

City of Seattle

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

Chris Gregorich, Director
Edward Murray, Mayor



July 28, 2016

TO: Education, Equity, and Governance Committee

FROM: Chris Gregorich, Office of Intergovernmental Relations (OIR)

SUBJECT: Proposal of Changes to Seattle Sister Cities Program

On August 12, 2013, Seattle City Councilmembers unanimously voted to pass Ordinance No. 124255, which formally provides the purpose, structure, and responsibilities of the Seattle Sister Cities Coordinating Council and Seattle's Sister Cities Program. The sections of the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) that were created by this ordinance include SMC 3.14.440-470.

Supporting the Executive and Council's interest in modernizing Seattle's Sister Cities Program, OIR has engaged the Mayor's Office, Councilmembers, the Seattle Sister Cities Coordinating Council, and community stakeholders in discussions about appropriate objectives and potential modifications to Seattle's Sister Cities Program.

Following these discussions, this memo addresses two separate topics:

- 1) The proposed changes to increase the scope of the Seattle Sister Cities Coordinating Council to a broader range of international issues and rename it the Seattle International Affairs Advisory Board; and
- 2) An outline of future steps to modernize the Sister Cities program and engage new people and cities to elevate Seattle's international profile.

1. Broaden the Scope of the Seattle Sister Cities Coordinating Council and rename it the "Seattle International Affairs Advisory Board"

Currently, the Seattle Sister Cities Coordinating Council (SSCCC) is a 20-member body that includes five representatives from the Sister City associations, one representative from the City Council, and one representative from OIR. The remaining 12 members represent the local community, cultural, educational, corporate and non-profit institutions. In light of Seattle's increasing international influence and engagement, we believe this body should expand in size and scope to address issues beyond the Sister Cities Program. We propose changing the name from "Seattle Sister Cities Coordinating Council" to the "Seattle International Affairs Advisory Board."

The mission of the Seattle International Affairs Advisory Board will be to raise the prominence of Seattle's international programs (including the Sister Cities Program), ensure alignment with

Seattle's strategic development goals, increase visibility of international activities, and improve access to fundraising for Sister Cities and other City-sponsored international activities. The Advisory Board will advise the Mayor, City Council, and OIR on Seattle's international engagement activities, including local outreach initiatives, official international travel, and partnerships with foreign cities and other entities. It will also interact with representatives from relevant City of Seattle departments to provide feedback on their international engagement programs. The Advisory Board will continue to monitor Seattle's Sister Cities program, which remains a well-branded, municipal-level form of diplomacy.

In addition to members from the Sister City Associations, the Advisory Board will include business thought-leaders, executives, and community members to provide energy and expertise to enhance the prominence of Seattle's international programs and ensure alignment with the City's development goals. The board will be made up of representatives from Sister City Associations, a representative from the Trade Development Alliance (TDA) of Seattle, and diverse representation from community, corporate, cultural, media, educational, governmental, and non-profit institutions that have ongoing interests in Seattle's international affairs.

2. Strategic Next Steps for Sister Cities and other International Programming

The ordinance proposed above is part of a strategic plan to raise Seattle's international profile, which includes strengthening its Sister Cities Program. Sister Cities' 60-year legacy has developed a powerful brand recognized by many Seattleites. Since its inception, Sister Cities International has promoted citizen diplomacy to facilitate hundreds of thousands of cultural and academic exchanges and generated over \$500 million in economic linkages. Engaging a wider community through the Seattle International Affairs Advisory Board and ensuring that Seattle's Sister City relationships are active and retain a strategic fit will increase Seattle's economic and cultural ties with international partners.

Review all Sister City Relationships: Pursuant to SMC 3.14.450 (C), each Sister City affiliation enjoys a five-year term of active status. Beginning six months prior to the end of an affiliation's five-year term, the Seattle International Affairs Advisory Board will review the relationship and make recommendations to OIR regarding the designation of each affiliation. The staggered five-year review process allows the Advisory Board to ensure active participation by Sister City affiliations and strengthen this brand in the coming years. OIR expects to use this process in the coming years to ensure the Sister City relationships receiving funding and support from the City are active and meet the goals set out in SMC 3.14.440.

Other next steps: OIR receives over 20 requests annually to establish new Sister City relationships with Seattle. However, in November 1996, Seattle's City Council placed a moratorium on new Sister City relationships. In 2017, OIR will work with the Seattle International Affairs Advisory Board, the Executive, and City Council to explore new ways to recognize ongoing and new ties to international cities that offer strategic, economic, and cultural opportunities to benefit the people of Seattle.