

SISTER CITY HANDBOOK

Guiding information for the International Relations Council and the City of Riverside as they build stronger international partnerships



HYDERABAD, INDIA

OBUASI, GHANA

JIANGMEN, CHINA

GANGNAM, SOUTH KOREA

ERLANGEN, GERMANY

RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA

SENDAI, JAPAN

CUAUTLA, MEXICO

ENSENADA, MEXICO

CAN THO, VIETNAM



Message from the Mayor

The Sister City Program is an asset to our community of Riverside, California. Our multiple international relationships serve the residents in a variety of ways. They offer ways our city can team with international partners, matching our interests with theirs, encouraging business and cultural development. Their institutions of higher education can pair with ours, offering exchanges of educational programs and students. Innovative programs can travel around the globe, inspiring both cities to grow, learn, and share ideas.



The benefits of these relationships develop a trust with both the City and the International Relations Council (IRC) and serve to elevate their respective resources to their best advantage. This Sister City Handbook is one way we can all build these programs together, with mutual understanding and focus. With guidelines in place, the path to stronger relationships should be clear.

Riverside values its Sister Cities and looks forward to the continuous development of these relationships.

Patricia Lock Dawson
Mayor of Riverside

Message from the President of the International Relations Council



As the world becomes smaller and smaller, having the ability to reach out and engage international businesses, schools, and arts and cultural programs will have a dramatic and significant impact on Riverside's quality of life. The IRC oversees interaction with our nine Sister Cities as citizen diplomats, bringing world leaders

and dignitaries to our community, providing a way for businesses to share ideas and resources, reaching out to help with humanitarian needs, and hosting student exchanges. We work in partnership with the Mayor's Office and the State Department to create pathways of understanding and ways to share cultural values. We welcome like-minded members from the community to join us in making a difference for the city of Riverside.

Bob McKenzie
President of the IRC, 2021-2022

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HOW TO ESTABLISH A NEW SISTER CITY IN RIVERSIDE

WHAT IS A SISTER CITY AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

A Sister City relationship is a broad-based, long-term partnership between two communities in two countries.

After the highest elected or appointed officials from both communities sign an agreement, the relationship is officially recognized by Sister Cities International. A Sister City organization (like Riverside's International Relations Council) is a volunteer group of citizens who, with the support of their local elected officials, form long-term relationships with people and organizations in a city abroad. Each Sister City organization is independent and pursues the activities and thematic areas that are important to them and their community including: municipal, business, trade, educational and cultural exchanges. Sister City organizations promote peace through people-to-people relationships—with



program offerings varying greatly from basic cultural exchange programs to shared research and development projects between cities with relationships. Our Riverside Sister City program increases city-wide cultural awareness, educational partnerships, and developments. It encourages business, tourism, and trade, and shares valuable resources and approaches in business, education, culture, and technologies.

Considerations for Future Sister City and Friendship City Affiliations

Requests to support new Sister City relationships spring from a variety of sources, such as official city governing members, Riverside citizens with connections in foreign countries, or international contacts. Requests can come in a variety of ways – by official letter, phone call, email, or visits by officials. It is important that future affiliations with international cities take these points into account:

- To make sure **relationships between cities are robust**, there is a **finite number of Sister City affiliations** that can be maintained. Riverside currently has nine Sister Cities, more than most cities our size. Considerable thought and evaluation must come with any additional commitments:
- If a request comes to the City of Riverside from another city, these considerations would be taken into account:
 1. **Do we already have a Sister City in that country?**
If so, how would our previous relationships be affected?
 2. Does the requesting city **already have an American Sister City**, and if so, what could Riverside add to relationships that already exist?
 3. What **additional benefits** might we both give and receive in this new relationship?
 4. What allies are **encouraging this relationship**, and are they committed to the process of establishing the relationship?
 5. Do we have a long-term commitment for **financial resources?**
 6. Do we have well-established **leadership and a volunteer pool?**

Such requests would ultimately come before the **IRC Board** for their recommendation. That recommendation would then be returned to the Mayor for direction. The process, as outlined in the following section, could begin with agreement from the IRC and the Mayor.

