



## **Sister Cities – New City Committee Meeting**

Thursday, August 28, 2025

3:30pm – 5:00pm

Virtual Meeting: [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_dSifDXfMTmmWAN78s98VvA](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_dSifDXfMTmmWAN78s98VvA)

### **I. Call to Order**

### **II. Discussion:** Update on Friendship City Relationship with Huehuetenango, Guatemala and Feasibility of Sister City Designation

- a. Historical Background and Partners
- b. Current State of Affairs
- c. Request from Huehuetenango
- d. New Sister City Affiliation Policy (Section B.6)
- e. Charlottesville and Huehuetenango Memorandum of Understanding
- f. Recommendation to the Sister Cities Commission
- g. Next Steps / Action Items

### **III. Adjournment**

Individuals with disabilities who require assistance or special arrangements to participate in the public meeting may call (434) 987-1267 or submit a request via email to [ada@charlottesville.gov](mailto:ada@charlottesville.gov). The City of Charlottesville requests that you provide 48 hours' notice so that proper arrangements may be made.

For technical issues with streaming the meeting, please call (434) 970-3113.

**RESOLUTION INITIATING SISTER CITY PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN  
CHARLOTTESVILLE, USA AND HUEHUETENANGO, GUATEMALA**

**WHEREAS**, the Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission (CSSC) has acted on a desire by community members to pursue establishment of a Spanish-speaking Sister City for Charlottesville;

**WHEREAS**, as the result of a thorough selection process involving substantial public input, the CSSC has recommended Huehuetenango, Guatemala as Charlottesville's newest Sister City;

**WHEREAS**, Huehuetenango and Charlottesville enjoy numerous similarities and strong support from individuals and organizations in both communities in sustaining a Sister City partnership;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Charlottesville City Council that a Sister City partnership between Charlottesville and Huehuetenango is hereby initiated;

**AND, FURTHERMORE**, that representatives from Charlottesville and Huehuetenango shall hereby work to identify potential areas for collaboration between the cities, with the goal of crafting a Memorandum of Understanding formalizing the terms and goals of a Sister City partnership by the end of 2021 for official approval by both city governments and for submission to Sister Cities International.

Approved by Council  
December 7, 2020



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Kyna Thomas, CMC  
Clerk of Council

**Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission**  
**Affiliating with a New Sister City**

**Purpose**

The purpose of a sister city is to promote understanding and foster relationships among individuals, communities, and cities of the world through cultural, economic, educational and humanitarian activities.

The Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission seeks a reasoned and systematic approach to establish sister city partnerships between Charlottesville, Virginia and cities in other parts of the world.

Therefore, the Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission adopts these criteria and procedures for selecting and affiliating with a new Sister City.

**Criteria**

Charlottesville can have a Sister City relationship with another city for various reasons including, but not limited to historical, governmental, educational, or humanitarian. The ideal Sister City relationship is based on two cities having similarities on which activities and exchanges can be built. The goal of the Questions for Consideration, pages 5 to 7, is to help review these similarities and the key criteria for selecting a future sister city.

The key criteria for selection include:

- Citizens in both cities demonstrating an interest in affiliating
- Governments of both cities demonstrating an interest in affiliating
- An advocate group interested in supporting the relationship between the two cities
- The ability of citizens of both cities to communicate with each other
- The ability of citizens of both cities to travel to the other respective city
- Capability that activities between the two cities can be developed in numerous areas such as cultural, educational, medical, governmental, economic, and humanitarian
- Evidence that the relationship would be sustainable overtime.

## Procedure for Affiliating with a Sister City

### Overview

Affiliation with a new Sister City may be established by using the following procedure in four phases A) Initiating a Request, B) Commission's Response, C) Council's Response, and d) Official Affiliation.

### A. Initiating a Request

- 1) An individual, group, organization, or government body, hereinafter referred to as the *Advocate Group*, establishes contacts within the proposed sister city to determine interest in a sister city relationship. A visit, at the sole expense of the *Advocate Group* to the proposed city is optimal, but not required.
- 2) The *Advocate Group* researches the proposed new city and submits a written proposal to the Commission addressing all issues identified in Questions for Selecting a Sister City.
- 3) The Commission reviews the proposal. If accepted, the *Advocate Group* shall make a presentation to the Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission. The presentation must demonstrate:
  - a. How the proposed city meets the key criteria for selection
  - b. Sufficient volunteers willing to take responsibility for establishing a relationship (i.e. a list of individuals, local organizations and institutions that support the partnership)
  - c. The Advocate Group's willingness to fund-raise for the maintenance of the partnership
  - d. Sufficient proof of the long term commitment of the Advocate group to maintain active exchanges and activity in the partnership (i.e. ?)

### B. Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission Response

- 1) The Commission contacts Sister Cities International to inquire if there are any impediments to "Sistering" with the proposed city. The advocate group shall perform an outline internet search to gather more detailed information about the proposed city, including direct contact with the US Department of State and the Embassy or Consulate of the proposed Sister City. This information is then presented to the Commission. If another U.S. has a sister city relationship with the proposed city, the Commission will need to determine if the existing U.S. city is willing to enter into a cooperative agreement with Charlottesville to share the same international partner.
- 2) The Commission shall solicit from the public its testimony about the proposed "Sistering" by offering a public comment opportunity at a meeting before voting. After public comments have been received, if any, the Commission shall deliberate, and vote for, or against, pursuing the city recommend by the *Advocate Group*.

