



LOCAL-MOTIVE TOUR

HOW TO MAKE PROGRESS WHEN POLITICAL DIVISIONS DOMINATE

Even in a politically divided environment, we can still build stronger towns. We just need to be thoughtful about how we operate and keep focused on the goals at hand.

1

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS FIRST.

Change takes time. It has to start with building a foundation of relationships with both leaders and residents. Once you get to know them and soften the ground for your position, people are often less dug in on their positions than you might think.

2

HONE IN ON THE REAL CONCERNS AND NEEDS.

Don't ask people what they want or don't want, especially on technical issues. Instead, ask what they care about and what their needs are. Ex: Don't ask whether someone wants a bike lane on a particular street. Ask if they want people in their community to be able to get by without a car, whether they want kids to be able to travel safely to school on their own, etc.

3

FIND COMMON GROUND AND SHARED VALUES.

Find the places where you can agree with your fellow residents and ground your arguments in those. Strong Towns offers a set of values that transcend political differences, including: resiliency over efficiency, incremental steps over megaprojects, continuous adaptation, and citizen participation.

4

FOCUS ON THE ISSUE AT HAND.

Don't bring extraneous issues or national politics into a campaign or proposal. These will only serve to alienate potential allies. Ex: If you're fighting against a new highway project through downtown, don't start talking about crime in another neighborhood or the president's thoughts on new highways.

5

BE THOUGHTFUL ABOUT LANGUAGE.

Take the time to learn the language that your neighbors and leaders speak. While concepts like "equity" and "environmental protection" might resonate with one group of people, concepts like "fiscal solvency" and "local business opportunity" might make a more compelling case for others.