

# STRONG TOWNS

## ANNUAL REPORT

2022

**STRONG  
TOWNS**

1001 Kingwood Street Studio 116

Brainerd, MN 56401

844-218-1681 | [www.strongtowns.org](http://www.strongtowns.org)

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

---

A paradigm shift in how we go about creating prosperity is happening. Your support of Strong Towns is putting important ideas and resources into the hands of community leaders, both inside and outside of local government. You are helping build a movement that will change the way that places are built, maintained, and renewed.

Yes, this is very exciting, so buckle up. Things are accelerating.

This past year, we adopted a new Strategic Plan and began to focus our energy on five core campaigns. These campaigns are designed to quicken the spread and adoption of Strong Towns ideas. We've been at this only a short time and we're already seeing the impact.

For example, we just launched the Crash Analysis Studio, a program that shifts the way cities respond to automobile crashes. We are using the Strong Towns media platform to show people how to turn tragedy into meaningful action, then teaching them how to create their own studio. Our first session is only days old and we have already heard of changes being made.

The new Strategic Plan also called on us to launch the Community Action Lab, a program designed to turn ideas into action in model communities. We have four places going on this journey with us this year, and will add at least five more in 2024. We plan to report on their successes and struggles so others can learn from them, as well.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## (CONT.)

And, hundreds of people are joining new and existing Local Conversations around the country each week. We're going to get as many of them as we can together in Charlotte, North Carolina, this May for our first ever National Gathering.

I am often asked what I do for a living. I say I am part of a movement that, if we are successful, will transform the way we all live, giving people lives that are more prosperous, secure, and meaningful. Thank you for being part of that movement with me. Keep doing what you can to build a Strong Town.

—Charles Marohn, President of Strong Towns



*The Strong Towns staff at our 2022 summer retreat in Minneapolis.*

# CAMPAIGNS

## AND CONVERSATIONS

### FIVE CORE CAMPAIGNS

The new Strong Towns Strategic Plan outlines five core campaigns as the focus of our advocacy. These campaigns are laying out the clearest critique of prevailing practices and providing concrete alternatives for local advocates to implement. Through these campaigns, we equip advocates with a wealth of information and guidance. Below are some highlights from our work on each of the five campaigns.

1

#### ENSURE TRANSPARENT LOCAL ACCOUNTING

The true extent of deferred maintenance and replacement cost obligations for infrastructure is not accounted for in a city's financial reports. Municipal financial statements must be prepared with the local citizen in mind, not a Wall Street analyst or bond investor. We're shining a spotlight on local accounting and showing people why this absence of transparency matters, through resources like our hard-hitting articles about biases in property assessments and our participation in the Just Accounting for Health initiative. (Visit [justaccounting.org](http://justaccounting.org) to learn more.)

2

## LEGALIZE INCREMENTAL HOUSING

The housing market is broken. To fix it for everyone, we're providing a clear roadmap to open the door to incremental development. Strong Towns presents pointed critiques and policy guidance to remove the barriers that prevent a neighborhood from evolving over time in response to local needs.

3

## END PARKING MANDATES AND SUBSIDIES

Parking minimums cost the public in the form of extra infrastructure that must service all that parking—but without the taxable value to recoup public investment. We must end parking mandates and subsidies to free up vast swaths of land that can be used more productively. Strong Towns' parking reform map has borne witness to the proliferation of communities who are doing just that. (Visit [strongtowns.org/parking](http://strongtowns.org/parking) to see the map.) When we started our annual #BlackFridayParking campaign in 2014, the thesis—that we are overbuilt on parking, even on the busiest shopping day of the year—was outside the mainstream. Now it's become accepted wisdom.

4

## CREATE SAFE AND PRODUCTIVE STREETS

Our grassroots movement of people is changing everything about how our streets are built. Bad street design is the primary cause of vehicle crashes involving fatalities and traumatic injuries—we must build (and rebuild) streets that are dominated by people, and accommodate cars as a secondary feature. Strong Towns wrote the book on building safe and productive streets, and we're helping public officials, professionals, and citizen advocates take control of their local streets.

