Council Meeting Date: September 3, 2002 **Agenda Item: 6(d)**

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

AGENDA TITLE:	Review of Draft Sister City Relationship Policy
DEPARTMENT:	City Manager's Office
PRESENTED BY:	Eric C. Swansen, Senior Management Analyst

PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT:

Throughout the City's history, there have been numerous requests by foreign municipalities, local residents and businesses to create sister city relationships. In 1996, the City Council adopted a resolution that encourages the creation of a Sister Cities Association, and requires establishment of such an association prior to creating a formal relationship policy.

Recently, the Shoreline Sister Cities Association was incorporated as a non-profit association by the State of Washington. This association was created by a well-rounded group of residents and businesses, including representatives from the Shoreline Chamber of Commerce, the Shoreline/Lake Forest Park Arts Council, Shoreline Community College and other associations. In keeping with the policy set by Council, staff has prepared the attached policy to guide selection and relationships of any future sister city relationships.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact associated with this policy. Staff has worked with the Sister City Association to create clear roles and responsibilities, which do not involve the City in the financial management or fundraising efforts of the Association. The City would, however, provide limited in-kind assistance to support the activities of the Shoreline Sister Cities Association, including scheduling assistance, arranging activities with elected officials and the delegation from any sister city.

RECOMMENDATION

No action is required. Staff is seeking Council input and consensus regarding the draft Sister City Relationship Policy. A formal resolution will follow this discussion to adopt this policy at a later date.

Approved By: City Manager _____ City Attorney N/A

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the City's history, there have been numerous requests by foreign municipalities, local residents and businesses to create sister city relationships. In 1996, the City Council adopted a resolution that encourages the creation of a Sister Cities Association, and requires establishment of such an association prior to creating a formal relationship policy.

BACKGROUND

Sister City relationships are international relationships created between cities to enhance international understanding. In Washington State 45 cities have established at least one relationship with a City in another country. Most cities create relationships based on common traits, either related to population, geography, existing trade or community ties or industrial commonalties. Many cities have more than one sister city relationships, typically supported by an all volunteer sister cities association. Seattle is one of the more prolific sister city supporters, with 21 sister city relationships established on five continents. Relationships typically consist of information sharing, cultural exchanges, and people-to-people sponsored visits.

In 1996, Council adopted a resolution that encouraged the creation of a Shoreline Sister Cities Association, which would be a necessary element of any future Sister City Relationship Policy. The resolution went on to state that once such an association was created, the City would consider a sister city policy.

Staff discussed this issue with Council at a number of budget or planning retreats since 1996. In 2001, former Councilmember Cheryl Lee suggested that the City make positive steps in creating a sister city relationship, but not involve the City staff in doing so. She suggested that there are motivated people in the community ready to create a relationship, and that it could be done without staff involvement. Council decided that moving forward with some limited staff assistance during the formation phase of a Sister Cities Association was important, as there are definite implications to the City. It was recognized that it is in everyone's interest to have staff assist in forming the Association, but leaving the final steps up to the members of the Association.

In November 2001, staff assembled representatives from the Shoreline Chamber of Commerce, Shoreline Fire Department, Shoreline Community College, the Council of Neighborhoods, the Shoreline Lake Forest Park Arts Council and other organizations to determine interest in establishing a Shoreline Sister Cities Association.

Staff outlined the steps needed to form a sister cities association, including developing a mission, establishing bylaws, creating a strategic vision, and filing for necessary state and federal incorporations. Working throughout the winter, staff facilitated discussions to craft these steps. In late Spring, the group started the final steps to incorporation, including establishing a board of directors. Most recently, the group finalized the incorporation process with the Washington State Secretary of State, creating a formal non-profit organization. The group is also seeking Internal Revenue Service certification as a charitable non-profit organization, which is vital to fundraising efforts.

With the group now incorporated, the City has an obligation to develop a Sister City Relationship Policy. Staff worked at the last meeting of the Sister Cities Association to review and comment on a Sister City Relationship Policy. This policy has been revised to reflect that discussion, and is ready for Council review.

DISCUSSION

The Sister City Relationship Policy (Attachment A) serves as the policy guidance to staff for the selection, creation and managing on-going relationships with other sister cities and the Shoreline Sister Cities Association. It also outlines the roles and responsibilities for the City and the Sister Cities Association.

Objectives
The objectives for entering into sister city relationships are to seek an enhanced understanding of international culture, heritage and problem solving. In particular, sister city relationships should provide mutual benefit by creating opportunities to participate in social, cultural, educational, governmental, environmental and economic exchanges. It is also an opportunity to develop economic ties for trade and tourism. It also is an important avenue to increase knowledge and understanding of diversity, both here and abroad.

Sister city relationships should not be construed as being a commercial endeavor. While many communities look to creating economic ties with a sister city relationship, this is different from creating a venue for commerce. Creating economic ties looks to draw upon the goodwill established through cultural, educational and social exchanges to create contacts for future commerce. In contrast, it is not intended as a venue for businesses to market or sell products as a primary means of commerce. As Council is aware, the State of Washington Constitution prohibits official actions that create private gain from public funds.

