

Evaluation of Minneapolis' sister city connections and options for ongoing management of the number of Minneapolis sister cities

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Staff was directed to 1) evaluate the number of sister cities that we currently have and the capacity to have more; 2) evaluate the engagement/involvement of the sister cities that we have at the current time and whether they should be continued; and 3) explore other options, including tiered status or other reviewed mechanisms, for sister city connections.

Minneapolis has 12 Sister City connections, ten (10) of which currently have a local sister city committee. Minneapolis sister city connections are managed through a contract between the City of Minneapolis and Meet Minneapolis, and in collaboration with local volunteer sister city committees.

The following summaries are included in this report:

- 1) Minneapolis sister cities by City Council Resolution date.
- 2) Program activities.
- 3) Options for considering the capacity to have more sister cities.
- 4) Tiered status for sister city connections.

## **MINNEAPOLIS SISTER CITIES**

### **Santiago CHILE**

Sister City since 1961

Sister City committee/organization: Club Chileno de Minnesota

Committee chair: Teresa Olson

### **Winnipeg CANADA**

Sister City since 1973

Sister City committee/organization: None at this time

Committee chair: None at this time

### **Kuopio FINLAND**

Sister City since 1973

Sister City committee/organization: Minneapolis Kuopio Partnership

Committee chair: Karl Reichert

### **Ibaraki City JAPAN**

Sister City since 1980

Sister City committee/organization: Minneapolis Ibaraki Sister City Association

Committee chair: Karl Reinhard

**Novosibirsk RUSSIA**

Sister City since 1988

Sister City committee/organization: in discussions with the American Russian Chamber of Commerce of Minnesota

Committee chair: None at this time

**Tours FRANCE**

Sister City since 1991

Sister City committee/organization: Minneapolis and Tours Sister Cities

Committee chair: Gail Beske

**Harbin CHINA**

Sister City since 1992

Sister City committee/organization: US-China People's Friendship Association of Minnesota, Minneapolis Harbin Sister City Committee

Committee chair: Kit Spangler

**Uppsala SWEDEN**

Sister City since 2000

Sister City committee/organization: Minneapolis-Uppsala Friendship Committee of the American Swedish Institute

Committee co-chairs: Katie Fournier and Miranda Fischbach Striegel

**Eldoret KENYA**

Sister City since 2000

Sister City committee/organization: International Leadership Institute

Committee chair: LaJune Lange

**Cuernavaca MEXICO**

Sister City since 2008

Sister City committee/organization: Minneapolis-Cuernavaca Sister City Association

Committee chair: Rolando Borja

**Najaf IRAQ**

Sister City since 2009

Sister City committee/organization: Iraqi and American Reconciliation Project

Committee chair: Kathy McKay

**Bosaso SOMALIA**

Sister City since 2014

Sister City committee/organization: Minnesota Friends of Bosaso

Committee chair: Mohammad Osman

**PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

In 2008 Meet Minneapolis was tasked with looking into each sister city relationship and re-energizing existing relationships. Specifically, what work was being done and how could it be enhanced.

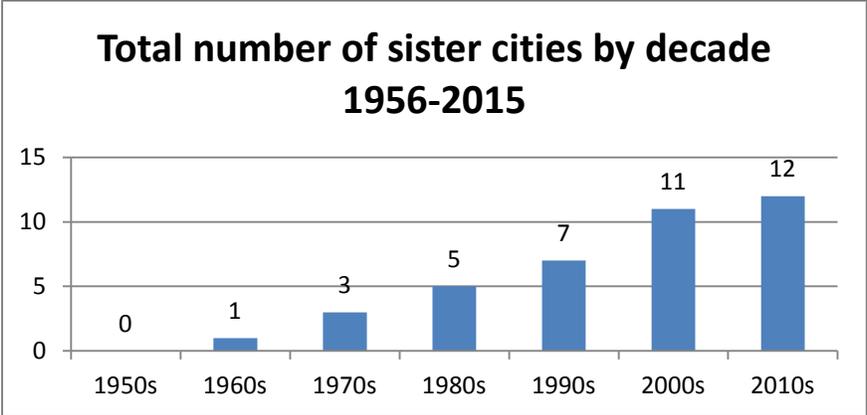
Sister city committees work both individually and as part of the collective program. Most prominently, this can be seen through their participation at the annual Minneapolis Sister Cities Day event in July. All sister city committees are responsible for an information table and contributing program entertainment representative of the city/country their committee supports. All committees provide input on the event and some also make additional contributions. For example, the Najaf sister city committee has built a relationship with a Target store to sponsor outdoor activities at the event. In addition to being a fun, free, informative, and family-friendly activity, Minneapolis Sister Cities Day is also used as tool to recruit Minneapolis residents and volunteers for the sister city committees. Started in 2008, annual attendance at this event is between 800-1,000 people.

