

**CITY OF FALCON HEIGHTS**  
Community Engagement Commission  
City Hall  
2077 West Larpenteur Avenue

**AGENDA**  
January, 29 2024 at 6:30 P.M.

- A. CALL TO ORDER:
  
- B. ROLL CALL:  
Cooley-Kistler\_\_\_\_ Ebbesen\_\_\_\_ Lindstrom\_\_\_\_ Stockford\_\_\_\_  
  
STAFF PRESENT:  
Van der Werff\_\_\_\_
  
- C. PRESENTATION:
  
- D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:  
1. November 20, 2023 Community Engagement Commission Meeting Minutes
  
- E. AGENDA:
  - 1. Officer Elections
  - 2. Standing Rules
  - 3. CEC Schedule & Events
  - 4. Neighborhood Liaison Handbook
  - 5. Sister Cities
  
- F. INFORMATION/ ANNOUNCEMENT
  
- G. ADJOURNMENT:

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**CITY OF FALCON HEIGHTS**  
Community Engagement Commission  
City Hall  
2077 West Larpenteur Avenue

**MINUTES**

November, 20 2023 at 6:30 P.M.

A. CALL TO ORDER: 6:33 PM

B. ROLL CALL:

Cooley-Kistler\_X\_ Ebbesen\_X\_ Lindstrom\_X\_ Stockford\_X\_

COUNCIL LIAISON:

Councilmember Wehyee\_\_\_

STAFF PRESENT:

Van der Werff\_X\_

C. PRESENTATION:

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. October, 16, 2023 Community Engagement Commission Meeting Minutes

Lindstrom motions to approve the meeting minutes; 4-0

E. AGENDA:

1. Neighborhood Liaison Handbook and List

Kris Grangaard joined to meeting to help understand the origin of the Neighborhood Liaison Handbook as she was one of the founders of the Neighborhood Commission.

Ebbesen explains that her goal for the Liaison program is to make it as simple as possible for people. She wants to have a point person in each area to spread info from the City, but also for neighbors to spread info to each other and to check on each other. We can get more people involved by spreading information about the program at community events, such as handing out snowman kits or s'mores packs.

Stockford introduces Kris Grangaard and spoke of her expertise and community involvement.

Grangaard talks about the Liaison program and what some of its goals were back in the day. Now the City is the keeper of all the names of the neighborhood liaisons and when it first started off, the commission was in charge of that. There was not much City involvement. The goals and mission of the program was a lot different as there was a lot of concerns around Y2K and ensuring safety of all neighbors. Security issues and data

privacy became more important and contact information could not be easily shared anymore. The list of Liaisons was handed to the City.

Van der Werff explains that contact information can be given out with permission.

Ebbesen agrees, communications easier today than 10 years ago and people tend to be hesitant to open the door for strangers. Nowadays, communications have improved tremendously, so there isn't always a need to go out and check on your neighbor.

Van der Werff wants to encourage community activities to get the energy going and it already exists in certain neighborhoods in town.

Ebbesen adds that this will hopefully increase the likelihood of identifying and getting more liaisons involved.

Stockford agrees and we can also go out and knock on doors for volunteers.

Lindstrom says it could be fun and motivational to see what other neighborhoods are doing.

Van der Werff likes that idea and states; events or neighborhood activities can be shared in the newsletter or on social media pages. For example, the Northome neighborhood had their annual Halloween parade and potluck and van der Werff went out to take some pictures and interacted with the neighbors. Afterwards, it was shared in the newsletter.

Grangaard states that it is proven that having information on paper is still the most effective way for people to absorb information. So that could be a good way to share information.

Ebbesen states that the information would not be shared with the City and that this will be stressed in the new handbook as well. It's just to be shared with neighbors and there could be some occasional overlap for when the City wants to share info about an event. But they can share that with the neighborhood block captains, who then can share it with the rest of the neighborhood.

Van der Werff will check on the possibility to create Google Doc to edit the Liaison Handbook, but is not sure if it is allowed under Open Meeting Law. The League of Minnesota Cities advised against it. If it's not possible, the document will have to be created by someone and then brought to the meeting for comments/ edits.