FIRST STEP

Productive Sister City relationships are a result of a carefully thought-out process. The following represents the criteria and framework individuals can use in assessing the viability of a prospective Sister City partnership.

COMPATIBILITY

Is the Sister City being considered advantageous/compatible to Riverside in terms of?

- Population
- Size
- Demographics (including the make-up of ethnic communities of interest from the perspective of the prospective city)
- Cultural diversity or richness
- Higher education initiatives, infrastructure, and interests
- Business and commercial interests
- Health care and other (e.g.; youth, etc.) initiatives, infrastructure, and interests
- Fiscal impact (this should be positive or neutral)
- Strategic value to Riverside community and educational institutions

ASSETS

A successful Sister City relationship needs assets in both cities. These may include:

- **Human:** Individuals or groups who are already engaged in (or willing to engage in) long-term activities involving the two cities. Ideally, one should have such groups or individuals in both cities, and groups with roots in both cities.
- **Programmatic:** Institutional (including commercial) activities that could connect the prospective city with Riverside.
- **Historic:** Historic roots with one culture or one individual from that international location.
- Existing **global initiatives, structures, and organizations.**

PARTNERS

To either establish or maintain a successful Sister City relationship, **partners in both cities are necessary.** Natural partners in the Sister City process are:

- **Chambers of Commerce**
(including specialized chambers such as the African American Chamber and Asian Indian Chamber)
- **International Relations Council of Riverside**
(and equivalent in prospective city)
- **Existing Sister City committees**
(Riverside has nine such committees)
- **Sister Cities International**
- **National Council of International Visitors** (Riverside has a local chapter)
- **City Council**
- **Mayor**
- **City Manager**
- **Local university administrators**
- **Local community colleges**
- **Local high school and middle school administrators**
- **Local chapters of global trade organizations**
- **The local community**
- **Administrators of local hospitals and health care facilities**
- **Local and/or regional businesses, especially those focused internationally (Bourns)**
- **Faith-based, nonprofit, and other non-governmental organizations**



Erlangen, Germany –
Riverside Student Exchange

GOALS

Based on the assessment of the strengths, assets, and mutual interests of the two cities, it is important to formulate a set of achievable goals and expectations for the relationship.

RELATIONSHIP FOCUS AREAS INCLUDE:

- Arts, Culture, and Tourism
- Economic Development
- Education
- Student Recruitment
- Environmental Issues
- Health Care
- Public Safety
- Municipal and Governmental Exchanges and Cooperation
- Sports
- Technology
- Youth



Sendai, Japan

CHAMPIONS

Finally, each prospective city needs a **champion** to motivate, unify, and pull together the allies, assets, support groups, and goals to make the Sister City relationship happen. These might happen as a result of university interest or private business sector interest. Since Sister City relationships are a two-way street, champions are needed to take a proactive role in building, maintaining the relationship, and sharing the passion for continuing interaction.

PROCESS

Once the criteria outlined so far have been satisfied, the following sequence of events must occur.

- Formation of an **exploratory Sister City committee** within the International Relations Council of Riverside.
- Expanded **groundwork and investigation** of the prospective city by the newly-formed exploratory committee (this includes comprehensive information gathering and exchange between the cities, and an assessment of the willingness of the prospective city to entertain a Sister City relationship with Riverside).
- A **visit (or visits) to the prospective city** by an official delegation from Riverside.
- A **return visit (or visits) to Riverside** by an official delegation from the prospective city.
- Execution of a **Sister City agreement** by the mayors (or chief administrators) of Riverside and the prospective city.
- **Ratification** by City Council.
- **Notification of the executed Sister City agreement** to Sister Cities International (SSI).
- **Formal ratification** by SSI.



