

Focus Areas and Criteria to Establish Sister City Relationships

City of Milpitas, Sister Cities Commission

The Milpitas Sister Cities Commission serves as an advisory body to the Milpitas City Council on matters affecting sister cities relationships, programs, and activities. It also reviews applications for sister city affiliations and forwards recommendations to the City Council.

Members of this commission volunteer their time and talents to establish and maintain sister city relationships. The Sister Cities Commission is composed of seven regular members, and two alternate members appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council. Special liaisons include one member of the Council and one member of the Milpitas Unified School District Board of Education that serve in a non-voting capacity.

As a volunteer-based commission, members work to obtain support from local cultural, business and school groups. The commission oversees planning for sister city affiliations in light of pledged support, both financial and in-kind.

Focus Areas & Objective Statements

Focus areas for the City of Milpitas Sister Cities Commission are educational, cultural, social, economic and charitable. Its objectives for establishing sister city relationships are:

- a) To engage the people of the City of Milpitas in cultivating strong and rewarding relationships with the people of similar cities of foreign nations to understand one another as individuals, as members of their community, as citizens of their country, and as a part of the family of nations.
- b) To foster continuing relationships of mutual concern between the people of the City of Milpitas and the people of established sister cities.
- c) To lead activities and programs that educate and equip the City of Milpitas and established sister cities with a mutual understanding of culture and economics.
- d) To assist the City of Milpitas in participating as an organization in the promotion of a local program sponsoring international cooperation and goodwill.
- e) To act as a coordinating body among local organizations, including the Milpitas Unified School District, Milpitas Sister Cities Association and other support groups or individuals desiring to engage in the planning, fundraising, and participation of international municipal cooperation and exchange.
- f) To encourage and obtain volunteer support from business and individuals within the Milpitas community for sister city relationships, activities and cultural exchanges.

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Guiding Criteria to Select a Sister City

❖ Overall Factors

- Genuine interest of both cities
- Long-term commitment to the relationship
- Adequate financial support for exchanges and maintenance of the relationship
- Realistic assessment of factors (interests and similarities) for a successful relationship
- Awareness that a desire to learn from and share experiences with a potential sister city may balance the lack of a similar characteristics with the city
- Separation of personal beliefs from political, economic, commercial and cultural realities
- Focus on a foundation of existing strengths for best results
- Awareness that the Milpitas Sister City Commission volunteers its time and talents to foster effective, long term relationships

❖ General

- Exchange goals for both cities
- Population
- Geographic location (mountains, desert, lake, port)
- Comparison of key industries
- Local ethnic population
- Existing links to community (arts group, university, YMCA, Rotary)
- Does the city have sister city relationships in other countries? Are they successful?
- Role of the City of Milpitas and Sister Cities Commission in establishing and maintaining the relationship

❖ Cultural, Civic, Educational

- Art exchange potential
- Museums
- Theaters
- Symphony/Orchestra
- Library
- Civic organizations (Scouts, Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, Women's Clubs)
- Newspapers/Television/Radio
- Sports teams (amateur and professional)
- Hospitals
- Primary and secondary schools
- Educational institutions (colleges, universities, technical, training institutes)

❖ Economic

- Trade exchange potential
- Prevailing economic conditions
- Language/cultural patterns and barriers
- Market analysis of industries
- Investment climate/present investment levels
- Liberal vs. restrictive trade climate
- Invisible trade (education, high-tech, service, exports)
- Annual number of tourists
- Presence of foreign businesses locally
- Local businesses engaged in international activity
- If a port city – port connections

❖ Political

- History of diplomatic relations
- Present degree of cooperation between U.S. and foreign country in political, economic, commercial and cultural levels
- Government organization
- Diplomatic presence
- Honorary consuls
- Health, safety and security conditions

Basic Steps to Initiate Sister City Relationships

Following is a list of general steps the Commission may take to initiate or respond to sister city relationship inquiries.

When the Commission initiates the relationship:

- 1) Research a city or region with discussion for next steps at commission meetings.
- 2) Establish contact with a sister city representative of that region or city.
- 3) Obtain completed Request for a Sister City form. May be filled out by a commissioner.
- 4) Obtain a tentative agreement confirming focus area(s) and criteria for the relationship.
- 5) Write Memorandum of Understanding for City Council review and approval.
- 6) Register relationship with Sister Cities International, as appropriate.

When a city or region inquires about a relationship:

- 1) Respond to all inquiries in writing. (Email inquiries accepted as a first step, however the Commission will move to formal, written letters to establish interest areas.)
- 2) Obtain completed Request for a Sister City form. Discuss potential relationship within three meetings from the date of initial inquiry.
- 3) Confirm and establish contact with a sister city representative of that region or city.
- 4) Conduct research and discuss next steps at commission meetings.
- 5) Obtain a tentative agreement confirming focus area(s) and criteria for the relationship.
- 6) Write Memorandum of Understanding for City Council review and approval.
- 7) Register relationship with Sister Cities International, as appropriate.

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