



STRONG TOWNS BLONO

2026-2030
Strategic Plan



2026–2030 Strategic Plan

2025 Executive Committee



Noah Tang
President



Tyson Mohr
Vice President



Quinlan Tisdale
Secretary



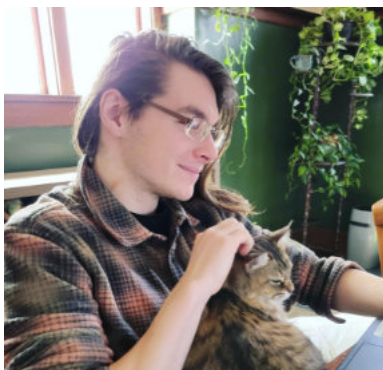
Gretchen Knapp
Treasurer



Zach Carlson
Education Co-chair



Dr. Alan Lessoff
Education Co-chair



Aza Verove
Social Officer



**Dr. Katherine
McCarthy**
Neighborhood Liaison



Tyler Pessler
*Urban Centers
Revitalization
Committee Chair*

Mission:

We work to foster a vibrant, safe, economically and environmentally sustainable, and livable community through advocacy, grassroots action, and building social capital.

Vision:

We envision a community where people work together to improve the places they live for themselves and each other.

Values:

- **Iteration:** We prioritize grassroots and iterative growth that builds over time rather than large-scale projects.
- **Access:** We emphasize lowering the bar to participation in the local economic and social ecosystems that build resiliency and a sense of community.
- **Collaboration:** We believe many voices should be creating and safeguarding progress.



ABOVE: Photo of the 2025 Annual Membership Meeting in April.

Organizational History & Accomplishments

Strong Towns Blono got its start in July 2021 when Noah Tang created a Facebook group entitled the Bloomington Revivalists. It was intended to be used as a forum to discuss national Strong Towns and other urbanist ideas within the context of Bloomington-Normal. An initial in-person meeting occurred in Tang's house on August 15, 2021. From there a small group shared experiences and discussed ideas for what the group could do. By October 2022, the organization was sponsoring social events and had set up a working group on accessory dwelling units (ADU). However, everything was still ad-hoc; the organization still lacked governing structure, accountability, or legal status.



ABOVE: *First meeting of the interim Executive Committee.*

By mid 2023, community activist Joe McDonnell had become the fledgling organization's secretary, with Nolan Owens as its public relations officer and Tang as acting president. By December of 2023, the interim executive committee was filled. In February 2024, the IRS approved 501(c)(3) charitable status. In April 2024, the membership voted to prioritize several specific campaigns in line with the grassroots organizing strategy that characterizes the Strong Towns movement. The group completed a downtown survey, as well as the 2025 Circus Murals Project, a visible pedestrian connection between the library and the museum square.