Erlangen, Germany



Cuautla, Mexico



Obuasi, Ghana



Gangnam, South Korea

DEVELOPING FRIENDSHIP CITIES WITH RIVERSIDE

Riverside has a robust Sister City program for a city our size. Maintaining Sister City relationships is an on-going effort on the part of the City and the IRC. The term “Friendship City” might be used as a one-time interaction between Riverside and an international city but is not intended to replace or bypass our Sister City process. Some examples of ways this designation could be used are:

- **Highly-Focused Events** such as sharing resources on a limited basis for a mutual art exhibit or festival, or for one specific business venture. This highly focused exchange could grow to a yearly event, or simply be concluded at the completion of the exchange.
- **Outreach** such as when opportunity presents itself for the Mayor or City Council members to make a connection with another international city during a visit that might result in a limited, but valuable, relationship.
- **Unofficial;** the relationship of “Friendship City” can be extended from municipal government to municipal government on an informal basis without expectations of ongoing financial commitments.
- **Goodwill;** the goal of this designation would clearly be to foster goodwill for a limited period, which would be clearly specified. An example might be to designate a year, or a specific time period of exchanges.

EXPECTATIONS BETWEEN SISTER CITIES

There is an expectation that Riverside will reach out to their Sister Cities on an annual basis at a minimum to keep relationships vital, productive, and enhance mutual benefits. There is a continued interest in broadening the base of involvement. There are many ways the City of Riverside, the IRC/Sister City Committees might accomplish this connection. These are suggestions, and connection to our international friends is neither limited to this list, nor is connection in all areas to be expected.

- **Arts & Culture** – Music performances, art exhibits, peace parks and gardens, cultural festivals, art competitions, and highlighting aspects of both cities in a variety of venues and formats, including both online and in-person activities.
- **Business & Trade** – Promoting mutual economic benefit, supporting international cooperation between institutions of higher education, sharing best practices, sharing marketing, trade and investment plans, business-to-business connections, and commercial partnerships, and advancing innovative concepts, like sustainable development.
- **Community Development** – Helping one another with the exploration of health, sanitation, water, health, electric, technology, humanitarian, and green programs, to name just a few.
- **Youth & Education** – Encouraging student travel, short & long-term exchanges, sports tournaments and events, student showcases of work from both countries, youth leadership summits, electronic pen pal programs, and much more, including connecting our K-12 schools, colleges, and universities with counterparts in our Sister Cities.
- **Governance** – The opportunity to establish ongoing communication with municipal governments and learn from one another.
- **Promotion** – Tourism, raising the profile of Riverside internationally as an attractive city and a great place to live, work, invest, visit, do business, and study in tangible ways.
- **Natural Disasters, Emergencies and Need** – Helping our Sister Cities in times of need with training, personnel, supplies, or funds.
- **Online Programs to Connect Both Cities**



Hyderabad, India

COMMUNICATION AND REPORTING

While the Sister City program does many things that benefit the local community, these cannot be appreciated without community updates. Sister City Updates should be a part of the Mayor's Annual Report and focused on documenting the changes, accomplishments, and performance of the Sister City program. In this report, they should stress how they achieved independent goals and objectives for the program and whether this matches the strategic vision for the organization (IRC).

An annual report from the Sister City program should have **several major goals** (set by the IRC) with objectives that demonstrate achievement for each of the goals. Quantifiable measures should be created. It is critical that the Sister City program demonstrate its value as a vehicle for international goodwill and cultural understanding to the public at large.

It is also advisable for each Sister City Committee to **communicate activities to the City of Riverside** that can be included on the Mayor's website. There should be photos, maps, information about our Sister City and, most importantly, upcoming events that have a connection to Riverside. The website should also feature ways for citizens to get involved in the Sister City program.

