



## City of Sacramento City Council

915 I Street, Sacramento, CA, 95814  
[www.CityofSacramento.org](http://www.CityofSacramento.org)

**Meeting Date:** 8/14/2012

**Report Type:** Staff/Discussion

**Title:** Ashkelon Sister City

**Report ID:** 2012-00598

**Location:** Citywide

**Recommendation:** Pass a Resolution establishing a Sister City Relationship with Ashkelon, Israel.

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**Presenter:** Celia Yniguez, Operations Manager, (916) 808-7171, Mayor/Council Office

**Department:** City Clerk

**Division:**

**Dept ID:**

**Attachments:**

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- 1-Description/Analysis
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### **City Attorney Review**

Approved as to Form  
Matthew Ruyak  
8/8/2012 4:59:16 PM

### **Approvals/Acknowledgements**

Department Director or Designee: Shirley Concolino - 8/8/2012 3:52:40 PM



## **Description/Analysis**

**Issue:** The Sister City Program mission statement is “Promote peace through mutual respect, understanding and cooperation.” To this end, Sacramento has established nine relationships with cities in Europe, Asia, the Pacific Rim, Central America, and the Middle East. The most recent city was Bethlehem, Palestine in 2009. At that time, in an effort to promote cooperation and good will, two resolutions were adopted: 1) a resolution establishing Bethlehem as a sister city; and 2) a resolution of intent to form a sister-city relationship in Israel. Since 2009, the local community has identified and selected an appropriate and willing city, Ashkelon. Certain individuals and groups have expressed opposition to the proposed sister-city relationship, raising concerns with Israeli government policies since Israel’s founding as a modern nation in 1948. However, the Sister Cities program is designed to allow people-to-people interaction despite our political or religious differences. As quoted on the City’s website, “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.”

**Policy Considerations:** Past and future staff support from the Mayor and Council office will be limited to coordination of Mayor and Council participation in sister city activities. Consequently, new sister-city relationships must demonstrate community interest and participation since each is responsible for developing and implementing activities. Members of the Jewish Federation of Sacramento, the Jewish Community Relations Council, and many other members of the Sacramento-Ashkelon Sister City organizing committee, as well as representatives from Ashkelon, demonstrated the necessary interest to develop and sustain a sister-city relationship.

**Environmental Considerations:** N/A

**Sustainability:** N/A

**Commission/Committee Action:** N/A

**Rationale for Recommendation:** The establishment of Ashkelon as a sister city implements Resolution Number 2009-777, in which the City Council gave its endorsement of intent to formalize a Sister City relationship with an Israeli city under the guidance of the Sacramento Sister Cities Council. The community participation required to advance activities and relationships with Ashkelon are in place.

**Financial Considerations:** None

**Emerging Small Business Development (ESBD):** None

## Background

### Sister Cities Program and Sister Cities Council

The City of Sacramento is proud to have an active Sister City Program (Program). The Program's mission statement captures the City's participation and investment in this endeavor – "Promote peace through mutual respect, understanding and cooperation." Over the past fifty plus years, nine sister city relationships were established across the world. The cities and establishment dates include: Manila, Philippines, 1961; Matsuyama, Japan, 1981; Jinan, China, 1984; Hamilton, New Zealand, 1988; Liestal, Switzerland; Chisinau, Moldova, 1989; Yongsan-gu, Korea, 1997; and Bethlehem, Palestine, 2009. The City's participation has allowed Sacramentans to meet new friends and build relationships with people throughout our nine sister cities, as well as the entire world.

Essential to the Program is the Sacramento Sister City Council (Council). The Council is composed of the President, or designee, from each of the nine sister cities. Their mission is to develop mutually beneficial cultural, educational, social, and /or economic relationships between the citizens of Sacramento and its Sister Cities. Additionally, they facilitate the development of relationships through cooperative activities. These include dissemination of newsletters and announcements of events of interest, engaging in joint activities, and networking with other internationally-oriented organizations. To this end, the Council meets five to six times a year. At these meetings, the Mayor's designated staff person attends and serves as staff support.

### Bethlehem, Palestine

From 2006 to 2009, a group of volunteers from Sacramento pursued a formal sister city relationship with Bethlehem. This resulted in a formal request to the Mayor and City Council to establish a sister city relationship. 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. In December 2009, in the spirit of the Sister City Program - to promote relationships that foster peace and cooperation, the City Council adopted two resolutions establishing a new sister city in Palestine and the intent to pursue and establish one in Israel. Resolution No. 2009-776 adopted Bethlehem as a sister city. Resolution No. 2009-777 is an intent resolution to form a sister city relationship in Israel: "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."

For the past three years, the Jewish Federation of Sacramento, the Jewish Community Relations Council, the Sister Cities Council of Sacramento, and numerous supporters from throughout Sacramento's diverse community have taken the necessary steps to implement the resolution and identify a specific sister city in Israel. After many months of investigation and community outreach, the Sacramento organizing committee narrowed the choice to three cities, including Ashkelon and two other Israeli cities. Finally, earlier this year, after numerous exchanges with community leaders in both Sacramento and Ashkelon, Ashkelon was chosen and arrangements were made for a large group to travel to Ashkelon in November to formalize the relationship.

This new Sister City relationship between Sacramento and Ashkelon will build upon numerous ongoing exchanges between Ashkelon and Sacramento. For more than a decade, the Jewish Federation of the Sacramento Region has been involved in Partnership Together (formerly Partnership 2000), a program designed around sharing ideas, strengths, challenges, successes, and empowering communities to generate change. The Sacramento Federation has been partnering with the cities of Kiryat Malachi and Hof Ashkelon in Israel, home to tens of thousands of new immigrants, and providing scholarships so that

students can pursue their education. In exchange, the students work to improve conditions in their communities through various volunteer programs. Delegations from Sacramento have been visiting residents in the region for years and the Sacramento community has hosted students and soldiers who visit local public schools and organizations to offer a true person-to-person connection with a resident of Israel. The Sacramento Ashkelon Sister City organizing committee seeks to broaden this preexisting regional partnership to include the city of Ashkelon, only 11 miles from Kiryat Malachi and Hof Ashkelon. In addition, many Sacramentans have relatives and friends living in or near Ashkelon.



RESOLUTION NO. 2012-  
Adopted by the Sacramento City Council

**ENDORISING THE SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SACRAMENTO AND  
ASHKELON**

**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, in Central America, and the Middle East.
- C. On December 9, 2009, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 2009-777, which endorsed the intent to formalize a Sister City relationship with an Israeli city under the guidance of the Sacramento Sister Cities Council.
- D. Citizens of the Sacramento region have formed the Sacramento to Ashkelon Sister City Initiative, to work within 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, and environmental innovators.
- E. It is the intent of those involved in the Sacramento to Ashkelon 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 Ashkelon as Sister Cities.
- Section 2. The City Clerk shall cause copies of this Resolution to be sent to the Mayor of Ashkelon and to Sister Cities International in Washington, D.C.