- a. If the vote is negative, a letter shall be written to the *Advocate Group* explaining why the intended relationship was not approved and what, if anything, might be proved to obtain approval of the relationship.
  - b. If the vote is affirmative, the commission reports in writing its recommendation to pursue the new city to Charlottesville City Council. The City Manager is asked to send an official information packet to the Mayor of the proposed city, along with a letter asking for the establishment of a "Friendship City" relationship in which the cities develop a relationship to last at least 3 years. During this trial period the cities get to know each other and determine if they want to enter into the long-term Sister Cities relationship.
- 3) If the response from the Mayor of the proposed city is positive, the commission votes to approve the "Friendship City" relationship and appoints a Chair and New City Committee charged with developing and managing the new "Friendship City" relationship.
  - 4) The New City Committee recruits grass roots volunteers with broad community representation and gathers letters of support from local organizations, businesses, and institutions.
  - 5) There shall be at least one exploratory visit between cities; ideally, the delegations should include at least one elected official.
  - 6) Not less than three years from the date the commission approved a "Friendship Relationship", the New City Committee can make a formal presentation to the Commission recommending the establishment of a new "Sister City Relationship" and requesting that the Commission seek approval from Charlottesville City Council to "sister".
    - a. The presentation must include:
      1. an overview of the relationship during the initial period as "Friendship Cities",
      2. demonstration of sufficient volunteers willing to take responsibility for managing the relationship and assisting in fundraising,
      3. letters of support from local organizations, businesses, and institutions,
      4. a proposal for exchanges/programs/activities to be executed over the next two years by the City Committee including a budget for these activities.
    - b. If the proposal is approved by the Commission, the Commission will go before City Council with a presentation asking permission to enter into a formal "Sister City" relationship.
    - c. If the Commission does not approve the request to "sister" then they must vote to either continue as "Friendship Cities" or end the relationship.

### **C. Charlottesville City Council Response**

Charlottesville Council votes to approve or reject the recommendation from the Commission to enter into a new Sister City relationship.

- a) If the decision is positive, Charlottesville City Council adopts a Resolution declaring their intent to "sister" with the proposed city and the counterpart governing body of the new sister city also adopts a similar resolution of intent.
- b) If the decision is negative, the Commission must vote to either continue or end the "Friendship City" relationship.

### **D. Official Affiliation / Signing Ceremony**

- 1) During an official visit (in either city), the Mayor or top elected official available from each city, signs a Sister City Agreement. It is strongly encouraged that there be reciprocal visits by official delegations, including at least one elected official from each City within one year of the signing of the Sister City Agreement.
- 2) All official documents should be written in English and in the language of the counterpart community. Both communities should receive a signed set of the official documents in both languages for their records.
- 3) One copy of all official letters and resolutions should be sent to Sister Cities International, the U.S. Embassy in the country of the sister city and the partner country's embassy in the U.S.

## Questions for Selecting a Sister City

**Any *Advocate Group* requesting the Sister Cities Commission to consider a new sister city must provide a written proposal that addresses the following questions:**

### **A. General Factors**

1. Does Charlottesville already have a sister city in the proposed city's country?
2. Does the proposed city have other sister cities, including a U.S. city partner? (It is preferred that the proposed city not have another sister city relationship in the U.S. However, if the proposed city already has an official sister city affiliation with another U.S. city, this should not be an impediment to pursuing a partnership, as long as all parties agree.)
3. What is the demography and ethnic diversity of the proposed sister city?
4. What is the geography and environment in the proposed sister city? (e.g. water, parks, rivers, bays, harbors, etc).
5. Does the proposed city have an established contact person within its governmental structure or an established liaison group to work with Charlottesville? If so, please give contact information (name, address, phone, and email).
6. If the proposed sister city has sister city relationships with other cities, how successful are these relationships?
7. Are there Charlottesville residents who are nationals from the country being considered?
8. Are there Charlottesville residents who speak the language of the proposed city/country, available for translating and interpreting?
9. Identify various types of exchanges that could be executed with the city/citizens.

## **B. Cultural, Civic and Educational Factors**

1. What are the cultural institutions of the proposed city? (e.g. art galleries, museums, theaters, symphony, musical groups, dance studios, libraries, etc.)?
2. Does the proposed city have local civic organizations (e.g. Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, Scouts, ethnic clubs, etc.)?
3. Does the proposed city have a formal communication system (e.g. newspapers, TV and radio stations, etc.)?
4. Does the proposed city have amateur and professional sports - youth and adult (e.g. soccer, baseball, hockey, basketball, tennis, water sports, golf, lacrosse, etc.)?
5. Does the proposed city have educational institutions (e.g. pre-school, elementary, secondary, post-secondary, technical, medical schools, law schools, etc.)?
6. Does the proposed city have hospitals, health facilities, and social services?
7. Is the language of the proposed city taught in Charlottesville public schools, local private schools, local language clubs, private language schools, and/or universities?
8. Is English taught in their educational system?
9. What is the history of the proposed sister city? Are there any ties to the U.S. and/or Charlottesville?
10. Who/What are some of the major historical individuals or events that have occurred in the proposed City?

## **C. Economic and Commercial Factors**

1. Identify the key industries (e.g. shipping, banking, military, tourism, medical research, biotechnology, manufacturing, environmental conservation).
2. Describe the past, current and projected economic conditions, initiatives, and development opportunities.
3. What is the trade and investment climate?
4. Does the proposed city have a Chamber of Commerce?
5. Does the proposed city have an airport or airline service?
6. Does the proposed city have practical training opportunities (e.g. work force training, hotel management, information technology, culinary institutes)?
7. Identify the tourism opportunities --numbers of tourists annually, hotels, festivals, attractions.

