



REPORT TO COUNCIL

City of Sacramento

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Staff Report
December 15, 2009

**Honorable Mayor and
Members of the City Council**

**Title: Consideration to establish a Sister City relationship with Bethlehem, and
intent to establish a Sister City relationship with a city within Israel**

Location/Council District: Citywide

Recommendation: 1) Adopt a **Resolution** Establishing a Sister City relationship with Bethlehem, and 2) Adopt a **Resolution** of Intent to establish a Sister City relationship with a city within Israel.

Contact: Lisa Serna-Mayorga, Council Operations Manager, (916) 808-7171

Presenters: Lisa Serna Mayorga, Members of the Sacramento to Bethlehem Sister City Initiative, and Members of the Jewish community of Sacramento

Department: Mayor & Council

Division: N/A

Organization No: 0100

Description/Analysis

The City of Sacramento currently has eight sister cities. The first sister city, Manila, Philippines, was established on June 8, 1961 and the most recent addition was the City of San Juan de Oriente on February 28, 2006. The City of Sacramento also has Sister City relationships with Matsuyama, Japan (1981), Jinan, China (1984), Hamilton, New Zealand (1988), Liestal, Switzerland (1989), Chisinau, Moldova (1989), and Yongsan-gu, Korea (1997). The president, or designee, from each of the eight sister cities meets every other month as a group entitled The Sister Cities Council of Sacramento. At those meetings, the Mayor's designated staff person attends and serves as staff support.

In an effort to promote a sense of cooperation and good will, staff and local sister city advocates have brought two locales together, one city and one country, in this report for City Council consideration through two distinct resolutions.

Consideration is requested to authorize one relationship (Bethlehem) and offer intent to authorize a relationship at a future date (Israel). In an effort to promote dialogue and understanding, which are central to the Sister City concept, it is very encouraging that Sacramento, as one of the most diverse cities, can bring this collaborative report forward to the City Council.

Policy Considerations: Requests for new sister city relationship must primarily come from community interest and participation in activities mutually beneficial to both parties. Historically there has been, and will continue to be limited staff support through the Mayor and Council office for the coordination of mayor and council participation with sister city activities.

Environmental Considerations: N/A

Rationale for Recommendation: The City of Sacramento enjoys one of the most diverse populations in the country. Sister City relationships encourage multi-cultural and cross-cultural learning and foster opportunity for social, cultural and professional exchanges for residents of Sacramento through the guidance Sacramento Sister Cities Council.

Financial Considerations: N/A

Emerging Small Business Development (ESBD): N/A

Respectfully Submitted by: 
for Lisa Serna-Mayorga
Mayor & Council Operations Manager

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Attachment 1**Background**

Historically it has been the policy of the Mayor and Council that sister city relationships must be supported from the community as a grass roots effort and additionally, that these community-based groups must be prepared to organize and support the affiliation events. The Sister Cities Council assures us that there is good local support for both of these sister cities.

The proposed new sister city relationship is with Bethlehem. A group of volunteers from Sacramento have been connected and working towards the goal of a formal sister city relationship since 2006 based on their research and mission of Sister Cities International. They formalized their work through the establishment of the Sacramento to Bethlehem Sister City Initiative and in October 2007, the group began participating in the Sister Cities of Sacramento Council, submitting regular reports on their activities and progress. In February 2008 and March 2009 the Sacramento to Bethlehem Sister City Initiative was included in the Sister Cities of Sacramento Council's annual report to the Mayor and Sacramento City Council.

In March 2008, a Sister Cities International delegation hand delivered a letter from the Sacramento to Bethlehem Sister City Initiative to Bethlehem's Mayor and Municipal Council. In the letter, the group expressed its hope that Sacramento and Bethlehem would become Sister Cities. On March 26, 2008, Bethlehem's Municipal Council approved Sacramento and Bethlehem becoming Sister Cities. Over the last three years, the Sacramento to Bethlehem Sister City Initiative has established and nurtured friendships between Sacramento and Bethlehem artists, students, community gardeners, and others and in recognition of the solid bond the group is forging between the two communities, Bethlehem's mayor, Dr. Victor Batarseh, wrote a letter of friendship to Sacramento's mayor, Kevin Johnson in April 2009. The Sacramento to Bethlehem Sister City Initiative hand-delivered Mayor Batarseh's letter to Mayor Johnson and proceeded to move forward with the formal establishment of a sister city relationship.

