



## Aurora Sister City Selection Criteria and Processes

### Introduction:

A sister or friendship city relationship is formally created when the mayors or highest elected or appointed officials from two communities sign a memorandum of understanding establishing the partnership. This is usually the result of a lengthy process involving the local sister city organization, the municipality, and other local institutions. The process can be different for each community; this document guides those interested in exploring a relationship with the City of Aurora and Aurora Sister Cities International (ASCI).

In the United States, the concept of “sister cities” was first championed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower after World War II. He envisioned a network of citizen diplomats that would foster friendship and understanding between diverse cultures and former foes as an act of peace and reconciliation and would encourage trade and tourism. In recent times, sister cities and their less formal relative, friendship cities, have increasingly been used to form international business links between cities.

Aurora Sister Cities International defines “sister cities” as strategic relationships between the city of Aurora and global partner communities which usually begin as a friendship city and, if all goes well over a year or two, result in a formal sister city agreement. A primary distinction between the two types of relationship is as follows:

#### **Sister Cities**

These are cities in which the mayor and city council of each city vote and agree to a formal partnership.

#### **Friendship Cities**

These are cities in which the mayor of each city agrees to a partnership. The relationship is less formal than that between sister cities and often precedes a sister-city relationship.

Aurora Sister Cities International may also facilitate strategic exchanges that provide a direct and immediate benefit to Aurora, its residents, or its businesses. These exchanges may be used to help develop a future friendship or sister city relationship.

**Selection Criteria:**

To establish a friendship or sister city, Aurora Sister Cities International typically looks for partner cities with the following ties, similarities, or connections:

**Economic Commonalities:** The prospective city should share common industries with Aurora, offer the potential for international trade with Aurora companies, or show a business climate conducive to investment or other economic opportunities for Aurora firms and individuals.

Common industries, institutions, and characteristics might include:

- Aerospace and defense
- Bioscience
- Technical/community college education and student exchanges
- Significant employment in the education and security sectors
- Energy including solar and other renewable energies
- Healthcare
- Medical and healthcare education
- Connections for Buckley Air Force Base and the National Guard
- Technology/innovation
- Transportation logistics (distribution)
- Tourism —sports, entertainment, environmental, medical

**Population Size:** A sister city of comparable size to Aurora ensures good symmetry between municipal governments, community groups, and private organizations, as well as offering common challenges and opportunities.

**Ease of Access:** The prospective city should be easy to access via an international or regional airport, have good local transportation, and offer convenient access to its country.

**Geography:** Similar geographic qualities mean that Aurora and the partner city will be able to share knowledge related to the challenges and opportunities associated with geography.

**Tourism:** The prospective city should offer the potential for tourism exchanges with Aurora and the promotion of travel between the two cities.

**Educational Institutions:** High school and higher education exchange require similar counterpart institutions that should be identified early in the process.

**Cultural Institutions:** These may include museums, music venues, and community centers.

**Preexisting Relationships:** These may include, but are not limited to, mayoral relationships, trade relationships, expatriate and diaspora communities, faith-based groups, and individual experiences.

Final Selection Criteria. 11/18/2015 Document created in 2015/ Revised in August 2024.

**Diversity:** The ASCI Board will give preference to cities that engage Aurora’s international communities.

“Not all criteria need to be present for a relationship to be appropriate”.

**Required for a Relationship:**

**Aurora City Local Committee:** A committee in Aurora must be formed to promote and sustain the potential and ongoing relationship. The committee must raise a minimum of \$5,000 before a sister-city relationship can be made final. Additionally, the committee must commit to funding and executing two activities per year designed to keep the relationship active.

**Partner City Local Leadership:** The prospective city must have an established organization or community group whose function and capabilities parallel those of the Aurora Sister Cities International program e.g., providing administrative and other support, garnering municipal support, hosting of events, and securing official approvals. The entity must be willing and able to communicate well with counterparts in Aurora.

**Initiating a Request:**

- There are two ways to start a request for a new friendship or sister city:
  - Through a local community or institutional effort.
  - Through the initiative of the ASCI board or the City of Aurora.
- Relationships should ordinarily be set up first as friendship cities (requiring only mayoral agreement) and will be considered for sister city status after a year or two of building the relationship.
- The first step in developing a new sister-city relationship is to ensure that Aurora leadership is open to the possibility of entertaining a new proposal. Among those consulted could be the Mayor, the City Manager, the ASCI Executive Director, the City Council member on ASCI’s Board, and the Office of International and Immigrant Affairs.