#### **D. Political and Governmental Factors**

1. Is there a diplomatic presence in the U.S. and in the country under consideration?
2. What are the protocol resources (e.g. Embassies, Consulates)?
3. Does the U.S. have Visa regulations on the proposed country? What is the ease of securing visas?
4. Describe the political climate of the proposed Sister City.
5. What is the governmental structure of the proposed City?

# GuateMaya Foundation and Charlottesville Sister City Commission

## **Background:** Charlottesville and Huehuetenango

The city of Charlottesville, VA and the city of Huehuetenango entered a Friendship Cities relationship on July 1, 2021. The friendship classification is an exploratory status as part of Sister Cities International. The sister cities' relationships in Charlottesville are directed by the Charlottesville Sister City Commission (CSCC).

The City of Charlottesville is an active member of Sister Cities International, a nonprofit citizen diplomacy network that creates and strengthens partnerships between U.S. and international communities. This network strives to build global cooperation at the municipal level, promote cultural understanding and stimulate economic development. Appointed by Council, the CSCC as a volunteer-based organization promotes understanding and fosters relationships between citizens and organizations in the Charlottesville area and our sister cities through cultural, economic, educational, and humanitarian activities.

The Mayor of Huehue and his delegation of nine persons visited Charlottesville in November 2022. The Mayor of Huehue has issued an invitation for the Mayor of Charlottesville to lead a delegation to visit Huehuetenango in or after October 2025.

The GuateMaya Alliance was one of the Key supporting organizations promoting the establishment of this relationship and remains the city of Charlottesville major resource in our exploration of the city of Huehue.

GuateMaya Alliance (formerly known as Ixtatan Foundation) is a productive Nonprofit Organization founded twenty-three years ago, soon after the Guatemala Peace Accords were signed in 1996.

The Foundation operates from Guatemala in the department of Huehuetenango and is based in Charlottesville, VA. GuateMaya Alliance supports the power and capacity of Guatemalan youth to foster participatory pathways to community well-being. In 23 years, it has gone from school infrastructure to innovative education models to graduating the town of San Mateo Ixtatán first youth from high school and college.

The Foundation initially focused on the population of northern Huehuetenango which is primarily of Mayan descent, a demographic group in Guatemala that, despite being more than half the total population, has been systematically discriminated against and excluded from the national education system. Indigenous students must learn in a foreign language (Spanish vs their native Mayan) and most of the country does not have access to middle or high schools so many only achieve 3rd or 6th grade in their communities.

Lack of education opportunities is a key reason why Mayan youth make the excruciating decision to travel undocumented to the U.S. in search of better opportunities for themselves and their families. GuateMaya Alliance focuses on these indigenous people in rural communities in the Western Highlands of Guatemala and more specifically empowering youth from underprivileged communities in Huehuetenango and other rural areas of Guatemala through education.

The foundation has taken on the responsibility of organizing the upcoming Mayoral delegation visit in October 2025.

25 / 09 / 2025 Follow-up to telephone call with Hector Mendez (PR for Huehue) and Elias Alonzo.

¡Buenas tardes, Héctor!

Gracias por la llamada de esta tarde. Para impulsar nuestra relación, necesitamos definir mejor nuestros propósitos para hermanarnos... ¿Qué beneficios obtendrá Huehue? ¿Por qué desea Huehue hermanarse? ¿Cuáles son las bases y las expectativas de Huehue? Tomaré sus respuestas junto con las de Charlottesville y elaboraré un acuerdo formal (lo que llamamos Memorando de Entendimiento) que los alcaldes podrán firmar durante nuestra visita de octubre. Necesito su opinión a más tardar el mediodía del jueves. Muchas gracias.

Además, tenga en cuenta los dos últimos párrafos de mi solicitud de marzo de 2023 en esta misma línea de conversaciones.

Es muy difícil imaginar que en octubre se cumplirán dos años desde la visita de Huehue a Charlottesville, y aún más desde mi visita allí. Personalmente, estoy muy emocionado por regresar.

Edward

Texts from Monday 25 August 2025

English translation: Follow-up to telephone call with Hector Mendez (PR for Huehue) and Elias Alonzo.

Good afternoon, Hector!

Thank you for the call this afternoon. To further our relationship, we need to better define our goals for the partnership... What benefits will Huehue gain? Why does Huehue want to partner? What are Huehue's foundations and expectations? I will take your responses along with those from Charlottesville and develop a formal agreement (what we call a Memorandum of Understanding) that the mayors can sign during our October visit. I need your input by noon on Thursday. Thank you very much.

Also, please note the last two paragraphs of my March 2023 request in this same line of conversation.

It's hard to imagine that October will mark two years since Huehue's visit to Charlottesville, and even longer since my visit there. Personally, I'm very excited to return.

Edward

Texts from Monday 25 August 2025

## La Aportes de Huehuetenango para el MDE

La Municipalidad de Huehuetenango extiende un cordial saludo a la ciudad de Charlottesville, Virginia, con el sincero deseo de fortalecer lazos de amistad, cooperación y entendimiento entre nuestras comunidades.

Reconocemos la importancia del hermanamiento como un puente de intercambio cultural, turístico y educativo que permitirá a nuestros pueblos compartir experiencias, conocimientos y valores.