The Sacramento to Bethlehem Sister City Initiative has obtained letters of support from the mayors of US cities with which Bethlehem has an existing Sister City relationship: Burlington, Vermont; Orlando, Florida; and Joplin, Missouri. The Sacramento-Bethlehem pairing is solid and will be an asset to Sacramento's Sister City tradition. Since the Municipal Council of Bethlehem has adopted an official resolution supporting the establishment of the sister city relationship with Sacramento, and there is strong local support for establishing and maintaining the relationship, the next step in the process is to determine if mutual interest of the Sacramento City Council exists to support pursuing the relationship. The resolution of the Sacramento City Council authorizing the relationship affirms Sacramento's interest.

In October 2009, members of Sacramento's Jewish community expressed substantial support for establishing a sister city relationship between the City of Sacramento and a city within Israel. Members of the Sacramento Jewish community seek to build a sister city relationship to promote cross-cultural bridges, economic prosperity, and tourism between the locales. The network of local volunteers advocating for this relationship have shown through a pattern of regional events and formal cultural programs that they have the potential to establish a vibrant sister city relationship. Supporters of this relationship would need to come to the City Council at a later date to finalize a formal sister city relationship. The resolution of the Sacramento City Council expresses intent to form such a relationship.

Attachment 2

RESOLUTION NO. 2009-****

Adopted by the Sacramento City Council

RESOLUTION OF THE SACRAMENTO CITY COUNCIL ENDORSING THE SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SACRAMENTO AND BETHLEHEM

BACKGROUND

- A. It is recognized that the friendship and understanding between individuals and organizations of Sister Cities bring benefits that are enduring and mutually rewarding.
- B. The City of Sacramento has benefited from having Sister Cities in Europe, Asia, on the Pacific Rim, and in Central America, but does not yet have a Sister City in the Middle East.
- C. The Mayor and members of the Municipal Council of Bethlehem during its session (176) held on March 26, 2008, approved and welcomed making official the Sister City relationship with Sacramento.
- D. Citizens of the Sacramento region have formed the Sacramento to Bethlehem Sister City Initiative, to work within the parameters of the Sister City traditions and encourage friendship between our two cities through people-to-people exchanges, e.g., students, artists, healthcare providers, agriculture, business, environmental innovators, and the like. These exchanges are being facilitated through actual community visits as well as virtual visits (via the Internet).
- E. It is the intent of those involved in the Sacramento to Bethlehem Sister City Initiative to be inclusive of the citizens of Sacramento, including the diverse cultural and religious communities in the area.

BASED ON THE FACTS SET FORTH IN THE BACKGROUND, THE CITY COUNCIL RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

- Section 1. The Sacramento City Council gives its endorsement to the affiliation of the City of Sacramento and the City of Bethlehem as Sister Cities.
- Section 2. The City Clerk shall cause copies of this Resolution to be sent to the Mayor of Bethlehem and to Sister Cities International, 1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 850, Washington, DC 20004

Attachment 3

RESOLUTION NO. 2009-****

Adopted by the Sacramento City Council

**RESOLUTION OF INTENT BY THE SACRAMENTO CITY COUNCIL TO ESTABLISH A
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SACRAMENTO AND AN ISRAELI CITY**

BACKGROUND

- A. The mission of the Sister Cities Council of Sacramento is to develop mutually beneficial cultural, educational, social, and/or economic relationships between the citizens of Sacramento and its Sister Cities.
- B. Sacramento is home to a thriving Jewish community with cultural, familial and spiritual connection to Israel.
- C. Members and organizations within Sacramento's Jewish community have expressed substantial interest in formalizing a relationship between the City of Sacramento and an Israeli city.
- D. The purpose of a formal relationship is to facilitate youth, business and cultural interaction. Beyond the members of the Sacramento Jewish community, benefits from a formalized relationship would be shared with all citizens of Sacramento and would encourage sharing of professional knowledge (e.g., healthcare, artistic, agricultural) while building positive relationships among citizens of both locales.
- E. It is the intent of those involved in a to-be-named-Israeli City to Sacramento Sister City Initiative be inclusive of the citizens of Sacramento, including the diverse cultural and religious communities in the area.

**BASED ON THE FACTS SET FORTH IN THE BACKGROUND, THE CITY COUNCIL
RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:**

- Section 1. The Sacramento City Council gives its endorsement of Intent to formalize a Sister City relationship with an Israeli city under the guidance of the Sacramento Sister Cities Council.
- Section 2. The City Clerk shall send copy of this Resolution to the Sacramento Sister Cities Council.