



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item-No Attachments (PDF)

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REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBJECT

Formalize the Current Friendship City Relationship with Iizuka, Japan to a Sister City Relationship Including Membership in Sister Cities International (Study Issue)

REPORT IN BRIEF

On January 29, 2016, at its Study/Budget Issues Workshop, Council prioritized the exploration of upgrading the current Friendly Exchange Relations (FER) Agreement with Iizuka, Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan to a formal sister city relationship (Study Issue paper OCM 16-01, Attachment 1). This report presents for Council consideration of options for the type of relationship it can establish with the City of Iizuka and then presents examples of increased levels of engagement and an opportunity for the Council to discuss funding commitments for this effort.

Staff recommends that Council formalize the relationship with the City of Iizuka through membership in Sister Cities International (Alternative 3, Option C).

Staff makes no recommendation on the amount of funding Council would approve for increased engagement; however, the Council should provide some level of resources to be dedicated compatible with the type of agreement authorized.

BACKGROUND

Due to numerous inquiries as far back as 1961, the City established a Sister Cities Citizens Committee to explore establishing a sister cities program. As a result of the work of the committee, the Council approved its first sister city relationship in 1964 with the City of Chilean, Chile, a relationship lasting eight years and resulting in a number of civic exchanges, but eventually discontinued by Council in 1970 due to a number of political issues.

For the next 30 years, Council periodically considered reestablishing a sister cities program, but declined based on potential impacts to City resources and staff time. In lieu of a formal program, the City Council and staff welcomed numerous foreign visitors to learn about the City's Planning and Management Systems (PAMS) and other programs, with City staff also being invited to other countries to discuss the City's management framework and processes.

In September of 2002, a delegation of business, cultural and government representatives from the City was invited to tour China in order to assist Silicon Valley companies in making contact with their Chinese counterparts. As a result of that visit, the City entered into a friendly exchange relations agreement with the city of Pinghu, China. Council subsequently adopted two more friendly exchange relations agreements with Anqing City, China in 2004 and with Suzhou, China in 2006.

The Pinghu agreement resulted in a 2003 study issue exploring the City's options for international

exchange opportunities. On December 12, 2002, at its 2003 Study Issues Workshop, Council prioritized a study on sister city type relationships with other countries; this report was considered during the April 1, 2003 Council Meeting, *RTC 03-097: Explore Establishment of an International Exchange Program (IEP) Similar to a Sister Cities Program* <http://archive.sunnyvale.ca.gov/Portals/0/Archive/RTC/2003/20030401/03-097.pdf?timestamp=1462481514600> (Attachment 6). Council adopted staff's recommendation, approving an informal friendship program allowing for agreements with foreign cities for the purposes of mutual benefit. Council also directed that the City's financial support for this type of program be limited to the cost of visitor gifts and the hosting of special events. In practice, the latter has been limited to meeting coordination for visiting dignitaries.

On November 14, 2006, when considering a relationship with the City of Suzhou, China, Council underscored the need for staff to review the foreign exchange relations program and to clarify guidelines for evaluating cities most appropriate for friendly exchange relations agreements. Specifically, Councilmembers asked whether current policy included a limit on the number of agreements that could be signed, and whether the policy established any criteria that must be met by a foreign city in order to enter into an agreement. The study was presented to Council in 2007 via *RTC 07-215: International Friendly Exchange Relations (Council Policy Issue)* <http://archive.sunnyvale.ca.gov/Portals/0/Archive/RTC/2007/20070717/07-215.pdf> (Attachment 7).

On July 17, 2007, Council approved Policy 7.3.24: *International Friendly Exchange Relations* (Attachment 12), which established a three-year renewable sunset clause for all existing and future friendship city agreements, notification to all existing friendship cities of their entitlement to renew their relationship prior to their three-year sunset, and direction that friendship city relationships be limited to a maximum of five and no more than three friendship agreements be from any one country.

In June 2013, Council entered into a Friendly Exchange Relations Agreement with the City of Dubna, Russia. After three years of inactivity between the two cities and lack of community support the agreement with Dubna expired per Council decision at the March 29, 2016 Council Meeting.

Sunnyvale Sister City Association (SSCA):

In November of 2013, Council approved a Friendly Exchange Relations (FER) Agreement with the City of Iizuka, Japan (Attachment 2) with limited use of City resources, as stated in Council policy. This Agreement is due to expire in December of this year.