En este marco, presentamos las primeras líneas de un posible acuerdo de hermanamiento, que será posteriormente ampliado y validado por el señor alcalde municipal Gustavo Cano, con el propósito de construir una relación que beneficie a ambas ciudades y que promueva el desarrollo mutuo, el respeto a nuestras identidades y el acercamiento entre nuestros ciudadanos.

### **¿Qué beneficios obtendrá Huehuetenango?**

**Impulso al turismo:** La promoción conjunta con Charlottesville permitirá atraer visitantes de Estados Unidos hacia Huehuetenango, lo que dinamizará la economía local, hoteles, restaurantes, transporte, artesanías y guías turísticos.

**Fortalecimiento cultural:** Los intercambios de música, danza, gastronomía y arte abrirán espacios de proyección para artistas y grupos culturales huehuetecos, mostrando la riqueza de su identidad.

**Desarrollo educativo:** Se fortalecerá el aprendizaje del idioma inglés en estudiantes y docentes, lo que incrementará oportunidades académicas y laborales. Además, la Biblioteca Municipal podrá crecer con apoyo, capacitación y donaciones, beneficiando a niños, jóvenes y adultos.

**Intercambio de experiencias:** Los programas de hermanamiento permitirán compartir buenas prácticas en gestión municipal, organización comunitaria, medio ambiente y desarrollo social.

Posicionamiento internacional: Huehuetenango se proyectará como una ciudad con apertura a la cooperación internacional, lo que fortalecerá su imagen y redes de colaboración.

### **¿Por qué desea Huehuetenango hermanarse?**

Porque comparte con Charlottesville el interés en fortalecer los lazos culturales, educativos y turísticos como herramientas de desarrollo comunitario.

Porque busca generar un puente de entendimiento y amistad entre ambas comunidades, promoviendo el respeto, la solidaridad y el aprendizaje mutuo.

Porque ve en el hermanamiento una oportunidad de abrir nuevas puertas a la cooperación internacional, que impulsen proyectos concretos en beneficio de la población.

Porque desea que su riqueza cultural (marimba, danzas, gastronomía, historia y tradiciones mayas) sea conocida y reconocida más allá de sus fronteras.

Porque considera que el intercambio turístico y académico puede transformar la vida de jóvenes, emprendedores, artistas y educadores locales.

### **¿Cuáles son las bases y las expectativas de Huehuetenango?**

Bases del hermanamiento:

La cooperación en tres pilares fundamentales: turismo, cultura y educación.

La disposición a trabajar en intercambios recíprocos que sean inclusivos y sostenibles.

El compromiso de las autoridades municipales, instituciones educativas, bibliotecas, artistas, organizaciones civiles y sector privado.

El respeto y la valoración de la diversidad cultural como eje central del hermanamiento.

## **Expectativas de Huehuetenango:**

Recibir delegaciones de Charlottesville para conocer la riqueza cultural, arqueológica y natural de la región.

Facilitar el intercambio de estudiantes, docentes y artistas que fortalezcan lazos entre ambas ciudades.

Que la Biblioteca Municipal se convierta en un centro de intercambio de conocimiento, con apoyo en formación, materiales y conectividad internacional.

Impulsar programas conjuntos de enseñanza del inglés y del español como segunda lengua, en beneficio de estudiantes de ambas ciudades.

Contar con un plan de acción anual que dé seguimiento a proyectos turísticos, culturales y educativos de manera organizada.

Construir un puente de amistad que trascienda generaciones, en el que la ciudadanía de ambas ciudades se sienta parte activa.

Agradecemos desde ya sus observaciones

Atentamente

Lic. Héctor Méndez  
Relaciones Públicas  
Municipalidad de Huehuetenango

## Huehuetenango's Contributions to the MDE

The Municipality of Huehuetenango extends its cordial greetings to the city of Charlottesville, Virginia, with the sincere desire to strengthen the bonds of friendship, cooperation, and understanding between our communities.

We recognize the importance of twinning as a bridge for cultural, tourism, and educational exchange that will allow our peoples to share experiences, knowledge, and values.

Within this framework, we present the first outlines of a possible twinning agreement, which will later be expanded and validated by Mayor Gustavo Cano, with the goal of building a relationship that benefits both cities and promotes mutual development, respect for our identities, and closer ties between our citizens.

### **What benefits will Huehuetenango receive?**

**Boosting tourism:** The joint promotion with Charlottesville will attract visitors from the United States to Huehuetenango, boosting the local economy, hotels, restaurants, transportation, crafts, and tour guides.

**Cultural strengthening:** Exchanges of music, dance, gastronomy, and art will open up opportunities for Huehuetenango artists and cultural groups, showcasing the richness of their identity.

**Educational Development:** English language learning will be strengthened for students and teachers, which will increase academic and employment opportunities. Additionally, the Municipal Library will be able to grow with support, training, and donations, benefiting children, youth, and adults.

**Exchange of experiences:** Twinning programs will allow for the sharing of best practices in municipal management, community organization, the environment, and social development.

**International positioning:** Huehuetenango will be projected as a city open to international cooperation, which will strengthen its image and collaboration networks.

## **Why does Huehuetenango want to become a sister city?**

Because it shares with Charlottesville an interest in strengthening cultural, educational, and tourism ties as tools for community development.

Because it seeks to build a bridge of understanding and friendship between both communities, promoting respect, solidarity, and mutual learning.