All local sister city committees are also invited and encouraged to participate in an annual meeting to provide a report for the past year and present a program of work for the year ahead. This ensures that exchanges are budgeted and staffed for appropriately. In addition, it allows for an exchange of ideas and experiences, and a synergy among the sister city committees for the benefit of the entire program.

Also, throughout the year staff regularly attend committee meetings of several of the sister city committees, and stay in communication with the committee representatives and meet with them as needed.

**OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERING THE CAPACITY TO HAVE MORE SISTER CITIES**

Minneapolis is currently on track to have more sister cities than can be supported by current resources. Resources include dollars, staff time, volunteers, and time from the Mayor and Council.



Option	Take no action	
1	Continue to accept and respond to proposals for sister city connections with Minneapolis.	<p>The number of sister cities will continue to increase. Staff receives approximately 5-10 requests annually for information about becoming a sister city with Minneapolis. Additional resources will be needed. Elected officials may not be able to devote time to individual sister cities as they do now.</p> <p>The capacity to have more sister cities is limited by resources of both time and money. Also, our international connections have an expectation that elected officials will commit time to meeting with them.</p>
	Alternative Options	
2	<b>Support the 12 Minneapolis sister city connections, and work to activate sister cities that do not currently have a local sister city committee. And limit the number of Minneapolis sister cities to 12.</b>	Recommendation. This is the maximum number of sister cities that can be managed based on the current budget and staffing.
3	Move sister cities without a local committee to emeritus status. And limit the total number of sister cities to 12.	Minneapolis currently has two sister cities that do not have a local committee. There has been interest in establishing a committee for at least one of these sister cities. Both sister cities are in locations where Minneapolis should have a sister city connection to promote its goals and contribute to the mission of Sister Cities International.

**TIERED STATUS FOR SISTER CITY CONNECTIONS**

In addition to Sister City status, Sister Cities International also recognizes Friendship Cities, Emeritus Cities, and Charter Sister Cities.

- Sister Cities International defines Friendship Cities as less formal relationships, but notes that although they are less formal, many friendship cities are as active as sister city relationships. Minneapolis has a friendship city connection with Hiroshima JAPAN. The

purpose of this connection is support for Hiroshima's anti-nuclear weapons work and other peace work; support for the Lyndale Park Peace Garden. Activities are carried out by Minneapolis-Hiroshima Friendship Cities, Inc.

- Emeritus Cities are sister city relationships which have been put into Emeritus status by a mayor or highest elected official, usually due to dormancy. Emeritus relationships are sometimes returned to full sister city status by citizens who revitalize the partnership.
- When two U.S. communities have the same sister city, the partnership that was first signed is acknowledged as the "Charter Sister City" relationship.

Each sister city and local committee is unique. Sometimes activity ebbs and flows, while other times volunteer committees are able to continue programs from year to year. Also, sometimes the number of volunteers participating in a local sister city committee dwindles. But often, local committees are reinvigorated with new volunteers. Through the efforts of individual volunteers, the annual Minneapolis Sister Cities Day, and others we are working to bring attention to the local volunteer sister city committees and opportunities to get involved.

The recommendation includes working to activate sister cities that do not currently have a local sister city committee. There is interest from the American-Russian Chamber of Commerce of Minnesota in the Novosibirsk sister city relationship. And with the Consulate General of Canada in Minneapolis there is an opportunity to focus on our sister city connection with Winnipeg.

Sister Cities International (SCI) defines a sister city relationship as a broad-based, long-term partnership between two cities in two countries. And a sister city organization as a volunteer group, with the support of their local elected officials, that forms a long-term relationship with people and organizations in a city abroad.

Together, the sister city volunteer committees and the City of Minneapolis can continue to support the SCI mission "to promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation – one individual, one community at a time."

And by focusing on the 12 sister cities Minneapolis currently has we can continue deepen the relationships we have and advance our International Goals and Objectives.

Goals:

- 1) Provide opportunities for City officials and others to position Minneapolis as a world-class city and center for international business.
- 2) Develop avenues for local businesses who want to establish or expand international commercial initiatives.
- 3) Increase citizen awareness of the influence and impact that foreign policy and the global marketplace have on our community.
- 4) Provide more options for citizens to experience, understand and appreciate other cultures.
- 5) Expand and enrich existing international relationships.

Objectives:

- 1) Explore economic development synergies between cities.
- 2) Share best practices for city government.
- 3) Develop and support educational, cultural and people-to-people exchanges.
- 4) Use sister cities as a catalyst for international promotion.