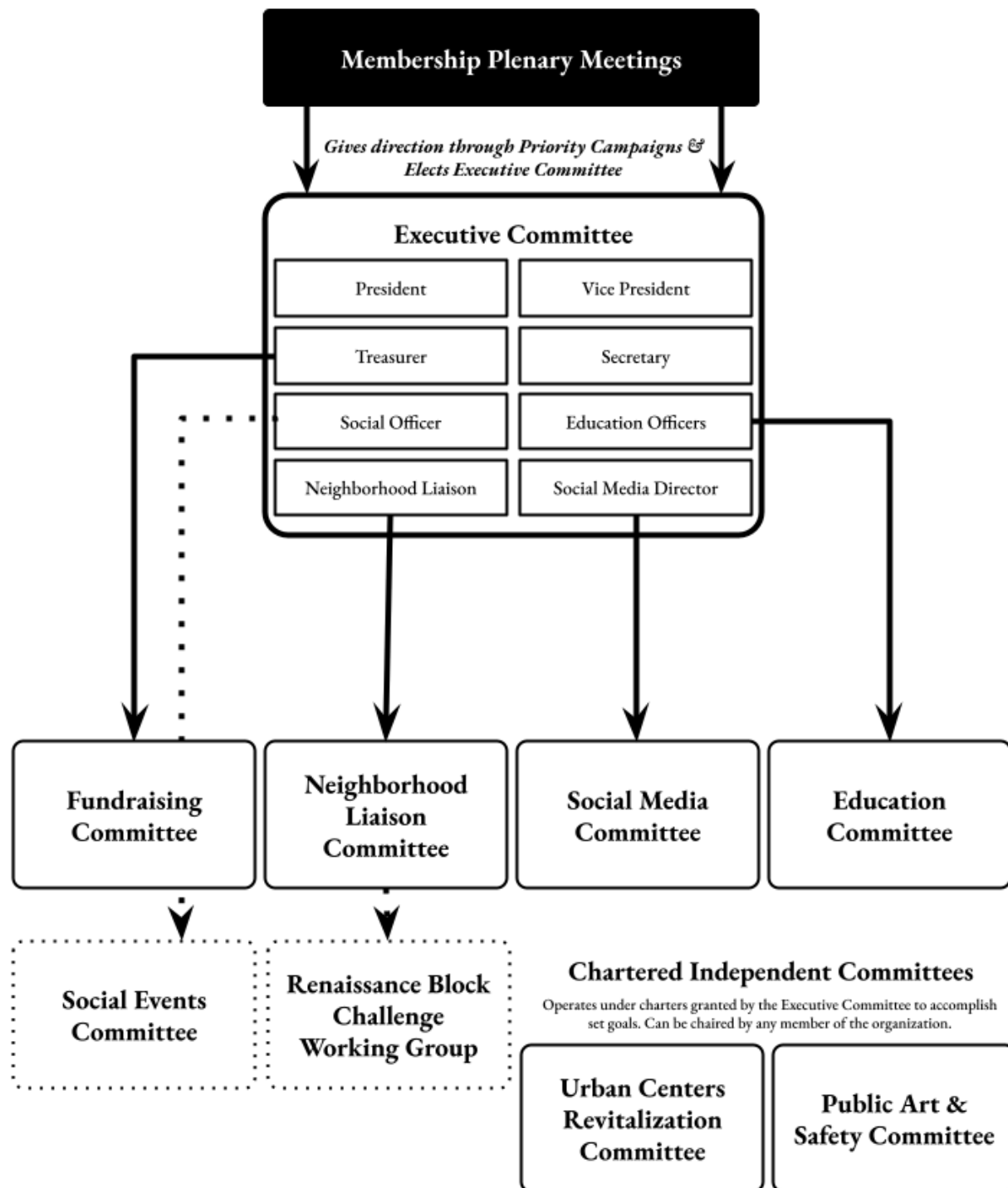
At the 2025 annual membership meeting, the group changed its name to Strong Towns Blono to closer align to the national movement. Even as several founding members moved on to other cities, the group completed its priority campaign, the Circus Mural Project. This project required the organization to raise over \$5,000 from small dollar donations, downtown business owners, an arts grant, and volunteering at city events. This project entailed working with other community members and institutions, especially the Bloomington Public Library. It also entailed cooperating with city officials to get official permitting. During May 2025, Strong Towns Blono put in more than 125 volunteer hours to aid artist Delia Dennhardt-Kerr to install the sprawling murals.



ABOVE: *Completed Sidewalk Murals for 2025.*

When this Strategic Plan was drafted, the organization also finalized the proposal packet from the Front N Center Design Charrette, another community-oriented project that Strong Towns BloNo initiated.

Strong Towns Blono Organizational Chart



ABOVE: Current organizational chart as of Fall 2025. Continuing to solidify member work through committees will be important to achieving our mission, vision, and values.

Strong Towns Blono Accomplishments

2021:

- Facebook group created
- Initial in-person meeting



2022:

- Casual Socials Started
- ADU working group successfully campaigned for zoning changes

2023:

- Recruitment of initial executive board
- Applied for 501(c)(3)
- Bylaws, incorporation, and bank account
- Parking reform downtown
- Top 16 in National Strongest Town Contest
- Visit by Chuck Marohn



2024:

- Conversion to membership organization
- 501(c)(3) granted
- Three active committees formed
- Seven trash pick up events
- Neighborhood organizers' toolkit launched
- Two public forums



2025:

- Name changed to Strong Towns Blono
- TEDx Normal Talk
- Five active committees
- Mural project completed
- Downtown survey completed
- Front N Center Charrette completed
- Documentary screening
- Mayoral forum



Current Status & Statistics

We are proud about how far we have come as an organization. Still, we aspire to much more. This is our first effort to compile a record of our activities and to sketch out goals, priorities, and plans.