Leading up to the approval of the Friendly Exchange Relations Agreement, a small group of active community members founded the Sunnyvale Sister City Association (SSCA). SSCA has been spearheading efforts to expand the relationship between Sunnyvale and Iizuka to one that is more formal and developed to include additional events and activities. During the November 10, 2015 Council Meeting, former Mayor Griffith sponsored, and Councilmember Hendricks co-sponsored, preparation of a study issue paper to explore options for expansion into a formal relationship between Iizuka and our City.

The SCCA achieved 501(c)(3) nonprofit status in June 2014 and has since hosted numerous activities for the last two years including the planting of cherry trees with commemorative plaques in various locations throughout Sunnyvale as a token of friendship between the two cities as well as two student cultural exchange trips: 11 Sunnyvale students traveling to Iizuka in June 2014 and 8 students in June 2015, and 20 Iizuka students visiting Sunnyvale in August 2014 and 20 again in

August 2015.

For additional information and history on the city of Iizuka, Japan, see Attachment 3.

EXISTING POLICY

Council Policies

- **7.2.4:** *Relationships with Outside Groups* (Attachment 10)
- **7.3.23:** *Naming/Renaming Parks & Recreation Facilities* (Attachment 11)
- **7.3.24:** *International Friendly Exchange Relations* (Attachment 12)

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The action being considered does not constitute a “project” with the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378 (b) (5) in that it is a governmental organizational or administrative activity that will not result in direct or indirect changes in the environment.

DISCUSSION

This discussion serves to clarify the differences between a “sister city” and a “friendship city”; describe a typical membership in Sister Cities International (SCI), the organization under which most international exchange programs operate; outline SSCA’s vision of the relationship between Iizuka and Sunnyvale; and explore the various costs and commitments required for implementation of an expanded relationship with Iizuka.

“Friendship Cities” versus “Sister Cities”

Friendship city relationships are generally less formal and more limited in scope than sister city relationships, involving less commitment or obligation than sister city relationships and often are limited to mayor-to-mayor agreements or Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) that help promote cultural cooperation between two jurisdictions.

Friendship city relationships are often utilized as the first stage in exploring a potential sister city partnership. These relationships help the two cities determine if each is prepared to commit to a long-term relationship that provides a more robust exchange of cultural, educational, trade, and economic development knowledge that may even solidify into specific or permanent projects or regular activities beneficial to the two cities.

Sister Cities International (SCI), a nonprofit international membership association headquartered in Washington, D.C., responsible for recognizing and supporting sister city relationships between U.S. communities and their international counterparts, and the organization under which most international exchange programs operate, defines a sister city relationship as “a long-term, cooperative relationship between two cities in different countries through which cultural, educational, business, and technical exchanges take place. It is formalized when two mayors (or highest elected/appointed officials) sign a memorandum of understanding establishing a sister city relationship.” SCI further posits that activities are usually organized and implemented by volunteers, local institutions, and municipal employees and that a city may have any number of sister cities.

Cities can enter into sister city relationships with other jurisdictions without membership in the SCI. However, membership in SCI has become standard practice for a majority of cities entering into this

type of commitment due to the services SCI provides (described below).

For information regarding the sister city activities of other local jurisdictions such as the City of Santa Clara or the City of Mountain please review Attachment 4.

Membership in Sister Cities International (SCI)

SCI staff provides assistance and expertise to its member cities to help strengthen their sister city organizations by sharing best practices, providing grants and funding opportunities, assisting with protocols and procedures related to other cities, advocating for sister city organizations and international exchange, organizing conferences and meetings, publishing a printed online directory of sister cities, networking among its membership, and providing additional resources including certificates, discounted travel insurance, visa consultations, webinars, and toolkits, as well as other benefits.

At Sunnyvale's current population of 148,028 (5/11/15), an annual membership in SCI would be \$970. Additionally, SCI reevaluates dues rates on an annual basis and decides whether or not to increase dues based on a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). A 0 to 3 percent increase is expected in 2017; subject to approval from SCI's board of directors.

When a new member city joins SCI, they pay membership dues and enter SCI's "Cities Seeking Cities" program, wherein SCI's membership department works closely with new members, providing a variety of support services to help them find a partner city abroad.

In a case where an applying city already has a sister city in mind, as with Sunnyvale and Izuka, participation in SCI's "Cities Seeking Cities" program would be less about identifying a sister city than providing assistance in outreach to embassies, the State Department, foreign municipalities, and all other appropriate parties in forming the already intended partnership. While the program is not required, it is recommended by SCI.

