

Promoting Progress & Sustainability for Communities @ 10 years

This October 31, 2021 marked the day of one decade since my partner Andy Seth and I launched the firm Sustainable Strategies DC (S2). Though Andy and I have been close colleagues for 25+ years at previous firms, we wished to create a special place that could bring the best tools to local leaders in their efforts to revitalize their communities in sustainable, equitable, and innovative ways. I pen this note to convey how grateful we are at S2 for the opportunities and initiatives we have been able to undertake with local communities, and to voice our tremendous optimism about moving forward in the coming years with a more robust team, some of the best clients in the nation, and new tools for revitalization progress.

S2 is a strategic consulting, resource/funding advocate, and government affairs firm based in Washington, DC, where we represent cities, towns, counties, villages, local and regional economic development entities, community development non-profits, and social service agencies. We have also had the good fortune to represent federal agencies such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, leading organizations such as Smart Growth America and ICMA, philanthropic foundations, and municipal leagues. And we continue to build effective national coalitions of these communities to push Washington for better resources for revitalization, through coalitions and campaigns including Climate Communities, the Manufacturing Alliance of Communities, the First & Main Coalition, and the Transition Advocacy Project. Thinking back, we remember great projects which communities and clients have accomplished – a LEED Platinum African-American community center in an underserved hamlet; securing half a billion dollars in federal and state funding to address the Flint water crisis; revitalized and vibrant waterfronts where dead and polluted factories had sat for too long; new civic plazas and community parks, arts and culture centers; farm-to-market grocery stores, historic buildings restored; unsafe roadways transformed to complete streets; multimodal transit stations built; expanded climate and green infrastructure innovations; new solar worker training centers; the maker movement; the enactment of the Brownfield Revitalization Act of 2017 – and many more highlights.

Now we have tripled in the number of professionals on the S2 team – to six! We are pleased to welcome new Associate & Grantwriter Rhea Rao this week, appreciate newly-promoted Senior Associate Suzie Kazar now in her third year with us, and celebrate Sarah Marin's four years here. We are so excited that Ashley Badesch, a key member of the team for eight years now, has become a full equity partner in S2 and is leading the new S2 Western Office from Denver with amazing growth and many new communities.

Celebrating this milestone is good, yet it is time to look ahead and try harder to support meaningful community progress:

- **Unprecedented revitalization resources:** With the enactment of the \$1.2 trillion **Bipartisan Infrastructure Framework** by Congress and its signing by President Biden – and the likely passage of a \$1.75 trillion **Build Back Better** package soon – there will be unprecedented levels of federal investment available for transportation, water, sewer, stormwater, broadband, and other community infrastructure, a massive investment in clean energy and green communities, and exciting new programs focused on local revitalization and sustainability. We stand ready to help localities navigate and secure those resources. With a robust **FY22 domestic appropriations** budget expected to pass by the end of the year, including many billions of dollars in **congressional earmarks** for local communities, we are ready to help you pursue additional grants and other resources for local projects.
- **Expanded capacities:** We plan to strengthen our long-standing **affiliations with other firms** to bring a full complement of skills to our local clients, including state advocacy firms, design and engineering shops, and community development experts. We will hire more full time **professional staff** for the S2 Western Office to serve that burgeoning practice, and we will establish a new model of using **contract grantwriting specialists** who will be incorporated into our team to expand our capacity to help you secure funding. And we intend to continue creating and managing **coalitions and campaigns** of local communities to be able to get more results out of Washington.
- **A renewed commitment to progress in communities:** All of this must be done in ways that harness the **best approaches to equity, inclusion, climate sustainability, resilience, and innovation**. We plan to highlight and help spread the best practices of localities in these areas, and we endeavor to focus our advocacy for communities in ways that are focused on these values and goals.

So let's kick off the next 10 years together! Thank you to our clients and colleagues for the opportunities to promote community progress with you.

Sincerely yours, Matt Ward, Andy Seth, Ashley Badesch, Sarah Marin, Suzanne Kazar, and Rhea Rao