Selection Guidelines
As Council is aware, our community values openness and fair and equal treatment. As such, it is important to provide equal consideration to all foreign cities interested in forming a sister city relationship. Simply stated, we will equally consider requests, based on consistent selection guidelines.

In general, we look to select sister city relationships where there is strong community support, including support from residents, businesses and institutions in Shoreline. We also look to political units who are similar to Shoreline in terms of size, population, similar challenges in relation to geography, or a similar role in regional affairs.

It is important to note that not all countries have cities as we know them. Many Asian nations have a form of government that creates a large political subdivision that links what we would consider City, County and State units. Some European countries have "de facto" cities, created centuries ago, but not formally managed as a distinct geographic area. More than anything, we are creating relations between communities, which may be part of larger political subdivisions, when we create relationships.

Selection Process

The process for selecting a potential sister city relationship starts with a letter of interest to the City on behalf of a prospective sister city. This letter should include a general statement about why a relationship should be created, a description of how the requestor City meets the objectives and selection criteria outlined above. The letter should also include a petition or letter of support by at least twenty people with local addresses who express a willingness to support a long-term, broad-based relationship with the requestor City. The petitioners should also agree to become active members of the Shoreline City Cities Association to promote and support sister city relationships in general.

Staff feels that while some initial discussions may be started by requests to Council, it is the role and responsibilities of the Shoreline Sister Cities Association to work behind the scenes to learn more about any requestor city. The Association would determine local support and become an advocate by creating connections with local residents willing to support the relationship.

Once a letter of interest is submitted, the City Manager will review the letter and supporting information, making a recommendation to the City Council on whether or not to support a sister city relationship. If the City Manager recommends creating a relationship, and the City Council concurs with this recommendation, the City will extend a Friendship City relationship for the first two years.

Friendship City vs. Sister City

A friendship city relationship provides a two-year window of opportunity to gauge compatibility and determine the long-term interest in pursuing a relationship. During this period, there is no formal structure to the relationship and no obligations between the cities. During this time, the Shoreline Sister Cities Association will encourage creating exchanges, sharing travel and culture information, and building community support for a relationship. The City will enter into a memorandum of understanding with the friendship city, which outlines a plan of action for the next two years and conveys the two-year term as being a precursor to a formal sister city relationship.

A memorandum of understanding between the Shoreline Sister Cities Association would also be created to outline roles and responsibilities, and detail how the relationship will be fostered within the City's existing resources.

Following the two years of friendship city status, the Shoreline Sister Cities Association would make a recommendation on whether or not the Shoreline Sister Cities Association, based on the plan of action, feels the relationship is in the community's best interest. This recommendation could recommend either creating a formal sister city relationship or providing one additional two-year period as a friendship city.

Following the establishment of a formal sister city relationship, the City Manager, with the assistance of the Shoreline Sister Cities Association, will provide an annual report on the activities and accomplishments of each relationship.

City Roles

Based on prior Council input, the City does not plan to provide financial or significant in-kind support from the City. The City's role is largely seen as providing in-kind services, such as making schedule arrangements with Councilmembers and the City's Leadership Team to host visits from counterparts with the friendship or sister city. The City may also pursue athletic competitions, provide meeting, exhibition or recreation facilities for exchanges and share information about municipal problem-solving, as the City's resources allow.

Unlike the current relationship with the Shoreline Lake Forest Park Arts Council, and the Shoreline Historical Museum, staff does not suggest providing ongoing funding for the Shoreline Sister Cities Association. The City may become a dues paying member of the Association.

As Council is aware, creating sister city relationships is not a mandated service of the City. While these relationships are a valuable endeavor, providing direct financial support creates the risk of reducing services we are mandated to provide.

Sister City Association Roles

The Shoreline Sister Cities Association will serve to support friendship and sister city relationships. This includes:

- Assisting the City in learning about potential relationship cities, and making recommendations to the City Manager on how to proceed.
- Developing the resources needed to support the plans of action for each relationship. Linking organizations, people and institutions in Shoreline with counterparts in relationship cities.
- Conducting fund-raising
- Planning, organizing, and implementing exchanges and formal visits
- Communicating with the City organization about opportunities for involvement

Terminating Relationships

While everyone expects every relationship to succeed, there may be occasions where it is in either party's best interests to no longer pursue a relationship. As a result, the City Council reserves the right to terminate a relationship for:

- Lack of interest.
- Failure to maintain active membership to support activities.
- Lack of progress on the plan of action.
- Behavior that violates federal, state or local laws on behalf of any party.
- Change in policy direction by the City Council.

RECOMMENDATION

No action is required. Staff is seeking Council input and consensus regarding the draft Sister City Relationship Policy. A formal resolution will follow this discussion to adopt this policy at a later date.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Draft Sister City Relationship Policy

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Sister City Relationship Policy (DRAFT)

OBJECTIVES

The City of Shoreline in entering into sister city relationships seeks international relationships which will enhance its citizens' understanding of other cultures, and/or which will allow the City to engage in productive and mutually beneficial exchanges of new technology, techniques, and solutions to problems with cities of comparable development. The City will support and encourage the establishment of sister city affiliations which serve the following objectives:

- To provide opportunities for citizens that live or work in Shoreline who wish to participate in social, cultural, educational, governmental, environmental, and economic exchanges.
- To enhance citizens' economic well-being by developing opportunities for trade and tourism.
- To provide opportunities for citizens that live or work in Shoreline to work on international projects.
- To share expertise in addressing problems.
- To develop business and economic ties in Shoreline with other parts of the world.
- To increase knowledge of and sensitivity to diversity here and abroad.