Grangaard explains they used to have doorhangers that were handed out to new residents.

Van der Werff states she sends out welcome letters now to new residents that sign up for water through St. Paul. Falcon Heights receives a list for that. She is thinking of reaching out to local businesses to see if they would be interested in adding a flyer or coupon to

the welcome packet. She states these, unfortunately, do not go out to apartment buildings as they do not have to sign up individually for water with St. Paul.

The commissioners discuss how to get apartment buildings involved and how to enter an apartment building safely.

Van der Werff suggest contacting the property managers and spreading information through them.

## 2. Human Rights Day/ Winter Coat Drive

Van der Werff explains they will have the Winter Coat Drive on December 9, 2023. She will promote it the week after Thanksgiving so it doesn't get lost in the shuffle.

Ebbesen wonders if she should still reach out to her medical contacts.

Van der Werff states we can keep those contacts as well as the one for the flu shot clinic and maybe use that for an event next year. She is planning on having the DEI community session with Third Sphere in January. It will be an interactive learning session.

## 3. Snowman Kits

Commissioners discussed if it makes sense to use new scarves and mittens from Spire for the snowman kits or have them donated as well. They agreed to have them donated and Ebbesen will be able to create the kits from scrap material at home.

Van der Werff will be able to create a registration and promote it in the newsletter/website and social media pages. For dates, the commission is looking at Presidents Day, which would be February 11 - 19. Also, to allow for some snowfall. People can pick up kits at City Hall.

## F. INFORMATION/ANNOUNCEMENT

Van der Werff will bring 2024 schedule for CEC meeting dates to the next commission meeting once they have been approved by the City Council. She states that there will be no meeting for the CEC for the first two months of the year, because of how the Holidays fall in January and February and City Hall will be closed. She believes it would be beneficial to pick a date to meet in January or February to keep momentum going with the CEC and there should also be a new Council Liaison that will be joining the meetings.

Grangaard provided some handouts from the Neighborhood Commission that explains some of its history.

No other announcements

## G. ADJOURNMENT: 8:02 PM

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## REQUEST FOR ACTION

<b>Meeting Date</b>	January 29, 2024
<b>Agenda Item</b>	E1
<b>Attachment</b>	Officer Elections
<b>Submitted By</b>	Elke van der Werff, Administrative & Communications Coordinator

<b>Item</b>	Officer Elections
<b>Description</b>	<p>The Commission must nominate and elect officers for 2024. Descriptions of these positions are as follows:</p> <p><b><u>Chairperson</u></b> Main contact between the commission and staff, conducts the meeting by opens/closes, calls for votes, and helps set the agenda for upcoming meetings.</p> <p>Generally we will also appoint a vice-chair and secretary, should the Commission wish to do so.</p> <p><b><u>Vice chairperson</u></b> Fills duties in the Chair's absence and encouraged to work as a team and communicate needs with staff.</p> <p><b><u>Secretary</u></b> Responsible for taking meeting minutes and sends to staff for review and approval at next meeting.</p>
<b>Budget Impact</b>	N/A
<b>Attachment(s)</b>	N/A
<b>Action(s) Requested</b>	Staff recommends nominating and electing officers for 2024.

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## REQUEST FOR ACTION

<b>Meeting Date</b>	January 29, 2024
<b>Agenda Item</b>	E2
<b>Attachment</b>	Standing Rules & Sikkink's Motion System
<b>Submitted By</b>	Elke van der Werff, Administrative & Communications Coordinator

<b>Item</b>	Adopt the Standing Rules
<b>Description</b>	The Commission must formally adopt the standing rules, which is a housekeeping item that is typically done at the beginning of each year.
<b>Budget Impact</b>	N/A
<b>Attachment(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Engagement Commission Standing Rules</li> <li>Sikkink's Motion System</li> </ul>
<b>Action(s) Requested</b>	Staff recommends approving the standing rules for 2024.

