

# Fostering Communities that Attract Young People

## Little Steps Can Lead to Big Changes



Here are **50 easy tips**, ideas, pieces of advice and bits of information **for both residents and towns** that came out of the forums. Quick and easy, they're meant to be **a starting point** for becoming more involved in creating the downtowns and Main Street centers we want to see.

**Start small. Change big.**

## What You Can Do

1. Get involved in the community you want to change.
2. Shop and eat in your local downtown.
3. Walk around the block (or ride your bike). Get to know your neighbors. Be the eyes on the street that keep you and others safe and involved.
4. **BE AN AMBASSADOR** for your town. Talk it up.
5. Listen to what others have to say.
6. Take the bus.
7. Change the reputation/stigma of taking the bus or other forms of public transportation by speaking well of it, or by providing input on what you'd like to see.
8. CTfastrak is holding a series of [open houses](#). Attend one and **MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD**.
9. Encourage people to be OK with waiting for the bus. Increased demand will lead to increased efficiency.
10. Consider engaging in "[placeshaking](#)".
11. Participate in [Park\(ing\) Day](#). This year it's on Friday, September 20.
12. Do a Google search on what your town is doing. Find out about the activity on a particular topic (like creating bike lanes) your town is engaged in. Town publications and the local library are also great resources.
13. *Attend local government meetings*, such as the [Planning Commission and/or Zoning Commission](#).
14. Encourage your town to put dates and locations for town meetings on social media (tell them specifically which forms (Facebook, Twitter, etc) you want them to use).
15. Be respectful of your town's current process.
16. Volunteer to serve on boards and commissions, and seek out opportunities for ways to effectuate change.
17. Advocate for the type of land use you want.
18. Attend workshops on community plans. Groups like the [Higganum Vision Group](#), [Mansfield Tomorrow](#), and [Bristol Rising](#) are popping up all over. Best of all, **they are working to create change** and they want **you** to be a part of it.
19. Share important, yet simple info such as websites with each other. For instance, **DID YOU KNOW CONNDOT'S SITE IS AWESOME** and has a ton of info, including [apps for your mobile phone](#) and an [interactive map](#) listing everything from accidents to ferries to links to local bus routes? Don't forget to pass on the cool new knowledge you find.
20. Educate drivers about bike lanes. Educate yourself. Would you know a [sharrow](#) if you saw it?
21. Encourage and participate in regionalism. The [Northwest CT Regional Planning Collaborative](#) is doing a great job of this. Check out their [website](#) then tell your local officials you want to see more regionalism like this in your town and elsewhere.
22. **Be persistent, know the process and demand change.**
23. Speak up. Write an article or op-ed for your local paper.
24. Request that your town host a mixer between young people and town commissions. Or offer to host one yourself.

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25. Read [Governing](#) magazine. It's actually really interesting, and will give you a new perspective on how your town is managed.
26. Join a group that publicizes local events and encourages civic participation. Check out your local Chamber of Commerce, or there's [The Group With No Name \(TGWNN\)](#) in the New Haven area, the [Hartford Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs \(HYPE\)](#), and [Young Professionals of Waterbury Region \(YPOWR\)](#).
27. Read your local Plan of Conservation and Development and town Comprehensive Plan.
28. **Encourage diversity** among your town's business leaders.
29. Live where you work.
30. Link your interests with charity work that benefits your town (like Habitat for Humanity).
31. Be patient – change doesn't happen overnight, but it does happen.
32. Be bold.

## What Towns Can Do

33. Focus more “placemaking” efforts on signs signaling pedestrian crossings. **MAKE IT SAFE FOR PEOPLE TO GET OUT. WALK AROUND. ENJOY THE COMMUNITY AND PATRONIZE LOCAL BUSINESSES.**
34. Emphasize educating property owners about the benefits of balancing vehicular access with pedestrian connectivity.
35. Market your town as a place for young people to start their careers and live among their contemporaries.
36. Increase outreach and cross-promotion between area colleges and universities, both structured and “guerilla”.
37. **Use social media to communicate and connect** young people with local government and community events.
38. Check out alternative means of hearing from citizens and residents:
  - [Textizen](#)
  - [MindMixer](#)
  - [Crowdsourcing](#)
39. Engage in **more public entertainment and art**. There are [some state funds available](#) to help with this from the awesome CT Office of the Arts (COA).
40. Do a keyword search of social media to see who's talking about your activities. Do you have the local bike enthusiasts jazzed about your proposed bike lanes? Are they telling their friends?
41. Pass on the knowledge with your peers. Did you figure out how to do #40? Great, now you can help your neighboring town do the same.
42. You can't do everything. Alone, that is. Encourage and participate in regionalism. Look at the [Northwest CT Regional Planning Collaborative](#) and Putnam for advice and inspiration.
43. Check out [ConnDOT's website](#). They're not as bad as you hear. In fact, they can be pretty receptive and open to new ideas. Give them a try.
44. Engage one or two really passionate people who can spread the word. They can work for the town or not. Better yet, **create citizen ambassadors** out of young people who love social media.
45. Hold a mixer between young people and town commissions.
46. Speak to high school students about where they want to live when they get older. Does your town meet their criteria?
47. Put artists on downtown development design teams to encourage public art.
48. Live **Tweet a public meeting**.
49. Text the date and location of your next Planning & Zoning Commission meeting.
50. Be an ambassador for your town. Talk it up. Show us why you love it so much.
51. **...IS UP TO YOU!** [Share your idea with us](#). Remember, all those small steps add up to one big change. . . .