Because he sees twinning as an opportunity to open new doors to international cooperation, promoting concrete projects for the benefit of the population.

Because it wants its cultural wealth (marimba, dance, gastronomy, history and Mayan traditions) to be known and recognized beyond its borders.

Because he believes that tourism and academic exchanges can transform the lives of local youth, entrepreneurs, artists, and educators.

## **What are the foundations and expectations of Huehuetenango?**

Bases of twinning:

Cooperation on three fundamental pillars: tourism, culture, and education.

The willingness to work in reciprocal exchanges that are inclusive and sustainable.

The commitment of municipal authorities, educational institutions, libraries, artists, civil society organizations, and the private sector.

Respect and appreciation for cultural diversity as the central axis of twinning.

### **Expectations for Huehuetenango:**

Receive delegations from Charlottesville to learn about the region's cultural, archaeological, and natural wealth.

Facilitate the exchange of students, teachers, and artists that strengthen ties between both cities.

That the Municipal Library becomes a knowledge exchange center, with support for training, materials, and international connectivity.

Promote joint programs for teaching English and Spanish as a second language, benefiting students in both cities.

Have an annual action plan that tracks tourism, cultural, and educational projects in an organized manner.

To build a bridge of friendship that transcends generations, in which the citizens of both cities feel an active part.

We appreciate your comments in advance.

Sincerely

Mr. Hector Mendez  
Public relations  
Municipality of Huehuetenango

# Huehuetenango

**Charlottesville's**

**Friendship City**



# **Presentation to the Charlottesville City Council - May 15, 2023**

## **Purpose:**

- A. To share the background, status and timeline for developing our partnership with the city of Huehuetenango, Guatemala.**
  
- A. To submit for approval, a resolution to invite the Mayor of Huehuetenango and his delegation to explore the City of Charlottesville.**
  
- A. To communicate the major milestones / dates in the Sister City Timeline.**

## **Background: Friendship City Huehuetenango**

**The formal process leading to Friendship and Sister Cities began December 7, 2020 with with the approval of a resolution by the Charlottesville City Council initiating the partnership between Charlottesville, VA and Huehuetenango, Guatemala. Additionally, the following letters were issued launching the relationship.**

**Letter from the Charlottesville City Manager, Chip Boyles, inviting Huehuetenango to form a partnership with Charlottesville as set forth by the Sister Cities International beginning as “Friendship Cities” and moving to draft a formal Memorandum of Understanding to be signed by both our governments - Dated Friday, 19 February, 2021**

## **Background: Friendship City Huehuetenango**

**The formal process leading to Friendship and Sister Cities began July 1, 2021 after at the beginning of the year following receipt of a response Huehuetenango mayor, Senor Gustavo Cano, accepting the invitation to form a partnership with Charlottesville (MAY 2021)**

# **Background: Friendship City Huehuetenango**

**The world wide pandemic, beginning in 2020, imposed restrictions throughout 2021 creating barriers, obstacles and other limitations to standard friendship opportunities.**

**We were only able to effectively begin the mutual learning process this past October when we began collaborating, with the help of Ixtatan Foundation, to plan an initial visit to Huehuetenango by a member of the Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission.**

**This visit took place in February 2023 and provided the first person to person contact between the cities. Needless to say, we have not progressed as far as would have been desirable in understanding our mutual expectations and wishes surrounding a friendship relationship.**

## **First Step: A visit to Huehuetenango**

**Working closely with the Ixtatan Foundation, who initially sponsored the city of Hue, we were able to organize an official visit to Huehuetenango by a member of the Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission. This visit took place in February 2023. I was the lone member of the Charlottesville Delegation along with two parties from the Ixtatan Foundation.**

**The visit was given a lot of local press coverage and I was able to meet most of the key players including the Mayor, the Sister Cities Commissioners, members of the city council and key players from the education, commerce and social communities.**

## Next Step: A visit to Charlottesville

**The Mayor and Sister Cities Commissioners of Huehue have expressed a strong desire to make an exploratory visit to Charlottesville as soon as possible. Given the amount of preparatory work involved, the earliest we could envision receiving a delegation would be in the fall of 2023.**

**This event would closely follow the model of the 2018 visit by the Mayor of Besancon and his delegation to Charlottesville. About 10 - 12 weeks of planning went into making the 2018 event happen successfully.**

## **Next Step: A visit to Charlottesville**

**The intensive planning, coordination and scheduling required to create a final plan is time consuming and labor intensive. The planning part of the process will start after the City council approves the draft and issues an invitation.**

**As a first step, input will be gathered from all the Charlottesville stakeholders, including the members of the Sister Cities Commission as well as solicitation of additional input from the Huehue Sister Cities Commission.**

# **Memorandum of Understanding**

**During the visit, a preliminary Friendship Document will be signed by the cities. This document is a precursor to the Memorandum of Understanding that will be signed when we have mutually agreed to advance the relationship from the Friendship to the Sister stage.**

**It was initially expected that the foundation document supporting the partnership would be a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed by both cities. The collaboration required to create this type of documentation has only recently become possible.**

**The collaborative planning process required for the delegation's visit will at the same time provide the basis for a comprehensive MOU where we identify and agree to our mutual expectations and objectives for this partnership.**