# 5

## END HIGHWAY EXPANSION

Before we can fix the crumbling roads we currently depend on, we have to stop making the problem worse. We are leading the fight to end highway expansions. In 2022, the message went out loud and clear: Our governments need to demonstrate that they are competent enough to maintain essential infrastructure. In articles, speeches, public events, and media appearances, we challenge the prevailing orthodoxy on highway expansion.

## LOCAL CONVERSATIONS

For years, Strong Towns advocates have found ways to connect with each other online and in person. This year, we worked hard to make it straightforward for people to start Local Conversations groups. These groups are catalysts for local action. Now there are over 120 groups meeting in the United States and Canada, and hundreds more individuals who have volunteered to start a group. These groups have launched local initiatives to abolish parking minimums, support incremental housing development projects, and educate the public about the Strong Towns approach. (Visit [strongtowns.org/local](https://strongtowns.org/local) to learn more.)



# MEMBER MOMENTUM

"I've never had such a 'lightbulb' moment as when I learned about Strong Towns and all the harm suburbs have done to this country. I hope that we can help people realize that the suburban experiment has failed, and we will have to change course to save our cities."

RAISA CABRERA  
BEACHWOOD, OH



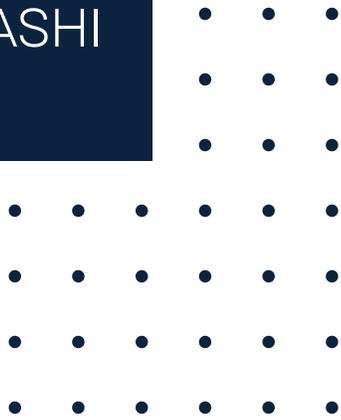
"I switched over to civil engineering as my major because of the work Strong Towns has done and how it's inspired me. I want to improve the environment in which I'm living right now."

ZACH STAGGS  
EL PASO, TX

"Growing up I always wondered why we didn't have the little corner market, or why we had to drive all the time. Thank you for taking the politics out of planning. Quality places to live [in] shouldn't be a point of political dispute. Thank you for providing that space to learn and grow."



HILLARY TAKAHASHI  
SLINGERLANDS, NY

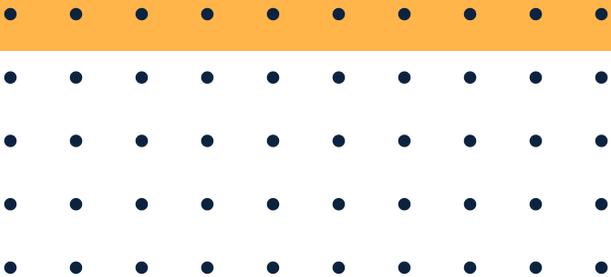


"Strong Towns is a visionary organization for our times! Time for local communities to invent new ways to thrive. Strong Towns can show us the way."

LIZ HOENIG AND CHARLEY KANIESKI  
PORT TOWNSEND, WA



"I love the content. Very excited to see more. You guys do great work and I'm hoping your content becomes more popular."