**FALCON HEIGHTS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMISSION**  
**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMISSION STANDING RULES**

**January 29, 2024**

**INTRODUCTION**

In the belief that the best decisions are made by the best-informed decision makers and that the public decision process is best served when the public has every opportunity to present views, the following rules are established to govern regular and special commission meetings as well as formal public hearings. There are several goals behind these rules.

1. In general, free and open discussion by all interested parties should be an essential part of the decision-making process.
2. The commission process should have as little procedural overhead as possible.
3. Time is better spent on substantial matters rather than proforma matters.

**MEMBERSHIP**

The formal commission membership consists of seven commissioners. All seven have one vote each and all can introduce motions. For purposes of leading the meeting, the chair, or in the absence of the chair, the vice-chair will be considered the chairperson. In the absence of the chair and vice-chair, the Commission shall name an acting chair for the duration of the meeting.

**RULES**

Agenda

1. To be considered, an item must be on the agenda and the agenda must be distributed to all the commission members and any other persons having responsibility for an item at least three working days prior to the meeting. Distribution may be made by electronic media, including the city website. An agenda can be modified with addenda by a majority vote but this should be used only for minor items or items with extreme time constraints.
2. Since there may be an audience not familiar with each item, the chair, or person appointed by the chair, will give a brief explanation of each item as it is addressed.
3. The order of items on the agenda need not be followed absolutely. The chair may adjust the order in the interest of:
  - a. Filling in time before a scheduled item, i.e., a public hearing.

- b. Grouping several items to best make use of consultant time.
- c. Accommodating individuals who have attended the meeting specifically, to provide input on an item.

#### Process - Regular Commission Meetings

1. For these proceedings the commission will use the 'open discussion' procedure. That is, discussion is open to any member before or after a motion is made. This privilege is also extended to the Staff Liaison and any of the consultants who may have an interest in or can contribute to the item at hand.
2. At the discretion of the chair, this privilege is also extended to those members of the audience who wish to provide input. The chair may also rule out of order any input felt to be redundant, superfluous or irrelevant.
3. The chair can make liberal use of the "unanimous consent" procedure. That is, items that in the judgment of the chair are likely to be unanimously approved, can be introduced for approval with the statement "If there are no objections, ... stands approved (or denied)." If any commissioner has an objection, then the item reverts to the standard motion procedure. This "unanimous consent" procedure cannot be used for items requiring formal votes, i.e. resolutions.
4. The standard motion procedure is changed to not require a second. A motion need only be made to be considered. This also applies to amendments.
5. To eliminate confusion, only one amendment will be considered at a time and that amendment must be germane to the motion. An amendment cannot itself be amended. If a change to an amendment is deemed appropriate, the amendment should be withdrawn and reintroduced accordingly.
6. The general mode of voting will be by acclamation but with enough clarity that the individual votes can be recorded in the minutes. If in doubt, the secretary can request a clarification.
7. If the commission action is the result of a resident request and that request is denied in whole or in part, reasons of fact supporting the denial will be made part of the public record.
8. No commission meeting will extend beyond 10:00 P.M. except by unanimous vote. This rule is not subject to the modification or suspension provisions of the Standing Rules.

#### ADOPTION/MODIFICATION/SUSPENSION

These rules with the exception of the mandatory 10:00 P.M. adjournment, can be adopted, modified or suspended in whole or in part by a 3/4 vote of the commission. If suspended, they are automatically reinstated at the next meeting. Should they be suspended or a situation occurs that is not covered by the standing rules, Sikkink's Seven Motion System (attached) will apply.

#### ANNUAL REVIEW

These rules will be reviewed annually in January.

#### INTERPRETATION

The chair will interpret the rules. However, the chair's interpretation can be appealed by any commission member and can be overruled by a majority vote.

