



# LOCAL-MOTIVE TOUR

## 4 ZONING REFORMS FOR A STRONG TOWN

**STRONG TOWNS  
NEED TO CONSTANTLY  
EVOLVE AND ZONING  
CAN BE A HINDERANCE.**

Strong towns are always reinventing themselves, as residents and government alike conduct small, iterative experiments in response to urgent needs. Unfortunately, zoning is often one of the biggest barriers to reinvention.

Zoning for a strong town needs to *lower the bar to entry* to build something, adapt something, or start something new to meet your needs and those of your neighbors.

### HERE ARE 4 WAYS TO THINK ABOUT WHAT THAT LOOKS LIKE

1

#### LEGALIZE SMALL

- Does your code make small buildings on small lots feasible?
- Can residents build an accessory dwelling or commercial unit?
- Can you reduce rules mandating the waste of land, such as parking minimums?

2

#### LEGALIZE FAST

- Can temporary land uses receive quick and straightforward approval?
- Do zoning applications face long delays and/or unclear discretionary approval processes?
  - Can your community work to allow experimental, provisional uses with little fuss?

3

#### ALLOW ADAPTATION

- Is the next increment of development available as of right?
- Can space be easily repurposed to meet your community's changing needs?

4

#### KEEP IT SIMPLE

- Is your code accessible to someone without a planning or development background?
- Do you have a one-stop source for residents who need help navigating the process?





# TIPS FOR ZONING REFORMERS

1

## REGULAR CITIZENS CAN BE INVOLVED IN ZONING REFORM!

You are the foremost expert on the things you'd like to achieve in your neighborhood, and the obstacles you and your neighbors have encountered at City Hall. Have coffee with your councilperson and make sure they know what you know, and organize with like-minded fellow citizens.

2

## PROCESS IS AT LEAST AS IMPORTANT AS SUBSTANCE.

The biggest zoning-related barriers to good, bottom-up development and placemaking often come not from the letter of the code, but from the difficulty, complexity, or delays involved in getting permission. Look for opportunities to improve these things at least as much as the actual letter of the code.

3

## PLANNERS: DON'T BITE OFF TOO MUCH.

Many a city has gone aground on the rocks of a failed attempt to overhaul its entire code. What incremental fixes can you make that will help residents now, while building an understanding of systemic problems and an appetite for reform within City Hall?

