public official: (circle one) Letter Email Phone Other: _____

Did you meet in person with them? (circle one) Yes / No

What you asked the public official to do: _____

Your Results

What was the result? _____

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