## SIKKINK'S SEVEN MOTION SYSTEM

### General Rules for a Simplified System of Parliamentary Procedure

1. The purpose of this decision making system is to allow efficient decision making that represents a majority position. Any motion, request, discussion or proposal, which seems to have as its purpose unreasonable delay, manipulation, or the goal of serving individual ends rather than group ends, can be ruled out of order by the chair. Such a ruling by the chair will be subject to the motion called appeal.
2. Free and open discussions are valued in this decision making system. For that reason, most motions are discussable and the motion to restrict discussion requires a 2/3 vote in order to pass. In recognizing persons for discussion, the chair first recognizes the person who made the motion, next recognizes other persons and always recognizes a person who has not spoken over a person who has already participated in the discussion. As far as possible, the chair should try to alternately recognize persons representing different viewpoints.
3. In examining the chart on the following page, you will note that five of the seven motions are amendable. However, only one amendment at a time may be considered. As soon as that amendment is passed or defeated, another amendment may be proposed.
4. The number in front of the motion listed indicates the rank of each motion. Thus, #1 – General motions are lowest in rank, and #7 – Restrict Debate motions are highest in rank. Two rules apply:
  - (1) You usually cannot consider two motions of the same rank at the same time, and
  - (2) If a motion of one rank is being considered, a motion of the same rank or lower rank is usually out of order, but a motion of higher rank is in order.

While these rules generally apply, the chair may allow some flexibility in certain circumstances. These situations almost always occur with motions #5, 6 and 7. For example, if #7 - "Restrict Discussion" is being discussed and a member wants a secret ballot vote on the matter, Request, while lower in rank, could be used to accomplish this purpose. The chair is allowed to make all decisions on exceptions, but all such decisions are subject to appeal.

**Important Note:** The previous page and the chart below are taken verbatim from the existing Administrative Manual of the City of Falcon Heights, now in revision. Please note that in the chart, the motions were put in order of rank from highest (#7) to lowest (#1).

Type of Motion/Rank	Purpose	Applies To What Situations	Needs Recognition	Needs Second	Can Be Discussed	Amendable	Vote Required
7. Restrict Discussion (highest rank)	To stop or limit discussion	All discussable motions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3
6. Appeal	To let the group vote on a chair's decision	To decision of the chairperson	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
5. Request	Not a motion but a way to question, challenge, or seek help	Any appropriate situation	No	No	No	No	Chair decides subject to appeal
4. Postpone	To delay action on any general motion to a future time	General motions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
3. Refer	To have a general motion studied by a committee	General motions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
2. Meeting Termination	To recess during a meeting or to end a meeting	Made to recess or adjourn	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
1. General (lowest rank)	To bring up business for majority decisions by the group	For doing business	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

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## REQUEST FOR ACTION

<b>Meeting Date</b>	January 29, 2024
<b>Agenda Item</b>	E4
<b>Attachment</b>	2024 CEC Schedule
<b>Submitted By</b>	Elke van der Werff, Administrative & Communications Coordinator

<b>Item</b>	2024 Community Engagement Commission Schedule
<b>Description</b>	The Commission will review of all regularly scheduled Community Engagement Commission meetings and events for 2024.
<b>Budget Impact</b>	N/A
<b>Attachment(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2024 CEC Schedule</li> </ul>
<b>Action(s) Requested</b>	Staff recommends reviewing schedule for 2024 meetings and discussing the upcoming events for the year.



# City of Falcon Heights Community Engagement Commission Meetings/Events

## 2024 Schedule *(3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month)*

January 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officer Elections</li> <li>• Standing Rules</li> <li>• 2024 Schedule &amp; Events</li> </ul>
March 18	
April 15	
May 20	
June 17	
July 6 (Event)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restoration Day</li> </ul>
July 7 (Event)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unity Day</li> </ul>
July 15	
<b>August 6 (Event)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Night to Unite</li> </ul>
August 19	
<b>September 14 (Event)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible event date for City Wide Garage Sale</li> </ul>
September 16	
October 21	
November 18	
December 16	

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## ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

<b>Meeting Date</b>	January 29, 2024
<b>Agenda Item</b>	E4
<b>Attachment</b>	Neighborhood Liaison Updated Handbook
<b>Submitted By</b>	Elke van der Werff, Administrative & Communications Coordinator

