

It's our 2018 Winter Member Drive, and we're working hard to become #2000Strong.

×

**We have 1699 members right now. That means we still need you.**

Click here now if you believe the culture of growth and development in America needs to change.  
Join the movement today.



ABOUT

EXPLORE

EVENTS

JOIN THE MOVEMENT



10 THINGS  
SMALL  
BUSINESSES  
NEED TO  
THRIVE

OCTOBER 12, 2017  
BY QUINT STUDER

Quint Studer is a [Strong Towns member](#), Pensacola, Florida resident and the founder of [Studer Community Institute](#). In this op-ed (recently published in the [Pensacola News Journal](#)

and reprinted here with permission), he shares some of the lessons he's learned from helping small businesses thrive in Pensacola.

Small businesses are leading the way to revitalize America. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration's August 2017 *Small Business Quarterly Bulletin*, they've created two out of every three net new jobs since 2014. But small businesses can't do their important work without the support of the community they call home.



Source: [Montgomery County Planning Commission](#)

Small business success has been essential to community growth. It's important to not take one's eye off building small and mid-size companies, and we are so grateful to the many others who have shared ideas with us and risked their futures to help grow their own company and grow our economy. The most valuable of all are the companies that call this area home, yet they bring in their revenues from outside our area. It's not just moving money around, but instead a true influx of capital into our economy.

The bottom line is, strong communities are good for business.

So, what do small businesses need to thrive? Here are 10 things that must happen to create a great small business community.

**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



A community of support, whether formal or informal, makes a world of difference for small businesses.

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.



A safe, lively commercial neighborhood is an ideal location for a new business. (Source: Arian Horbovetz)

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.

*(Top photo source: Climate KIC)*

RELATED STORIES



CITIES AS PLATFORMS OF PRODUCTIVITY

Cities are filled with talent, ideas, and hardworking people. We just need to provide them with the platform to be productive.

Mar 22, 2017 · Andrew Price



THE EMERGING DEMOCRATIZED ECONOMY

The key to building a sustainable local economy is to nurture a diverse set of employers that operate in multiple industries. With the emergence of the Democratized Economy,



HOW TO ENCOURAGE ENTREPRENEURS IN YOUR TOWN

A strong town needs strong local businesses.

Apr 20, 2016 · Rachel Quednau

localized production for  
regional markets is returning  
to the fore.

Jun 29, 2016 · Alexander Dukes

💬 [6 Comments](#) ❤️ 1 Likes ➦ Share

*Posted in [Member Post](#), [Top Story](#) and tagged with [Entrepreneurship](#), [small business](#)*

## Strong Towns Comment Policy

Please read our [Comment Policy](#) before commenting.



0 Comments   Strong Towns

1 Login ▾

Recommend   Share

Sort by Best ▾



Start the discussion...

LOG IN WITH



OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS ?

Name

Be the first to comment.

### ALSO ON STRONG TOWNS

#### Let's Turn this Dangerous, Expensive Road Back into a Safe

5 comments • 13 days ago



**The\_Overdog** — In most places in the west, the land originally belonged to a farmer or rancher and the original

#### The public hates planners but it doesn't have to be that way.

15 comments • 7 days ago



**Nolan Gray** — Ugh, where to start? This is such a foolish comment. A disclaimer saying what exactly? That a

#### What Makes for Great Bike Parking?

13 comments • 7 days ago

Avatar

**Cristiano Dalbem** — I absolutely LOVED this article! It's super well written and also lists exactly the same

#### Give it another century and we'll see how it goes.

89 comments • 4 days ago

Avatar

**Andrew Price** — Hi ZoomZoomDiva,Nobody is telling you what to do with your life. Keep living

Newer / Older



Search

[CONTACT US](#) | [EMAIL SIGN UP](#) | [DONATE](#)

[ARCHIVE](#) | [MEMBER BLOGS](#) | [SUCCESS STORIES](#) | [PITCH A STORY](#)

[PRIVACY POLICY](#) | [COMMENT POLICY](#) | [RSS FEED](#)



Strong Towns is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Our work is performed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#). Please share with others to use for good.