

Community Action Lab

The most
comprehensive
way to mobilize
your community
for change.

2023

**STRONG
TOWNS**

1001 Kingwood Street
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FOR 80 YEARS,

North American cities have pursued a pattern of development that is without precedent in human history. The Suburban Experiment is now the default approach to growth for communities of all sizes. It has led our towns and cities down the path toward financial insolvency. It has also made them less safe and less inviting.

Precious resources that should have contributed to our communities' prosperity have been tragically squandered. These wasted resources include not only our tax revenue and land, but also the finite time, energy, political will, and public trust available to make our cities more prosperous and livable.

The Strong Towns movement is challenging the status quo and helping communities change course. In contrast to the Suburban Experiment, the Strong Towns approach leads to financial strength and resilience. It relies on small, incremental investments rather than on large, transformative projects. It prioritizes the resilience of results over the efficiency of execution. It's also adaptive to feedback and conducts as much life as possible at a personal scale.

The Strong Towns movement is growing. Our articles, podcasts, and events now reach 2 million people annually. Advocates from all walks of life are implementing the Strong Towns approach in hundreds of towns and cities across the United States and Canada. From city halls to the halls of Congress, in communities of all sizes, and in every corner of North America, the Strong Towns movement is picking up steam.

INTRODUCING:

THE COMMUNITY ACTION LAB

In 2023, Strong Towns is launching its most in-depth resource ever: the Community Action Lab.

The Community Action Lab is the most comprehensive way to mobilize your town or city for change.

With the Community Action Lab, we are bringing together everything we've learned, not only about building stronger, more resilient cities, but also about building a movement. Strong Towns seeks to shift the vital center of dialogue using our broad reach, non-partisan appeal, and accessible messaging. The Community Action Lab works on multiple fronts to:

- Introduce Strong Towns ideas to your town, city, or county.
- Engage the public in conversations about growth and public investment.
- Train local leaders to apply the Strong Towns approach to the challenges and opportunities facing your community every day.

TWO YEARS

THAT COULD CHANGE EVERYTHING

The Community Action Lab is a two-year process. In the first twelve months, Strong Towns provides active community engagement, while in the second twelve months, we provide ongoing support for local leaders and community groups. Throughout the program, the Community Action Lab uses a three-pronged approach:

1

VISION: We communicate with local leadership to understand their individual goals and priorities, share critical information, and align the consensus vision around long-term strength and financial resilience.

2

ACTION: We train and coach an Action Team to apply the Strong Towns approach to current challenges, building their capacity to implement and sustain a new approach to community development.

3

CONVERSATION: We engage the broader community through a series of events, supported by ongoing media efforts, that produce a shift in dialogue within the community.

THE FIVE PHASES

OF THE COMMUNITY ACTION LAB

PHASE 1

PREPARATION

In preparation for kicking off the Community Action Lab and to ensure a productive launch, Strong Towns will survey community members, establish and target a local audience for online content, identify a date and venue for the kickoff event, establish media contacts, assemble an Action Team, and lay additional groundwork.

PHASE 2

LAUNCH

Strong Towns will launch the Community Action Lab with a large public engagement to begin the intensive phase of the project. We will host a large public kickoff event in the community during this time, including public lectures, Q&A sessions, and opportunities for walking tours and other activities to introduce the community to Strong Towns principles, which local media will be briefed on. We will also meet with the Action Team in person to share initial curriculum materials and discuss project goals.

PHASE 3

CAPACITY BUILDING

After the initial engagement event, we will shift into the Capacity Building phase of the Community Action Lab. This substantial phase of the project will include coaching sessions every 2–3 weeks with the Action Team, the implementation of a full content marketing strategy to increase local engagement with topics of community interest, and another public event curated for community topics of interest.

PHASE 4

ACTION

Following the second public event, we will shift our emphasis from learning and discussion to implementation of a Strong Towns approach. During the Action phase, the Action Team will focus their energy more intensively on specific local challenges and how to apply Strong Towns concepts to their solutions. Our team may bring in outside experts to assist the Action Team with their efforts. Our content marketing strategy and media outreach efforts will continue and mature in this phase, while overall community engagement will culminate in a third and final public event, the topic and timing of which will be decided with the Action Team and community leaders.

PHASE 5

ONGOING SUPPORT

After an intense year of engagement, the active portion of the Community Action Lab will conclude. We will invite leadership, Action Team members, and the broader community to stay engaged with Strong Towns and the broader Strong Towns movement by offering Action Team members access to a full year of Strong Towns Academy courses, among other resources. Strong Towns staff members, though remote, will remain responsive to offer assistance where possible and direct leadership and Action Team members to helpful resources.

LIMITED SPACE AVAILABLE

Eight decades of the Suburban Experiment have left communities financially vulnerable, less safe, and less connected. 2023 could be the year your community changes course, and that change can start with you.

Because of how comprehensive the Community Action Lab is, **Strong Towns can only accept five Community Action Lab applications annually.**

To learn more about the Community Action Lab, schedule a call with Strong Towns Development Associate Grace Whatley today:

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