The Sister City programs could benefit by **shared fundraising efforts** as a group. These might include ideas like International/ Sister City Restaurant Week, promoting travel opportunities in both cities (whale-watching in Ensenada, etc.), and promoting Sister City involvement within Riverside. There is also a need to lean on other organizations in the community to help make connections for the IRC and Sister Cities.

In addition:

- The International Relations Council should maintain its nonprofit incorporation active status with the State of California.
- The International Relations Council should have sufficient funds for periodic revisions of the Sister Cities brochures and web pages.
- The International Relations Council should submit an annual report to the Mayor outlining the status of the relationship with each of our Sister Cities.

EVALUATING THE SUCCESS OF THE SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIPS

The measurement of a successful Sister City relationship will be guided by the following criteria:

- **The Sister City Committee** (a standing committee of the International Relations Council) should be able to demonstrate sufficient local involvement on an ongoing basis and be willing to take responsibility for maintaining a firm relationship
- **The Sister City relationship in the other country** should likewise demonstrate sufficient local involvement on an ongoing basis
- The Sister Cities should have **approved exchanges** with both sides of the Sister City relationship a minimum of every four years. These can be formal delegations, student exchanges or one person in an official capacity. The goal is to make an in-person connection to our Sister City.
- It is desirable for the Sister City Committee to have a **minimum of ten (10) members** on an ongoing basis
- The Sister City Committees should be **represented on the IRC Board** and **report regularly** to the group as a whole



DISSOLVING A SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP

While regrettable, sometimes it is necessary and prudent for a city to terminate a Sister City affiliation. This could come about for a variety of reasons:

- **Loss of community interest and support** for an extended time
- **No communication** between Sister Cities, despite attempts made
- **A change of circumstances** that created the Sister City relationship at the start
- **An imbalance of factors** that made the Sister City match at the beginning become untenable as time has gone on
- **The loss of “champions”** in both cities that make relationship building difficult
- **Upon the recommendation of a “champion” or the Sister City Committee** based on their knowledge, history, and relationship with the Sister City

While the **preferred course of action would be to revitalize an inactive Sister City program**, there may be a time that Riverside may opt to terminate the Sister City relationship. If a Sister City affiliation is **dormant or inactive for a period of three years (with attempts at re-establishing communication failing)** the City of Riverside may initiate the process to terminate the Sister City relationship by performing these steps:

- Receiving a written letter of recommendation for dissolution to the IRC and Mayor of Riverside from the “champion” or Sister City Committee stating the reasons for dissolving the relationship;
- Upon evaluation, the Mayor will make a recommendation to the City Council;
- The Mayor or their designee will send a letter to the Mayor or lead representative of the Sister City to express the City’s intent to end the affiliation; and
- The Mayor or their designee will then notify Sister Cities International that the Sister City affiliation has ended.

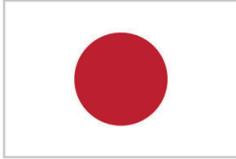
PLACING A SISTER CITY IN EMERITUS STATUS

- To place a relationship into Emeritus status, the Mayor **must write a letter to the mayor of the foreign city** indicating that they wish to remain Sister Cities but understand that the relationship will remain inactive until such time as both cities are able to sustain an active relationship.
- Sister Cities International should be **informed in writing by the mayor of the U.S. city** regarding the situation. Sister Cities International will then place the partnership into Emeritus status and will reflect this status in directories and all lists of Sister City programs (note: suggested 5 year maximum).



SISTER CITIES OF RIVERSIDE

AS OF 2021



**Sendai,
Japan**
1957



**Cuautla,
Mexico**
1968



**Ensenada,
Mexico**
1976



**Jiangmen,
China**
1996



**Gangnam,
South Korea**
1999



**Hyderabad,
India**
2000



**Obuasi,
Ghana**
2008



**Erlangen,
Germany**
2011



**Can Tho,
Vietnam**
2015

For further inquiries about the
City of Riverside's Sister City Program, please
contact the Mayor's Office at (951) 826-5551

RiversideCA.gov/Mayor