<b>Item</b>	Neighborhood Liaison
<b>Description</b>	<p>The goal of the Community Engagement Commission is to review and update the Neighborhood Liaison Handbook. The current online version was last revised on May, 2020.</p> <p>Based on recent discussions, staff created an updated Liaison Handbook using parts of the old handbook and suggestions from the commission.</p>
<b>Budget Impact</b>	N/A
<b>Attachment(s)</b>	Neighborhood Liaison Updated Handbook
<b>Action(s) Requested</b>	Review and suggest edits to the updated Liaison Handbook

## **Neighborhood Liaison Handbook**

### **What is a Neighborhood Liaison?**

A Neighborhood Liaison is an extension to the Community Engagement Commission that formalizes a more localized outreach community engagement effort. They will provide a more familiar point of access to the assigned neighborhood community, while building and strengthening relationships. They will spend their time in the community talking with people, collecting suggested ideas, and forming relationships to keep the community connected.

### **Goals:**

Curate relationships with neighbors to create safe spaces, safe streets and a welcoming community. Be a communication conduit between the city and your neighbors to help keep residents informed of important city updates and notify the city of concerns among a given neighborhood.

Connect individuals throughout the city that have already or are willing to develop a neighborhood network.

### **What does a Neighborhood Liaison do?**

Help connect residents in your neighborhood by gathering and sharing contact information amongst neighbors.

Find ways to connect neighbors through gatherings of any size. These could include Night to Unite, block parties, cookie exchanges, happy hours, etc.

Receive and share regular updates from the city about upcoming city meetings and events, safety alerts and other news. If concerns or issues are raised in the neighborhood the Neighborhood Liaison can send information to the city.

### **Does it take a lot of work to be a Neighborhood Liaison?**

Absolutely not! Many neighborhoods already have one or some people who already are connected on their blocks or neighborhood. We're want to connect with those individuals to be a point of contact for the city.

There may be occasions to gather liaisons to share concerns or success stories as a group but there will not be more than 3-4 voluntary meetings each year.

### **What kind of information is the city looking for?**

The only contact information that the city will request is that of the individual(s) who volunteer to be connected with the city as a liaison. Any information gathered among neighbors will not be sent to the city, only shared with neighbors.

### **How will the city support the neighborhood liaisons?**

The city will recommend communications, communication techniques and occasions to create neighborhood gatherings throughout the year. For some events the city may supply kits or supplies to help facilitate events.

**Neighborhood Liaison Code of Ethics:**

- Respect your neighbors
- Maintain a positive attitude and image
- Maintain local privacy of collected data
- Be a community builder

**Community Engagement Commission Role in the Neighborhood Liaison Program:**

The Community Engagement Commission (CEC) promotes opportunities for residents to be involved by endorsing and facilitating community outreach events. They will act as a human-bridge, defining ideas and activities that help to connect Falcon Heights City Council to the people they serve. The Commission shall serve as the city's liaison with the neighborhoods, and may make recommendations to the City Council regarding changes to the Neighborhood Liaison Program. The City Strategic Plan will be used to guide the commission's direction.

Emphasis shall be placed on the following activities:

- Recruit and retain neighborhood liaisons
- Identify areas with no liaison and focus recruitment efforts there.
- Update and distribute a neighborhood liaison handbook
- Implement appropriate Neighborhood Liaison training
- Provide suggestions on how to best communicate with the residents to keep our neighborhoods connected
- Act as a resource for neighborhood activities
- Provide regular reports to the City Council on the Neighborhood Liaison Program
- Attend Neighborhood Liaison training sessions.
- Plan, implement and evaluate city-wide events to promote community building.
- Begin including Falcon Heights businesses in community engagement efforts.

