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# STRONG CITIES NETWORK TO PARTNER WITH PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY TO HOST U.S. MAYORAL RETREAT AGAINST HATE, EXTREMISM, AND POLARIZATION: PUTTING COMMUNITIES FIRST

In October 2023, Pittsburgh commemorated the five-year anniversary of the shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue that left 11 people dead and the city searching for answers to what remains the worst anti-Semitic attack in U.S. history. One of the many lessons from the city's response in the wake of this unspeakable tragedy was the support and cooperation among and between its faith communities; a model for how interfaith cooperation and dialogue can support a city's healing. Through work with former Mayor Bill Peduto, Strong Cities has been **sharing learnings from Pittsburgh's response** with cities across its global network.



Strong Cities is excited, therefore, to announce it is partnering with Pittsburgh Theological Seminary—which is preparing students grounded in faith and formed in community, and committed to education and service that fosters a greater sense of purpose—to host the inaugural Strong Cities Network U.S. Mayoral Retreat in August 2024. A three-day residential program convened on the Seminary's Pittsburgh campus and benefiting from the support of other Pittsburgh-based partners, including **Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College**, the **Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation**, and the **Eradicate Hate Global Summit**, as well as the **National League of Cities**, and the **Muhammad Ali Center**, the U.S. Mayoral Retreat will be a unique opportunity for mayors and other local leaders to share and learn approaches and innovations they need to tackle an increasingly complex threat environment marked by rising hate and polarization.

With a centuries-old history of mission, scholarship and service, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary is committed to relationships of mutual learning and serving with other faith traditions and theological viewpoints. With its urban campus and proximity to Pittsburgh's tech and education sectors, the Seminary's history, mission, and resources provide a rich context for this mayoral retreat in a city that has so much to share with cities about response and resilience.

“Strong Cities is proud to be partnering with Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and grateful to President Asa Lee, and his team, for opening the doors of their beautiful campus to host the U.S. Mayoral Retreat,” said Eric Rosand, Strong Cities' executive director. “We are excited to bring mayors from across the United States to Pittsburgh for what will be a unique opportunity to share experiences and learnings from our global network to support mayors in their efforts to strengthen social cohesion and resilience.”

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary President the Rev. Dr. Asa J. Lee said: “We look forward to welcoming mayors to our city and to working with Strong Cities Network to provide training in service to our neighbors. Collaborative, interfaith learning is desperately needed in our world today to help address growing hatred and extremism that too often leads to violence. It's a great honor to do our part to bring about peace.”

The U.S. Mayoral Retreat will include sessions on topics such as:

- Understanding the city-level hate and polarization on- and off-line landscape

- Building community partnerships for prevention and response

- Mitigating the impact of global crises on community cohesion, including by promoting compassion and civility

- Responding to a hate or extremist incident: mayoral communications in a time of crisis

A key feature of this retreat will be the opportunity to hear and learn from diverse Pittsburgh stakeholders—including (current and former) city officials, Eradicate Hate, community-based organizations, and the private sector—who contributed to the city's whole-of-society response to the Tree of Life synagogue.

Stay tuned for further details in the coming months. For more information on the Strong Cities Network, visit [strongcitiesnetwork.org](https://strongcitiesnetwork.org) and follow on **Twitter/X**, **LinkedIn**, or **Facebook**.

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