

Preventing Hate and Targeted Violence in Small and Mid-Sized US Cities: Building a Research-Informed Local Prevention Ecosystem

Background

Cities are on the frontlines of national and global crises, often fueled by polarizing rhetoric and conspiracy narratives. Local governments are uniquely positioned to mitigate rising levels of hate, polarization, and targeted violence by fostering trust, dialogue, and inclusion. These efforts help build community resilience and reinforce social cohesion.

In October 2023, the [Strong Cities Network](#) – a global coalition of 270+ cities committed to addressing hate, polarization, and targeted violence – launched a two-year, DHS-funded [initiative](#) partnering with five small and mid-sized US cities to pilot approaches to address these issues locally: Albuquerque (NM), Athens (OH), Chattanooga (TN), Overland Park (KS), and Stamford (CT).

To date, with support from Strong Cities, each city has produced a directory of local key prevention-related implementation partners, convened a multi-disciplinary working group of these stakeholders (“Local Leadership Group”) to advance prevention efforts, conducted a local needs and vulnerabilities assessment (including a community survey soliciting input on the hate and targeted violence landscape and prevention priorities), and drafted a local prevention framework. These efforts serve as the foundation of a collaborative local prevention ecosystem, helping to ensure that the necessary relationships, partnerships, and systems are in place to allow the city to mitigate impacts on social cohesion from inevitable shocks and crises that will arise, including from national and global events that increasingly have local impacts.

Each city’s prevention framework outlines key priorities for prevention. The frameworks are tailored to the local context, but all follow a public health approach, including goals related to preparation, upstream prevention, intervention, mitigation, and sustainability. For instance, Stamford’s framework includes the following objectives:

1. Create a working group/management team to coordinate and help implement prevention efforts, including monitoring and evaluation;
2. Provide mechanisms for safe and accurate reporting of bias incidents and hate crimes;
3. Raise community awareness of the threat of hate and targeted violence, how to respond, and available resources to mitigate their impacts;
4. Promote social cohesion through community-building efforts, including those across racial, ethnic, and faith groups;
5. Align state and local community and school-based threat and vulnerabilities assessment and violence intervention programs;
6. Ensure an integrated, robust provision of social services for those at risk of mobilizing to violence and those reintegrating into the community; and
7. Sustain efforts through sufficient financial resourcing, including from the local government and community-based and other foundations.

Call for Research Partnerships

The Strong Cities Network invites researchers in public health, violence prevention, behavioral science, public policy, and related disciplines to partner with us in one or more of the pilot cities to help advance evidence-informed community prevention practices. We are open to working together to identify the most meaningful and productive ways to collaborate. Participation can be tailored to individual or institutional capacity and can range from short-term technical input to longer-term collaborative research partnerships.

Potential forms of collaboration may include:

Monitoring and Evaluation

Help design and/or implement robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plans to assess the effectiveness of prevention strategies and interventions across one or more cities.

Data Collection and Analysis

Support or lead data-gathering initiatives (e.g., hate and bias incident data, community surveys, focus groups) to better understand local dynamics and inform decision-making.

Student Practicum/Capstone Projects

Supervise or embed graduate students in City-led efforts through practicum or capstone projects focused on community resilience, civic trust, or violence prevention.

Community-Engaged Research

Co-develop participatory research projects with local stakeholders to capture lived experiences, identify needs, and evaluate outcomes in real time.

Comparative or Multi-City Research

Partner across pilot cities to conduct comparative studies or cross-site analyses that support broader learning across the national landscape.

Contact Information

If you are interested in collaborating or learning more, please contact Strong Cities Senior Manager for North America, Jordan Reimer (jr@strongcitiesnetwork.org).