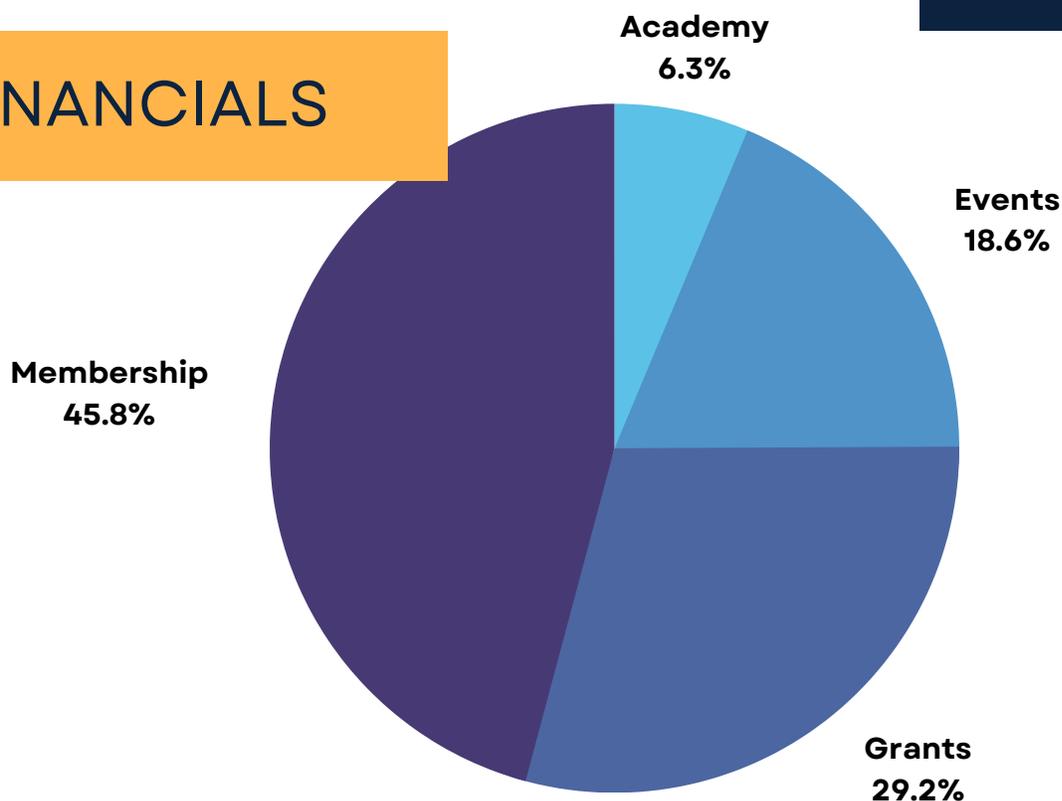
LEE HUYNH  
CHARLOTTE, NC

# A RECORD YEAR FOR MEMBERSHIP

The Strong Towns team hears from members on a daily basis who have stories like the ones above. People are gripped by a new way of viewing the community they live in, and it motivates them to take action. This year ended with record levels of new members (1,437) and total membership (3,665). This surge was fueled by a broadening of our audience and a growing awareness of the Strong Towns message. The result of this increase is that we see more members working in cities and towns to change the way that streets are constructed, challenge how public funds are spent, and lead the way to a more responsible pattern of development.

Strong Towns is supported primarily by our members and other donors who want to see our message spread.

## 2022 FINANCIALS



## 2022 KEY STATS

Total Audience: ~2 million  
Total Membership: 3,665  
Friends of Strong Towns (>\$500 donation): 106  
Local Conversations: 133  
Cities Visited for In-Person Events: 39

This is a broad movement of people doing what they can—68% of our members gave under \$100 in 2022.

# PREVIEW OF 2023

## HERE ARE SOME OF THE EXCITING VENTURES YOU CAN LOOK FORWARD TO STRONG TOWNS LEADING IN 2023:

- We're launching *Community Action Labs* in four North American cities, hosting events, coaching key community leaders, and publicly advocating for the Strong Towns approach. This is one powerful way we are generating focused energy for change across the continent.
- We're kicking off the *Crash Analysis Studio* to provide a new model for responding to traffic crashes, one that shifts the focus from merely assigning blame to one where local experts—technical and non-technical—work together to identify all the factors that contributed to the crash and recommend improvements. This is going to change the way we design streets, make our cities better, and save lives.
- We're hosting the first annual *Strong Towns National Gathering*, which will happen May 30–31 in Charlotte, North Carolina, just prior to the Congress for the New Urbanism. Strong Towns members want to gather, share ideas, and support each other. When they do, great things happen. We anticipate great things will happen at the Gathering, and even more after.

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR MEMBERS.  
YOU HAVE MADE THIS ALL POSSIBLE!

We invite you to become a member by making a donation of any amount. This support is essential to continue this work. Strong Towns members are at the very heart of this whole organization. Visit [www.strongtowns.org/membership](http://www.strongtowns.org/membership) to become a member today.