

Strong Towns Northampton announces its first annual Citizen of the Year Award

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Strong Towns Northampton is pleased to announce its first Citizen of the Year Award. The Award is made in recognition of good work done by a citizen on behalf of the Northampton community in the foregoing year, in line with the Strong Towns principles of taking initiative to make incremental but powerful change in the wellbeing of the city and region, especially in the domains of transportation, housing, and community-building.

Alex Jarrett, outgoing City Councillor from Ward 5 and outgoing President of City Council, is this year's recipient.

During his time on City Council, Jarrett was a primary sponsor or key champion of several significant pieces of legislation and policy initiatives in Northampton. His work focussed on climate action, housing affordability, and social justice.

Just in 2025, Jarrett produced or championed an incredible amount of thoughtful and transformative legislation, including the following housing efforts:

- a Fossil Fuel Free Building Ordinance, to reduce climate impacts of new construction in the city;
- an Historic Accessory Structure Conversion, to improve historic buildings, create more housing opportunities, and increase the density of neighborhoods without adding new structures that might disrupt neighborhood *esprit de corps*;
- legislation to support rent stabilization control at the local level;
- and Renter Broker's Fee Prohibition to restrict housing brokers fees from falling on the renters.

On transportation, Jarrett created legislation this past year that:

- reduced car parking mandates and increased bicycle parking requirements to encourage denser, more sustainable development;

- mandated ‘daylighting’ crosswalks across the city by restricting parking directly adjacent to all crossings, improving safety for vulnerable users of our public paths,
- codified and reviewed PVTa’s bus stops to increase efficiency, communication, and safety, especially for those with limited mobility.

Prior to 2025, during his time as Chair of the Legislative Matters Committee, Jarrett championed the transition to “Form-Based Code” for downtown Northampton and Florence Center. This legislation shifted zoning focus from what a building is used for to how it physically relates to the street, aimed at encouraging walkable, mixed-use development.

Beyond specific ordinances, Jarrett has originated or heavily influenced the following city efforts:

- Climate Resilience and Regeneration Plan: He helped develop the city’s long-term roadmap for carbon neutrality and served as a bridge between the Council and the new Climate Action and Project Administration (CAPA) department.
- Policing Review Commission: Jarrett served on this commission to help overhaul public safety models, which eventually led to the creation of the Department of Community Care, a non-police peer-response unit for mental health and social crisis calls.
- Transportation & Safety: He has consistently pushed for “Vision Zero” initiatives (the aim to design roads to prioritize zero traffic deaths), including traffic calming, expanded bike share networks, and the Northampton Snow Squad (a volunteer effort to help clear sidewalks).
- Two-Family by Right Zoning: He supported and advocated for zoning changes that allow two-family homes to be built “by right” in most residential districts to increase housing density and affordability without requiring complex special permits.

Aside from his work as a public official, Jarrett is a co-founder and current worker-owner of Pedal People, a cooperative business that provides a service to residents while promoting health and environmental responsibility, and creates an opportunity for worker ownership. He previously served on the Northampton Housing Partnership, a city board that works for affordable housing, was a founding team member of Valley Time Trade, served on the board of the Valley

Alliance of Worker Cooperatives, and was a volunteer for the Pioneer Valley Worker's Center. He is involving himself, in his post-Council era, with the effort to unite Northamptonians and create a more productive and harmonious conversation so that we can move the city ahead in challenging times.

Alex Jarrett is not only our first recipient of the Strong Towns Northampton Citizen of the Year Award, he is the reason we created it. His laser focus on a safer, more equitable, closer, and more effective Northampton, and his relentless invention of ways to engage in the nitty-gritty of policy and procedure to get there, embodies the Strong Towns spirit. Alex, we salute you!