**Process for a Community or Institutional Initiated Request:**

- An individual, group, or institution (the Promoter) researches the prospective partner city and submits a written proposal addressing how the prospective city matches the Aurora Sister Cities International’s selection criteria to the ASCI Board via the ASCI Executive Director.

- After reviewing the written proposal, the ASCI Board will recommend whether to ask the Promotor to proceed. If the Board's recommendation is to proceed, the Promoter will establish contact with counterparts in the proposed city to determine interest in a partnership. (In practice this determination of interest may already have been done.)
- If the response from the proposed city counterparts is positive, the Promoter if it has not already done so, will begin to recruit a committee (hereinafter Committee) of at least fifteen volunteers broadly representative of Aurora.

The Committee will submit a completed application consisting of:

- the attached application form;
  - a list of the Committee members and officers;
  - proof of interest and capabilities from counterparts in the proposed city;
  - an action plan for the Committee's first year of work on the proposed relationship;
  - a description of current or planned fundraising efforts;
- After reviewing the application packet and considering a recommendation from its Executive Director, the ASCI Board will decide whether to ask the Committee to further develop the proposed relationship. The Executive Director's recommendation will be based in part on direct contact with the leadership in the proposed partner city and interaction with the Aurora Committee.
  - If the Board's decision is positive, efforts should focus on learning more about each other's communities, identifying program/exchange opportunities, discussing local involvement, and developing a work plan that establishes goals for the partnership. Communities may send non-mayoral delegations during this stage.
  - No later than 6 months after receiving ASCI Board approval to continue, the Committee will meet with the Board to demonstrate that significant progress has been made in the relationship with the proposed partner city, that the Committee has full membership (15 or more), and that it has begun raising the required \$5,000. If little or no progress is shown, the application may be vacated.
  - If the ASCI Board is satisfied with the Committee's progress, it will present the application packet and proposal to the City of Aurora Mayor's office for formal consideration as a friendship city.
  - Upon formal approval by the Mayor's office, the Committee will have one year to raise the rest of the \$5,000 which will be deposited in the ASCI account, designated for the proposed relationship.

- The \$5,000 may be used for the following items, as well as other unforeseen needs: producing or reprinting ASCI's stationery and brochures; buying a new flag for Aurora's city hall; implementing activities to promote the new friendship city relationship; and providing gifts and support for the delegation from the new city.
- Once the Committee has met the fundraising goal, a friendship city agreement can be developed, agreed upon by both cities and signed by the mayors.
- The full sister city agreement shall be presented to the Aurora City Council after at a minimum of one probationary year which includes a continued commitment to fundraising on behalf of the friendship city and the hosting of at least two community-oriented activities during the year to promote the development of the relationship.
- For the sister city to be recognized by Sister Cities International, the two communities must sign formal documents that endorse the link. In collaboration with the Office of Immigrant and International Affairs, the ASCI Executive Director will create a partnership agreement that can range from ceremonial, with language focusing on each city's commitment to fostering understanding, cooperation, and mutual benefit to the precise, with areas of interest, specific programs/activities, or more concrete goals related to anything from numbers of exchanges to economic development.
- Once the partnership agreement has been developed and both communities have approved the document, the two highest-ranking officials will sign the document, which is often done during a formal signing ceremony

**Implementation and Evaluation:**

- Once documents are signed, implementation of formal sister city programs and exchanges outlined in the work plan developed during the early months of this process can begin. The committee will become an Aurora Sister City Working Group reporting to the ASCI Board and working closely with the ASCI Executive Director.
- Among the Sister City Working Group's best practices are the following:
  - Maintain close contact with the partner city's leadership focusing on ongoing programs and exchanges.
  - Set a date within two years of the relationship's launch to evaluate the partnership and adjust it if needed.
  - Hold regular Working Group meetings to review progress and address challenges in addition to conducting events, doing programming, and raising funds.
  - Share reports and accomplishments with the ASCI Board, Working Group supporters, City Council, and the Aurora community.

### **ASCI or City of Aurora Request**

- The Aurora Sister Cities International board or City of Aurora leaders may also suggest that a friendship or sister city relationship be considered if such relationship provides a direct benefit to Aurora and/or its businesses. Upon such recommendation, the steps outlined above will be followed as appropriate