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## ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

<b>Meeting Date</b>	January 29, 2024
<b>Agenda Item</b>	Sister Cities
<b>Attachment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits of Membership</li> <li>• Guide to Establishing a Sister City Program</li> <li>• Sister Cities Commission History - City of Red Wing</li> </ul>
<b>Submitted By</b>	Elke van der Werff, Administrative & Communications Coordinator

<b>Item</b>	Sister Cities
<b>Description</b>	<p>The City Council has been in discussion about participating in Sister Cities International (SCI). At their last workshop on Wednesday, December 6 they agreed it would be appropriate to involve the CEC and help identify and research cities.</p> <p>Sister Cities International was created by President Eisenhower in 1956 with the purpose of championing peace and prosperity, forming bonds between communities from around the world. 13 Minnesota cities are part of SCI. The Sister Cities of the 13 include cities in Poland, Germany, Chile, Japan, Kenya, Norway, Iraq, France, and many more.</p> <p>Participation in SCI starts with community-wide support and understanding of Sister Cities. Sometimes organizations are formed by the community that can include residents, local government, and schools. The organizations are specifically dedicated to SCI.</p> <p>Next, research begins for what cities could be a match to start a relationship with. A Sister City is usually one that shares cultural and historical bonds, similar landscapes, programs offered, and much more. After communicating and going through a correspondence phase, a partnership agreement is made where formal documents are signed by the highest elected or appointed official of each respective city. Once this ceremonial event occurs and documents are given to SCI, programs can begin to be implemented and exchanges can be planned.</p> <p>Other cities participating in SCI have had long lasting relationships that have been going on for decades. Students of different ages have benefited from a Sister Cities relationship by being exchange students in other countries and learning about other cultures and languages.</p>
<b>Budget Impact</b>	TBD

<b>Attachment(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Benefits of Membership</li><li>• Guide to Establishing a Sister City Program</li><li>• Sister Cities Commission History - City of Red Wing</li></ul>
<b>Action(s) Requested</b>	Start discussions about participation in SCO and identify cities that could be a match to start a relationship with.





## BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

### Joining the sister cities network

Membership in the SCI network benefits your local sister city program in several ways. SCI is the clearinghouse for local programs nationwide, providing services to its members, compiling statistics, promoting the SCI mission, publicizing the efforts of sister city programs, projects and volunteers, recognizing young artists and international scholars and offering various grant programs to its members each year.

Dues-paying members receive:

- Access to the SCI affiliations database and SCI guidance and support during the affiliation process
- Technical assistance on building, funding and managing a local sister city program
- International training, cross-cultural expertise, protocol advice and development materials
- Participation in virtual global roundtables linking cities around the world, including networking with Ambassadors and other diplomats
- Participation in virtual Global Conversations regarding issues pertinent to citizen diplomats
- Access to municipal professionals and political leaders throughout the world
- Up-to-date information on leading NGOs, foundations and government initiatives that support sister city activities
- SCI publications, including SCI News, Report to the Membership, the SCI directory, and the annual convention and awards programs
- Guides and brochures for program development, practical training, teacher and youth exchange, fundraising and proposal writing
- Reduced registration and exhibit fees for regional, national and international conferences
- Voice and vote for SCI leadership and association policies
- Eligibility for innovative grant programs, from youth exchange to municipal training
- Eligibility for the annual awards program
- Discounted group and incentive travel programs
- Eligibility for the Young Artist and Authors competition
- Opportunity to identify and send young adults to the SCI Youth Leadership Conference
- Access to J-1 Visas for practical training and various insurance policies
- Invaluable networking opportunities through state, regional, bilateral and international SCI conferences and meetings
- Hands-on assistance from your SCI State Representative
- Networking with other world leaders in the Sister Cities International network

Sister city programs tap SCI's resources to find contacts, to network globally and to glean ideas about how to develop projects that benefit U.S. communities and their affiliations.

Although one person may serve as the driving force to start a program, all successful sister city programs have many people involved in the planning process. These citizens guide the sister city

program while it is being structured and organized. It is not necessary to have a sister city to establish a sister city program and become a member of SCI.