## **Critical Steps / Timeline:**

- 1. Agreement by the Mayor and City Council to extend an invitation to Huehuetenango to visit Charlottesville. (This step also helps facilitate the issuance of VISAs required for their citizens to travel to the USA.)**
1. Identification and agreement of dates and participants: To be agreed upon and confirmed no later than June 06, 2023
1. Identification of **Budget and Fundraising Goals. Initial line item budget to be presented for review and pre-approval to Sister Cities Commission on June 6, 2023.**

## **Critical Steps / Timeline:**

**4. Final list of activities - completed by July 30, 2023.**

**5. Organize housing, transportation, translation services, venue locations, volunteers, etc.**

**6. Due to delays caused by the worldwide Pandemic, the initial goal of Creation of the MOU before the end of 2021 was not feasible, this goal is expected to be realized no later than July 1, 2024.**

**7. Submission of the MOU to the Sister Cities International Organization after it has been formalized and signed.**

## **Critical Steps / Timeline:**

**8. The official visit will last approximately 5 days, to be scheduled between November 2023 and March, 2024.**

**9. No later than the Summer of 2024, three years after our initial invitation, we expect to be in a position to continue, advance or even end our partnership with Huehuetenango.**

**Edward A Herring**

**Charlottesville Sister City Commission**

**434 825 3649**

**[edherring@gmail.com](mailto:edherring@gmail.com)**

**May 18, 2023**



## Types of Affiliations

### Sister City Relationship

A Sister City relationship is formed when the mayor or highest elected official (or, if elections do not take place, highest appointed official) from a U.S. community and a community in another country or territory sign a formal agreement on behalf of their communities endorsing a **“sister city/sister cities” relationship. Sister city agreements shall be considered active/valid** unless otherwise indicated by one or both of the respective communities.

Sister Cities International shall formally recognize only those relationships by cities/members in good standing (i.e. who are current on membership dues) in its Membership Directory or on its website. However, Sister Cities International shall not assert as invalid or otherwise impugn the legitimacy of those relationships formed by non-members.

### Friendship City

A Friendship City or Friendship Cities **relationship is often formed by cities as a “stepping stone” to a more formal “Sister City” agreement. Typically Friendship City agreements are** referred to as such in the formal documents that are signed. Sister Cities International shall recognize Friendship City relationships by members in its Membership Directory and website.

As per Sister Cities International Board of Directors:

Sister Cities International will recognize a new sister cities affiliation between a U.S. and an international community, even though another affiliation may exist between that international community and a different U.S. community, only if a cooperative agreement among all involved communities is filed with Sister Cities International. If a cooperative agreement is denied, or no response to the request is received within a reasonable amount of time, Sister Cities International will recognize the partnership as a *friendship city* and it will be delineated as such with a symbol in the membership directories.

The cooperative agreement *must be sent by* the *Mayor/County Executive/Governor* of the requesting community, and *must be sent to* the *Mayor/County Executive/Governor* of each of the existing partnership communities. Although the *Mayor/County Executive/Governor* may request input from, or may be given input by, the sister cities program, it is up to the discretion of the *Mayor/County Executive/Governor* to sign the cooperative agreement. Although Sister Cities International will help with the cooperative agreement process, it is up to the requesting community to get the agreement signed. **Sister Cities International will not, in any way, force a community to “share” and sign the cooperative agreement.**

To place a relationship into **Emeritus** status, the mayor or highest elected official of the U.S. community 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 of 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.

If a community wishes to **terminate** a sister city relationship, then a letter from the mayor or highest elected official of the U.S. city should be sent to the mayor of the sister city. Sister Cities International should be informed of this action in writing by the mayor of the U.S. city and Sister Cities International will then remove the partnership from its directories and all lists of sister city programs. We do not recommend terminating a relationship simply because it is dormant. Many partnerships wax and wane over the years, and in many cases a dormant partnership may be reinvigorated by local members years after it has been inactive.

## General Guidelines

In order for a sister city/county/state partnership to be recognized by Sister Cities International (SCI), the two communities must sign formal documents which clearly endorse the link. This presumes several key items: that the U.S. community is already a member of SCI and has followed proper procedures (e.g. passed a city council resolution declaring the intent to twin with the specific city); that both communities share a mutual commitment to the relationship; and that both have secured the necessary support structure to build a lasting relationship. You should check with your local sister city program to see if they have any additional requirements before pursuing a sister city relationship.

SCI often refers to these agreements as a “Sister City Agreement” or “Memorandum of Understanding.” However, as the following examples show, the actual name and format of your documents is left up to you.

A few things to keep in mind as you draft your agreement:

- **Your 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.**
- **Don’t try to include everything you plan to do. Some specifics, like particular areas of interest or participating institutions are good to include. However, there’s no need to include all the programs you plan to do if it makes the document too lengthy or limits the scope of projects.** This is a formal document to establish the relationship; specific tasks, responsibilities, or other nuts-and-bolts text related to implementation or administration of the partnership can be expressed more fully in a separate memorandum between the respective sister city committees. Your partnership agreement is a historical document and should not be dated or limited by being aligned with very specific tasks.
- Work with your counterparts. Remember that this is signed by both cities. You should share drafts of your agreement with your international partners and solicit feedback on **what they’d like to see in the agreement. Be flexible to cultural or municipal priorities.**
- Ask your counterparts to translate the agreement if it is drafted in English. It is important for the citizens of your partner community to be able to read and understand the commitment their city has made. Have someone in your own community who



speaks that language check the foreign-language version to make sure it mirrors what you have in your own agreement.