The new member city is not billed for membership dues again until it has established at least one sister city partnership, and there is no limit to the number of sister city partnerships a city may have. Additionally, only one of the partnering cities needs to hold a SCI membership in order to receive SCI's benefits; Sunnyvale's membership would apply to Sunnyvale and any potential future sister cities.

Sister city partnerships are considered formal by SCI when signed by the highest elected officials of each participating jurisdiction. These partnerships are considered indefinite unless terminated (an uncommon occurrence according to SCI) or moved into an emeritus (inactive) status.

SCI does not set up or dictate requirements for a local sister city program; these aspects are left up to the discretion of the participating jurisdictions. However, typical programs usually include delegation and student exchanges (for which SCI is a J1 visa sponsor). Local programs may also include such activities as festivals, tradeshow, health missions, or other events.

SCI also hosts an annual conference and helps facilitate various annual youth programs, including a High School Homestay Exchange Program, an Annual Youth Leadership Summit, and a Young Artists and Authors Showcase. See Attachment 9 for further details about these events.

Vision and Commitment of the Sunnyvale Sister City Association (SSCA)

Staff engaged with the SSCA through the course of this study. Continuing to pursue its original objective, SSCA is seeking to formalize the current relationship to a formal Sister City status. A summary list of potential actions desired by the SCCA is presented as Attachment 8. Staff evaluated the options and incorporated them into this report and the alternatives as appropriate.

Options for Expansion of Sunnyvale's International Friendly Exchange Relations Program

There are two elements involved in exploring potential expansion of the current program with the City of Iizuka:

- 1) Type of Agreement (or what the new agreement will be called) - Staff has outlined three options for the Types of Agreements for Council consideration; presented as Options A through C below.
- 2) Resources to Increase Engagement (or the level of initial funding to dedicate to the chosen type of agreement) - Staff has outlined examples of the types of activities that could be pursued with increased funding (Attachment 13).

1) Types of Agreements

Below is a list of various types of international program agreements to choose from.

OPTION A: Maintain Status Quo; Reaffirm Existing Friendly Exchange Relations (FER) Policy

Keep the existing Friendly Exchange Relations (FER) policy, with no cost impact to the City.

OPTION B: Rename Council Policy 7.3.24 From International Friendly Exchange Relations to Sister City Program

This option would simply rename the current Sunnyvale program so that it is more recognizable and defined (versus the current informal Friendly Exchange Relations (FER) policy/program. This option would save the City of Sunnyvale from paying \$970 annually to be a member of Sister Cities International; however, it would satisfy the desire of the City of Iizuka to be recognized as a 'Sister City.'

OPTION C: Authorize Membership in Sister Cities International (SCI) and Establish a Sister City Relationship

This option would change the current informal Friendly Exchange Relations (FER) policy/program to a formal sister city policy/program, including membership in Sister Cities International (SCI). Annual membership in Sister Cities International (SCI) for Sunnyvale's current population is \$970.

2) Resources to Increase Engagement:

Council has demonstrated an on-going interest in relationships with international cities through the years. These relationships can increase awareness of the global community, foster economic development and cultural exchange, and heighten understanding of the world marketplace.

Although the Council has also consistently determined that the City's friendly exchange relation agreements should use minimal resources, it is important to note that the relationship with Iizuka has been unlike the City's previous, relatively inactive relationships. There is currently a very active community presence that has remained keenly and diligently interested in continuing and expanding Sunnyvale's involvement with Iizuka, hopeful of culmination in a formal sister city relationship. For

this reason, the Council could easily justify an expansion of this particular relationship to one that is more formal and utilizes some additional resources.

Council could provide an initial, modest amount of seed funding to begin an increased level of engagement for the next fiscal year. In the meantime, the Iizuka City Council would have time to review and potentially endorse the Sunnyvale action. Iizuka staff expects their report would be presented sometime between September and December 2016. Depending on the action of the Iizuka Council, the Sunnyvale Council could then choose to revisit the benefits and costs afforded by a more expanded international program as part of the annual budget process.

