

STRONG TOWNS

For those passionate about the future of America's towns and neighborhoods.

A NEW SOURCE ON GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES.

Strong Towns has a fresh take on the same old story.

For decades we have avoided a difficult truth: Our pattern of development—the very way we build our towns and neighborhoods—costs more to maintain than it generates in return. We've masked this reality by inducing more growth through transfer payments between governments, reactionary transportation spending, debt and a Ponzi scheme of local government incentives.

Our ability to use these mechanisms of growth is waning. Our cities and states now face a financial crisis of tremendous proportions. We can cut spending and we can raise taxes, but we will not be on a path to sustained prosperity unless we are willing to reform our approach to growth.

Strong Towns is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization focused on the root of these systemic problems: our land use patterns—the way we have designed our towns and neighborhoods.

WE ADVOCATE...

- A new model of growth that allows America's towns to become financially strong and self-sufficient.
- An approach that accounts for the full cost of growth.
- A reorientation of emphasis from horizontal expansion of cities to obtaining greater use of existing public investments.
- An end to the inefficient use of public dollars and the destructive subsidies that create massive, unfunded maintenance liabilities for future generations.

EXCERPTS FROM STRONG TOWNS BLOG.COM

ON FINANCING GROWTH:
“What we are doing now is simply cruel. We're borrowing money from future generations so we can live a lie of artificial wealth.”

ON GROWTH:
“Our pattern of growth is now more of a belief system—a religion almost—than it is an expression of logic.”

ON GRANTS AND INCENTIVES:
“If we stopped subsidizing inefficient development, we would stop seeing inefficient development.”

ON INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING:
If America is to transition to a prosperous future, our zealous devotion to horizontal infrastructure needs to be tempered with an understanding of the value of vertical infrastructure.

Biographies

CHARLES MAROHN, JR.

President, PE AICP



Charles Marohn is a Professional Engineer (PE) licensed in the State of Minnesota and a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). He has a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Minnesota's Institute

of Technology and a Masters in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute. Marohn is a member of the National Society of Professional Engineers, the American Planning Association and the Congress for the New Urbanism.

Marohn is president of Community Growth Institute, a planning organization that works with small towns and rural areas. He is active in Republican politics, a member of the Discovery Woods Charter School Board, served on the East Gull Lake Planning Commission, was a member of Governor Pawlenty's task force examining the state's shoreland regulations, a veteran of the Minnesota Army National Guard and a regular on-air contributor to KAXE. He lives with his wife and two daughters north of Brainerd.

SPECIFIC EXPERTISE:

- ✦ Engineering and project feasibility analysis.
- ✦ Federal and state grant and loan programs for infrastructure.
- ✦ The relationship between transportation and land use.
- ✦ Zoning and land use regulation.
- ✦ Private development.
- ✦ Small towns and rural areas.

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JON COMMERS

Executive Director



Jon Commers has been involved professionally in public finance and city policy for fifteen years, and brings this combination to his role as Strong Towns' executive director. Understanding the underlying ingredients of thriving places is Commers' core

interest, which he explores through analysis and writing for Strong Towns.

Commers is founder and principal of Donjek, a public finance and policy consultancy based in Saint Paul, Minnesota. In this capacity, he has assisted public, private and philanthropic clients in their efforts to create effective urban areas and to craft policy to sustain them. Commers writes the Cents of Place blog and is a regular contributor to the Star Tribune's online forum, "Your Voices."

In addition to his work with Strong Towns and Donjek, Commers serves on the Saint Paul Planning Commission. He is active in the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor (DFL) party, and has served on numerous community boards. He lives with his family in Saint Paul.

SPECIFIC EXPERTISE:

- ✦ Public finance
- ✦ City and State policy
- ✦ Strategic and business planning

EDUCATION:

- ✦ MBA (University of Saint Thomas, St. Paul, MN)
- ✦ BA in History and Political Economy (Carleton College, Northfield, MN).

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StrongTowns



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