- Keep it to one page. Ceremonial documents such as these partnership agreements work best if they can be posted in their entirety.
- Most sister city agreements include some acknowledgement of the founding principles of the sister city movement—to promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation.
- Consider using official letterhead and/or other embellishments such as city seals or logos to reflect your enhance the document. Sister city agreements are often posted at city hall or other municipal offices and should reflect their historical importance
- Look at other agreements your city has signed. These agreements may give you an idea of what is acceptable or possible, and they may be in an easily replicable format. If you cannot access older agreements please contact Sister Cities International, we may have them on file, although we do not have copies of all partnership agreements.
- Documents must be signed by the top elected official of both communities.
- Check with your mayor, city council, town clerk, et al. to make sure that the agreement is OK with them. The mayor is the one putting his or her name on the paper, and you **don't want to spend time developing an agreement which will never be signed.**
- Official documents are usually signed during a formal ceremony recognizing the partnership. Be sure both communities receive a signed set of the official documents for their records.
- Remember to send your signed agreement to Sister Cities International. After we receive your agreement we will post the relationship in the City Directory and make sure it is included in our Annual Membership Directory.

**Remember that each city's sister city program is independent and can impose requirements like the establishment of a committee, a review period, sustainability/funding plan, among others, before sanctioning a sister city agreement. Check with your local program or mayor's office to see if this is the case.**

On the following pages you'll find a series of partnership agreements to give you an idea of what is possible. While you should feel free to use some of the formatting and language, we encourage you to make your agreement your own and be creative with what you produce. If you are unsure about your agreement or want advice you can always solicit feedback by sending it to our Membership Director at [akaplan@sister-cities.org](mailto:akaplan@sister-cities.org) or contacting us at (202) 347-8630.



دائرة بلدية أبوظبي وتخطيط المدن  
ABU DHABI MUNICIPALITY & TOWN PLANNING

**AN AGREEMENT FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF  
SISTER CITIES RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN  
THE CITY OF ABU DHABI ( U. A.E)  
AND  
HOUSTON , TEXAS ( U.S.A)**

The Sister City Program, administered by Sister Cities International, was initiated By the President of the United States of America in 1956 to encourage greater Friendship and understanding between the United States and other nations through Direct personal contact; and

In order to foster those goals, the people of Abu Dhabi and Houston, in a gesture of Friendship and goodwill, agree to collaborate for the mutual benefit of their Communities by exploring education, economic and cultural opportunities.

Abu Dhabi and Houston, sharing a common interest in energy , technology and medicine, and the desire to promote mutual understanding among our citizens do hereby proclaim themselves Sister Cities beginning on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of March 2001, the date of Houston City Council resolution establishing the Sister City relationship became effective.

Signed on this 26 of October 2002, in duplicate in the Arabic and English Languages, both text being equally authentic.

**Sheikh Mohammed bin Butti Al Hamed**  
**Chairman of Abu Dhabi Municipality**  
**&Town Planning**

**Lee P. Brown**  
**Mayor of Houston**



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007

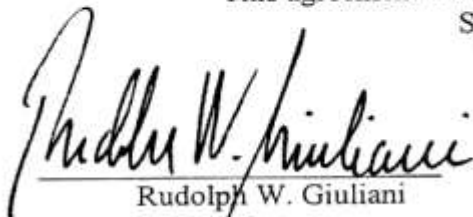
## **THE NEW YORK CITY-LONDON SISTER CITY PARTNERSHIP Memorandum of Understanding**


The Sister City partnership between New York City and London will foster mutually beneficial solutions to common challenges for these two great cosmopolitan entities. Consequently, the Sister City relationship between the two will be one of the most important in their network of global partnerships, as it strives to:

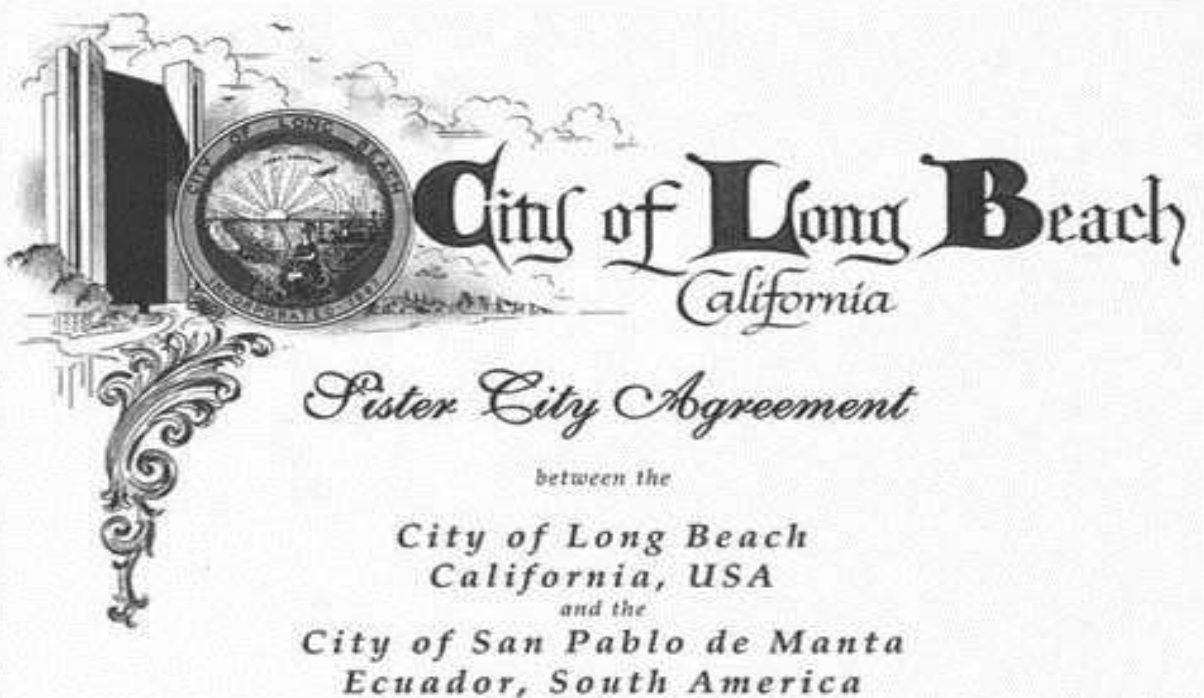
- Encourage and publicize existing exchanges between London and New York City so that they can flourish to benefit a wider cross-section of the citizens of both;
- Support and promote the development of new social, economic, academic and community programs to encourage both cities' citizens to share their experiences as a medium for learning from one another;
- Generate an improvement of the operation of the cities' various government agencies by serving as a conduit of information;
- Identify themes, common to both, that can generate new initiatives to further and nurture the increasingly powerful financial, social and cultural relationships between the cities;
- Promote key mayoral priorities relevant to both London and New York City;
- Provide financial or in kind support to community-led programs that advance the aims of the Sister City partnership;