Increased engagement can initially be achieved utilizing simple and low cost actions. Attachment 13 includes descriptions and estimated costs of these examples:

- Authorize the City Manager to Dedicate Additional Staff Hours in Support of International Relationship Activities
- City Delegation Visits to Iizuka and Additional Visits from Iizuka Representatives
- Increase Gifts to Visiting Iizuka Representatives
- City-Hosted Events
- Provide Additional Funding to the Sunnyvale Sister City Association (SSCA)
- Participation in Sister Cities International (SCI) Conferences and Events
- Enhancement of Japanese Theme at Braly Park

Summary and Next Steps

City staff will update 7.3.24: *International Friendly Exchange Relations*, as necessary, based on the actions taken by Council. Additionally, as previously noted, *friendship city* relationships are often utilized as the first stage in exploring a potential sister city partnership; this two-step approach worked well for the City in evaluating the community interest with the City of Iizuka. Staff will memorialize this approach as current practice. A draft of the revised policy will be presented for Council review via the Biweekly report.

Sunnyvale staff will inform Council in early 2017 to report on the actions of the City of Iizuka and the actions taken by the City Manager regarding the level of engagement.

FISCAL IMPACT

Based on the different examples presented in Attachment 13, the fiscal impact will vary. Each example identified will have some impact as noted; the magnitude will vary based on the amount of funding authorized by Council to support the type of program implemented. Council could authorize use of the Council Service Level Set-Aside fund (\$100,000 available in FY 2016/17) or the Budget Stabilization Fund for potential costs between \$1,000 and \$10,000.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall, at the Sunnyvale Senior Center, Community Center and Department of Public Safety; and by making the agenda and report available at the Sunnyvale Public Library, the Office of the City Clerk and on the City's website.

ALTERNATIVES

Types of Agreements:

1. **Option A:** Maintain Status Quo; Reaffirm Existing Friendly Exchange Relations (FER) Policy
2. **Option B:** Rename Council Policy 7.3.24 from International Friendly Exchange Relations to Sister City Program
3. **Option C:** Authorize Membership in Sister Cities International (SCI) and Establish a Sister City relationship and authorize the Mayor to sign a Sister City Agreement with the City of Iizuka, Japan, in a form approved by the City Attorney

Resources to Increase Engagement:

4. **Authorize funding of up to \$1000** to be used towards increased engagement and authorize the City Manager to determine which activities will be initiated using the funding.
5. **Authorize funding of up to \$5000** to be used towards increased engagement and authorize the City Manager to determine which activities will be initiated using the funding.
6. **Authorize funding of up to \$10,000** to be used towards increased engagement authorize the City Manager to determine which activities will be initiated using the funding.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Authorize Membership in Sister Cities International (SCI) and Establish a Sister City Relationship and authorize the Mayor to sign a Sister City Agreement with the City of Iizuka, Japan, in a form approved by the City Attorney (Types of Agreements - Option C); Resources to Increase Engagement: Staff makes no recommendation.

Based on the established commitment by the community and the Sunnyvale Sister City Association, staff recommends that the Council formalize the relationship with the City of Iizuka by establishing a membership with Sister Cities International (Alternative 3, Option C).

Staff makes no recommendation on the amount of funding Council would approve for increased engagement; however, the Council should provide some level of resources to be dedicated compatible with the type of agreement authorized.

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Reviewed by: Walter C. Rossmann, Assistant City Manager

Approved by: Deanna J. Santana, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Study Issue Paper, OCM 16-01: Explore Expanding Friendship City Relationship with Iizuka, Japan to a Sister City Relationship
2. Friendly Exchange Relations Agreement Between Iizuka, Japan and Sunnyvale, California
3. Iizuka, Japan Description and History
4. Sister City Activities of Other Local Jurisdictions
5. Letter from Mayor Saito to Mayor Hendricks
6. *RTC 03-097: Explore Establishment of an International Exchange Program (IEP) Similar to a Sister Cities Program* <<http://archive.sunnyvale.ca.gov/Portals/0/Archive/RTC/2003/20030401/03->

[097.pdf?timestamp=1462481514600](#)> (Hyperlink Attachment)

7. *RTC 07-215: International Friendly Exchange Relations (Council Policy Issue)*
<<http://archive.sunnyvale.ca.gov/Portals/0/Archive/RTC/2007/20070717/07-215.pdf>> (Hyperlink Attachment)
8. Summary of Meeting with Sunnyvale City Staff and the Sunnyvale Sister City Association, February 29, 2016.
9. Sister Cities International Conferences and Events
10. Council Policy 7.2.4: *Relationships with Outside Groups* (Hyperlink Attachment)
11. Council Policy 7.3.23: *Naming/Renaming Parks & Recreation Facilities* (Hyperlink Attachment)
12. Council Policy 7.3.24: *International Friendly Exchange Relations* (Hyperlink Attachment)
13. Examples of Increased Levels of Engagement