## SCI Membership Programs and Benefits

For more member benefits, please visit our website at [www.sistercities.org/membership](http://www.sistercities.org/membership)

### Global Networking

- Peer-to-peer networking with sister cities programs
- Connect with foreign communities
- Support from foreign and domestic Diplomatic Corps

### Telling Your Story

- Marketing & communications assistance
- Recognition through Annual Awards
- Crisis communications

### Resources That Matter

- Governance & policy services
- Discounted affinity benefits
- Toolkits & templates

### City Connection Marketplace

Sister Cities International has helped dozens of communities develop partnerships in countries around the world. Let us help you find your next sister city.

*"Concord might never have paired with Freeport, Bahamas has it not been for the assistance of this program."*

### High School Homestay

As a J-1 Visa sponsor, Sister Cities International can help you provide the experience of a lifetime to an international youth. Host students for a semester or year-long stay in your sister city.

*"I improved my English, I made a lot of friends, I developed a good relationship with my host family, and I learned to understand American culture better. Now I feel more like a citizen of the world."*





## QUICK GUIDE TO ESTABLISHING A SISTER CITY TOOLKIT

### Overview

A sister or friendship city relationship is formally created when the mayors or highest elected or appointed officials from two communities sign an Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishing the partnership. However, this is usually the result of a long process that involves the local sister city organization along with the municipality and other local institutions. While the process can also be very different for each community and can vary from culture to culture, this guide can serve as a point of reference in guiding communities through the process.

### The steps

- **Planning process:** The first step in developing a new sister city relationship is to ensure everyone is in agreement.\* This would include the local sister city organization and the highest elected/ranking official, provided this individual approves and formalizes the partnership. The contact information for local sister city organizations may be found by visiting the Sister Cities International website at [http:// www.sistercities.org/](http://www.sistercities.org/).
- **Research phase:** Sister city relationships are strategic, long-term partnerships that should be mutually beneficial. Identifying potential partners is the foundation to developing a successful relationship. If you don't already have a potential sister city in mind, below is a list of data points that communities should look for similarities when identifying potential partners:
  - **Population size:** Some variance in city sizes is natural, but choosing a sister city of a similar size usually ensures good symmetry between municipal governments, community groups, private organizations, as well as similar challenges/opportunities
  - **Geography:** Similar geographic qualities, whether it's ports, deserts, lakes, mountains, climate, etc. often means that cities will be able to share valuable knowledge related to the respective challenge or opportunity associated with each quality
  - **Industries:** Potential commerce and trade partnerships
  - **Academic institutions:** High school and university exchanges, which are often a part of any relationship, require similar counterpart institutions that should be identified early in the process
  - **Cultural institutions:** This may include museums, music venues, community centers
  - **Preexisting Relationships:** This may include, but is not limited to: mayoral relationships, trade relationships, expatriate/diaspora communities, faith-based groups, and personal experiences ranging from study/work abroad to marriages
  - **Historical or ancestral connections:** Ethnic and/or cultural links

\*Many communities have developed criteria or policies to guide their research or to evaluate inbound inquires, whether from cities abroad or local residents, in order to manage the volume of requests as well as ensure that potential relationships are both appropriate and sustainable. If you are interested in developing such a policy please email [membership@sistercities.org](mailto:membership@sistercities.org) for more assistance as part of our Governance and Policy Services.

