Ideas

Staying Strong

https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2014/9/21/6sjciaalk9u4itivab8kgd0gis0ogt

We all need to understand, first and foremost, that you don't need to attend a meeting to care. You don't need to be involved in the system that has been set up for you in order to be involved in your place. A base assumption of the Strong Towns movement is that the city is ours. We are not relegated to secondary citizens simply because we are not following the process set forth by those in power.

The format of a council meeting creates feedback that is disjointed and unhelpful. There is little opportunity for back and forth dialog. Complex issues must be discussed in limited timeframes. Members of the public are often given cursory slots at the beginning and the end of the agenda and frequently leave feeling as if they are being patronized or tolerated, not listened to. I don't blame anyone for finding little value in spending their time this way.

Visioning sessions and other informal focus groups often go a long ways towards improving the power structure of the dialog, but they are horrible places for gathering good feedback. I realized years ago that, when people show up for a visioning session, their brainstorming session will create a list of micro-issues each cares about and a megaproject, let's say a new community center.

when I was asked by our team what a Strong Citizen is, here was my first stab.

1. **A Strong Citizen is a leader by example, sharing the values of a Strong Town in the way they live their own life.**

2. **A Strong Citizen is actively involved in their community, although not necessarily in local government.**

3. **A Strong Citizen knows their immediate neighbors and works with them to resolve conflict and build a strong neighborhood.**

4. **A Strong Citizen seeks connections with others outside their neighborhood as a way to gain knowledge, build understanding and strengthen the community.**

5. **A Strong Citizen honors the work of past generations, respects the needs of the current generation and protects the interests of future generations.**

Podcast: Local Government Encourages Residents to do Tactical Urbanism

https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2017/9/20/tactical-urbanism-fayetteville?utm_content=buffer4e1a5&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer

Strong Towns Podcast - Local Government Encourages Residents to do Tactical Urbanism

10 Things Small Businesses Need to Thrive

https://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2017/10/10/10-things-small-businesses-need-to-thrive?utm_content=bufferd96cf&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer

1. A friendly regulatory environment. Small businesses need easy-to-understand codes from local government, as well as a solid understanding of why such regulations are in place. Too often (accurately or not) entrepreneurs and small business owners perceive that local governments put up hurdles for them to jump over.

2. A strong entrepreneurial support system. Small business owners need support and collegiality. Communities need to start and promote clubs and groups that allow them to connect with other entrepreneurs. When we started our Studer Community Institute (SCI) small business roundtables in Pensacola, the most noted feedback we got is that entrepreneurs often feel isolated.

3. A culture of community support. Entrepreneurs need to feel that the community is invested in their well-being. Once leaders start this conversation, the community will respond. Once we made the case that small businesses make communities better, our citizens became huge supporters. People jump right in. They'll do anything to help make a small business successful.

4. Access to good employees/talent pool. Your town should be a place where people want to live. Safe neighborhoods, a strong education system, a vibrant downtown, and other amenities that add up to a good quality of life are must haves. This is one reason we're focused on creating America's first Early Learning City and boosting kindergarten readiness with SCI. Research shows that jobs and education are the two areas key to quality of life.

5. Strong mentors in the community to help entrepreneurs navigate what they don't know. Not only does this keep them from making costly mistakes, it helps them feel supported so they don't mind taking the risks necessary for growth. I've been impressed by how many busy, seasoned business owners have stepped into a mentorship role in Pensacola. It has created lasting relationships and been very fulfilling for both parties.

6. Orchestrated growth around them. Growth begets more growth. When companies, non-profits, and other organizations are thriving, new ventures are more likely to take off and thrive themselves. And that growth needs to be strategic and thoughtful. If you're a small business owner, what's to the left of you, the right of you, and across the street really matters.

7. A safe, clean environment in which to operate. Attractive urban and suburban spaces and low crime rates are good for business. If you're in an unsafe area, it won't matter how good your product or service is. Customers won't come.

8. Access to capital. Bank loans, government grants and other forms of assistance can go a long way toward helping small businesses invest in their future. And sometimes mentors can help connect them to silent partners for funding.

9. Access to leadership and business training. Around half of all businesses fail in the first five years. This is why it's so important that entrepreneurs learn the basics of leadership and sound business practices. At SCI, we focus on issues like strategic planning, marketing, effective hiring and time management.

10. A commitment to promoting innovation and startups. Local governments tend to court big business and big industry, usually at the expense of new ventures and mom & pop shops. This trend needs to shift. Cities need to invest in their small shops, restaurants, and small- and mid-size businesses and make decisions that benefit them just as much as (if not more than) the big box retailers and manufacturing giants.

Communities can strive to create good environments for small business. We in Pensacola have learned from others—and we are still learning—and we hope we can help others as we have been helped. We find that all towns and cities want the same thing: to become a great place for people to live and visit. We are all on the same journey to make people's lives better.

Task Management

http://www.eisenhower.me/eisenhower-matrix/