As of August 1, 2025, we have achieved these measures of success:

Dues-paying members	48 ¹
Actively engaged members	36
Volunteer hours (2025 YTD)	654.5
Funds raised (2025 YTD)	\$5374.47
Facebook group members	602
Facebook page likes	278
Instagram followers	449
Newsletter subscribers	153
Website views (2025 YTD)	900

¹ Includes 3 Bloomington City Council members

Our organization will, in addition, track progress in the following areas.

New numbers to track
Article audience
Renewed and lapsed members
Podcast and video plays

Organizational Short-Term Goals

We will review the goals listed below by December 2026 and adjust them as needed.

Short-Term Goal #1: Grow Our Number of Supporters

We aim to expand the size of our organization and thereby the presence and influence of the Strong Towns movement in central Illinois.

1. Raise the number of dues-paying members to 75 by the end of 2026
2. Retain at least half of current dues-paying members
3. Raise the number of members who are actively engaged in the organization
4. Have more volunteer hours in 2026 than in 2025



ABOVE: Volunteers meet in January 2025 for the Downtown ADA compliance survey.

Short-Term Goal #2: Grow Our Audience

For our policy ideas to have influence, we need to reach an ever-larger portion of Bloomington-Normal's people.

1. Raise the number of social media members/followers by 20% by the end of 2026
2. Raise our newsletter subscribers by 20% by the end of 2026
3. Increase our website viewership by 20% by the end of 2026
4. Publish at least four podcast episodes a year
5. Publish at least two long-form videos a year
6. Publish at least four articles a year
7. Table at least four events a year
8. Network/present to at least four groups a year
9. Be featured on traditional media like *WGLT* or *Pantagraph* at least twice a year



ABOVE: Tyler Pessler and Noah Tang in a WGLT interview about the Front N Center Charrette in 2025.

Short-Term Goal #3: Grow Our Overall Impact

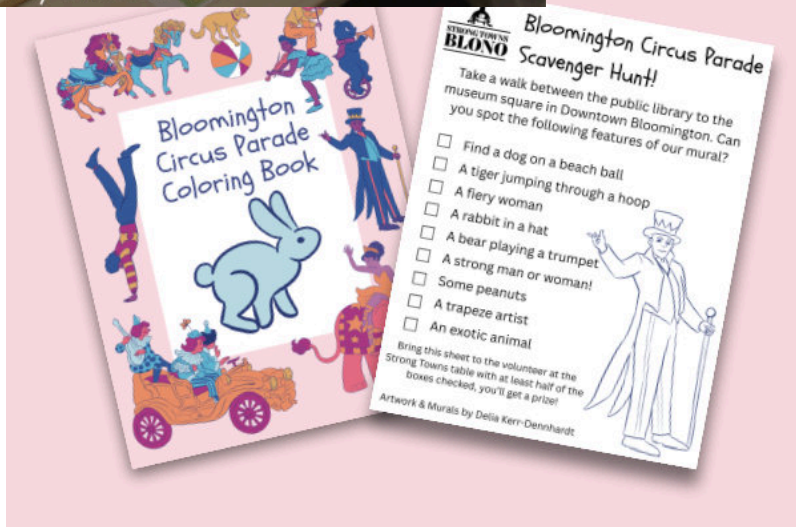
By carrying out regular, practical projects, we display our seriousness about affecting the community.

1. Complete at least four low-impact projects a year (e.g. trash pick ups)
2. Complete at least two high-impact projects a year (e.g. murals, code changes)



ABOVE: Front N Center Charrette promotional materials.

RIGHT: Ephemera from the 2025 Sidewalk Murals project launch party.



Short-Term Goal #4: Stabilize Our Organization

A strong internal structure provides a foundation for our external goals.