- Develop lines of communication:** The next step in the process is to develop a line of communication with the prospective sister city community may start by sending a letter of introduction from one mayor to the other. This letter should introduce your community, identify why you are interested in developing a sister city relationship, identify potential program/exchange opportunities, and identify a point of contact for this initiative. This is when international protocol should be followed in order to ensure a positive experience. Provided symmetry is a key aspect of international protocol, if your local sister cities organization operates through the work of community volunteers it is good practice to identify a volunteer contact as well as a contact within the mayor's office. If you need assistance in targeting appropriate contacts within the international community, please contact [info@sistercities.org](mailto:info@sistercities.org).
- Correspondence phase:** Once the letter has been received by the perspective sister city and a line of communication has been established, the next several months should be focused on learning more about the each other's communities, identifying program/exchange opportunities, discussing local involvement, and developing a work plan that establishes short and long term goals for the partnership. Many cultures will recommend a physical exchange during this phase, but often various means of technology is used to effectively communicate. This period is also a great opportunity to implement a program to "test the waters." This program could include a youth pen pal exchange, municipal/professional best practice, or other knowledge-sharing exchange, among many other opportunities. Many communities may send non-mayoral delegations during the correspondence and planning stages-whether that be the city manager, council members, local business professionals, or volunteers.
- Develop partnership agreement:** Both communities have decided to move forward and formalize the relationship. In order for a sister city, county, or state partnership to be recognized by Sister Cities International, the two communities must sign formal documents which clearly endorse the link. The partnership agreement can range from the ceremonial, with language focusing on each city's commitment to fostering understanding, cooperation, and mutual benefit to the precise, with particular areas of interest, specific programs/activities, or more concrete goals related to anything from numbers of exchanges to economic development. Sister Cities International has developed a toolkit and template that will assist in creating this document and can be found under the toolkits and templates section of the SCI Member Area.
- Signing ceremony:** Once the partnership agreement has been developed and both communities have approved the document, the two highest ranking officials will sign the document, which is often done during a formal signing ceremony. This ceremony is usually an in-person event, but can be virtual. While it is important to tailor these ceremonies to fit your specific communities, Sister Cities International has developed a guide to this process and can be found under the toolkits and templates section of the SCI Member Area. Once the agreement has been signed, please send an electronic copy of that agreement to Sister Cities International at [membership@sistercities.org](mailto:membership@sistercities.org).
- Implementation and evaluation:** It is time to implement programs and plan exchanges outlined in the cooperative plan developed during the early months of this process. It is a good practice to set a date, whether within the next six months to two years, to evaluate the partnership and make adjustments if needed. If you ever come across any issues, concerns, or are looking for program ideas, please do not hesitate to contact Sister Cities International.

## **Sister Cities Commission**

The Sister Cities was founded in 1992, to promote cultural exchange between cities of different nations to foster strengthened economics, world peace, and a greater understanding of the world issues. The City of Red Wing has two official sister cities – Ikata, Japan and Quzhou, China. The commission also has had an informal relationship with Drammen, Norway.

Interest in a sister city started in the late 1980s. The idea did not take off until 1992. In March 1992 there was a reuniting of World War II Doolittle Raider Commanders who crash landed in China after a raid on Japan, and the Chinese farmers who had rescued them from Japanese soldiers. This event was brought to Red Wing by Wacouta artist and explorer, Bryan Moon. At a luncheon address during this event, Mayor Romeo Cyr suggested the possibility of a friendship connection with a city in the area of China that the rescue had occurred.

At the August 10, 1992 city council meeting Mayor Romeo Cyr requested that the City Join Sister Cities International. At that point two delegates had contacted him from China and Norway to establish a relationship. The Council approved joining Sister Cities International and forming a Sister Cities Commission. Sister Cities International was formed in 1956 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The first reading of the ordinance creating the Sister Cities Commission was at the October 13, 1992 City Council meeting.

Ordinance No. 137 was approved at the October 26, 1992 City Council Meeting. In December, fifteen community members were chosen by Mayor Romeo Cyr to be the first Commissioners of the Sister Cities Commission. The current Commission is also made up of fifteen members. The first meeting of the Commission was held in 1993. Red Wings two sister Cities Ikata, Japan and Quzhou, China. The Partnership with Quzhou was formed in 1993 and the partnership with Ikata was formed in 1995.

Mayor Nakamota from Ikata, Japan had been to Red Wing in order to assess Red Wing as a city in which his community wanted to establish an international connection. The reason that Mayor Nakamota was interested in Red Wing was that Ikata had a nuclear power plant that already had an exchange program in place with Prairie Island Nuclear Power Plant in Red Wing. Mayor Nakamota liked Red Wing so along with NSP approached the Sister City Commission and asked to be considered as a Sister City. Official agreements between the two cities were signed in Red Wing on August 8, 1995.