With the above purposes in mind, the Mayor of the City of New York and the Mayor of London solemnly confirm that these two cities are united by an official partnership by the protocol of this Memorandum of Understanding.

This agreement will go into effect from the date of signatures.  
Signed in March of 2001

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rudolph W. Giuliani  
Mayor  
New York City

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Ken Livingstone  
Mayor  
London

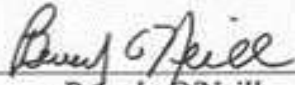


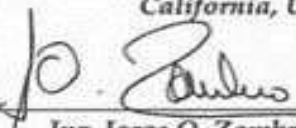
*In accordance with the authorization and approval expressed by the City of Long Beach, California, USA, and the City of San Pablo de Manta, Ecuador, South America, it is declared that a "Sister City Agreement" between the two cities is hereby established for the following purposes:*

- (1) to promote and expand the effective and mutually beneficial cooperation between the people of Long Beach and the people of San Pablo de Manta; and*
- (2) to promote international goodwill, understanding, and expanded business relations between the two cities and their respective nations by the exchange of people, ideas, and information in a wide variety of economic, social, cultural, municipal, environmental, professional, technical, youth, and other endeavors; and*
- (3) to foster and encourage charitable, scientific, trade and commerce, literary and educational activities between the two cities;*

*This Sister City Agreement shall be officially established and shall become effective when this document has been duly executed by the Mayor of Long Beach, California, USA, and the Mayor of San Pablo de Manta, Ecuador, South America.*



  
Beverly O'Neill  
Mayor, City of Long Beach  
California, USA

  
Ing. Jorge O. Zambrano Cedeño  
Mayor, City of San Pablo de Manta  
Ecuador, South America

Dated: September 19, 2000



## REAFFIRMATION OF SISTER CITIES DECLARATION

adopted by THE HONORABLE RICHARD M. DALEY  
MAYOR OF CHICAGO

and THE HONORABLE ZHANG RONGMAO  
MAYOR OF SHENYANG

ON

JUNE 5, 1995

*On this the tenth anniversary of the signing of a sister city agreement, in order to further the traditional links of friendship between Chicago and Shenyang and to reaffirm their mutual aspiration to work in unison for the benefit of their cities and nations, the Honorable Mayor Richard M. Daley, Mayor of the City of Chicago, and the Honorable Zhang Rongmao, Mayor of the City of Shenyang, on this fifth day of June 1995, do hereby acknowledge and reaffirm the sister cities agreement between the City of Chicago and the City of Shenyang.*

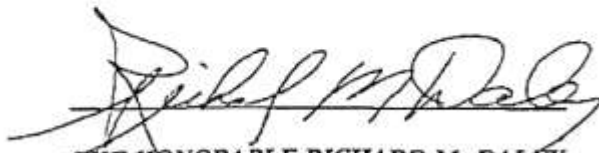
*The City of Chicago and the City of Shenyang on the basis of friendly cooperation, equality and mutual benefit will continue to develop a sister cities relationship to promote and broaden economic cooperation and cultural exchanges between the two cities.*

*The two cities do hereby declare their interest in exploring the establishment of business and trade relations between Chicago and Shenyang.*

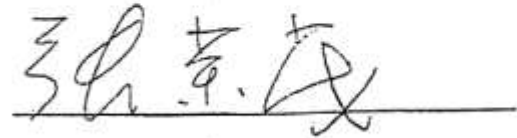
*In addition, exchanges will be promoted in the area of the arts such as exhibits, music, dance and other cultural activities.*

*In addition, exchanges will be promoted in education and the establishment of contacts within educational institutions encouraged.*

*In addition, we declare our intention to promote exchanges in such fields as science and technology, sports, health, youth and any areas that will contribute to the prosperity and the further development of friendship between the people of our two cities.*



THE HONORABLE RICHARD M. DALEY  
MAYOR OF CHICAGO



THE HONORABLE ZHANG RONGMAO  
MAYOR OF SHENYANG