1. Streamline the membership application process and our system for recording volunteer hours
2. Create a yearly budget to ensure financial stability
3. Maintain our status within the Strong Towns Local Conversations System:
 - 3.1. Become a Stage 4 Strong Towns Local Conversation (STLC)
 - 3.1.1. *3+ LC leaders who have completed the training online*
 - 3.1.2. *9+ dues-paying members*
 - 3.1.3. *3+ Strong Towns national organization members*
4. Continue to train and empower members for leadership positions
5. Meet with new members one-on-one to determine organizational fit
6. Create lists of volunteer skill-sets, as well as ongoing and special task lists
7. Create intern positions for students to engage in meaningful work with our organization

BELOW: *Meeting of the Executive Committee in 2025.*



Organizational Long-Term Goals of Three to Five Years

Below are examples of durable improvements we hope to set in motion, goals that grow from the vision for which we have organized:



Long-Term Goal #1: Make Our City Housing Friendly

Our community is in a housing crisis, and we will prioritize a Strong Towns response.

1. Adopt most or all initiatives from the Housing Ready Toolkit from the national organization
2. Curate a small developers' alliance to conduct human-scaled projects
3. Work with the city to make missing-middle housing not only feasible, but easily attainable
4. Lobby for the local governments to establish a housing trust fund and/or housing development catalyst revolving loan fund to support non-market housing like land trusts and cooperatives.

ABOVE: Still from "Julia's Backyard Quest for Accessible Housing" on YouTube.



Long-Term Goal #2: Implement Urban Revitalization

These are examples of the hard, practical work that will improve our community.

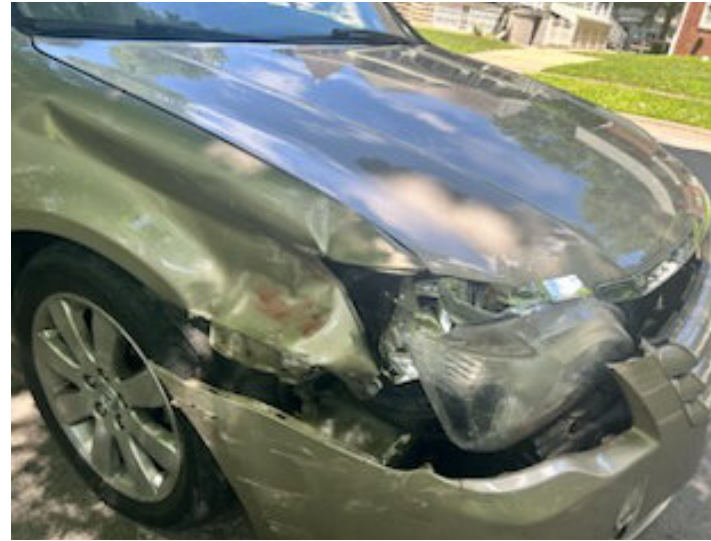
1. Implement the Renaissance Block Challenge Grant pilot project
2. Grow the number of active neighborhood organizations by 50%
3. Work with the governments of Bloomington and Normal, as well as stakeholders and developers to mend the urban fabric around Downtown and Uptown.
4. Pursue creation of a community development corporation as a means to facilitate redevelopment in areas in the vicinity of Downtown and Uptown.

ABOVE: Rendering from the Front N Center Charrette in 2025.

Long-Term Goal #3: Safe and Productive Streets

Reforming the auto-oriented regime that prevails here and across the United States will take a lot of concerted effort, but these following goals would set us on a better path.

1. Implement the Strong Towns Crash Analysis Lab and publish results on our website
2. Work with local governments to create quick-build solutions to street geometry problems
3. Lobby for municipal participation in National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) and for adoption of NACTO's urban street design guidelines
4. Advocate for a strong metro-wide bike and public transportation network



ABOVE: Car accident in report sent to Bloomington traffic engineers.

Long-Term Goal #4: Increase Organizational Capacity

We hope to ensure that our group—and others like it—maintain an ongoing role in local policy and civic life.

1. Raise our fundraising capacity through multiple revenue streams, such as major donor gifts, grants, merchandise, and joint fundraising with like-minded organizations like history museum and Jaycees.
2. Lease or own a space in Downtown Bloomington or vicinity that will serve as an office and third-space for members and non-members alike.
3. Increase capacity by paid staff for supportive work



ABOVE: Eugene Debs Social Hall, nonprofit meeting space created in East Buffalo, NY by members of the national Strong Towns movement.