SELECTION GUIDELINES

The following is a composite of different factors for consideration when selecting a sister city. These factors are recognized as subjective in nature and are to be used as general tools to assist in the selection process. The awareness that a desire to learn from and share experiences with another city can, in some cases, balance the lack of similar characteristics with a potential sister city.

- Strong Shoreline community support.
- Strong support by the business community and/or other key organizations/institutions in the community.
- The existence of a charitable nonprofit organization or a proposed charitable nonprofit organization/institution which is able to work closely with the City of Shoreline.

Similarity to the City of Shoreline in terms of:

- size, either absolutely or in relation to the region, e.g., the City of Shoreline is approximately 11 square miles; Seattle is approximately 84 square miles. King County is approximately 2126 square miles.
- population, either absolutely or in relation to the region, e.g., the City of Shoreline's population is 53020. Seattle has a population of 563,374. The proposed city is adjacent to or within 20 miles to a large urban center.
- the proposed city has infrastructure challenges presented by a similar geographic condition, e.g., hilly terrain, surrounded by mountains and arms of the sea; density; infrastructure in place to allow accessibility to and from city.
- the proposed city has a similar role in the region, e.g., a key player in regional, economic and political activities.
- a history of informal relations between the two communities.

An interest in sharing views and information on issues of governance and citizen/governmental relationships.

Recognized as a municipal government or similar political subdivision of an independent state of the world with which the United States has diplomatic relations at the time the selection is considered.

SELECTION PROCESS

In order to ensure that sister city affiliations reflect the community's interests and are managed effectively by the City of Shoreline in partnership with an active volunteer organization(s), requests to the City for sister city affiliations shall be evaluated as follows:

A. Any city or organization may submit a Letter of Interest to the City of Shoreline on behalf of a proposed sister city. This letter should also include:

- A statement, along with a general description of the city, indicating why the requestor city wants to become a sister city with the City of Shoreline.
- A description of how the requestor city meets the Objectives and Selection Guidelines of this Policy.
- A petition with the names, addresses, and phone numbers, of at least twenty (20) people who:
  - attest to a long-term, broad-based interest in establishing a sister city relationship with the petitioning city; and
  - are, or who will agree to become, active members of a volunteer citizen organization to support that relationship.

B. An initial summary review for general fit and applicability with the Objectives and Guidelines shall be completed by the City Manager within 30 days of receipt of the Letter of Interest.

C. The City Manager shall in a timely manner make a recommendation to the City Council as to whether a sister city affiliation should be pursued, based on the selection criteria and the objectives stated above.

D. Friendship City Status:

1. The City Council shall designate the requestor city as a Friendship City for the first two years. The designation of Friendship City means that there is no formal structure to the city-to-city relationship and there are no formal obligations between the cities. The two-year trial period will give both cities the opportunity to continue to gauge compatibility and to determine if there is a long-term commitment on the parts of both cities to enter into a formalized sister city relationship.
2. A "Memorandum of Understanding" between the City of Shoreline and the Friendship City will be prepared agreeing to a plan of action for the two-year trial time period. If needed, an extension of up to an additional two years may be granted by the City Council.
3. A "Memorandum of Understanding" between the Shoreline Sister Cities Association and the City of Shoreline agreeing to a plan of action of how the non-profit organization will support the friendship city relationship being established within the City's existing resources, staffing and authority.

E. Formal Sister City Status:

Following the two-year Friendship City period, the Shoreline Sister Cities Association will make its final recommendation to the City Manager prior to the City Council's final decision regarding an on-going formal sister city relationship. This recommendation will be based on the accomplishments of the Shoreline Sister Cities Association related to the plan of action outlined in the memorandum of understanding and the accomplishments of the plan of action between the Friendship City.

F. City Involvement

The City supports the Shoreline Sister Cities Association through largely indirect means, and does not intend to provide on-going funding for operations. In general, the City will support the Association's efforts through combined promotion and publicity efforts, assisting with scheduling Council and Staff attendance at local exchanges, visits by delegations and providing meeting room space for Association business. The City may also work with the Association to provide opportunities for exchanges with recreational programming and special events as resources allow. The City may support the Association as a dues paying member.

G. Annual Review of Sister City Relationship

Following the establishment of a formal Sister City relationship, the City Manager, with the assistance of the Shoreline Sister Cities Association's leadership, will present an annual report to the City Council at a regularly scheduled workshop meeting. This report should outline the current plan of action, the accomplishments of this plan, and recommendations for updating the plan with new goals for the following calendar year. The City Council will accept, modify or reject the recommendations for updating the plan for the next year for the relationship.

H. Termination

The City Council can terminate a sister city relationship for the following reasons:

- Lack of continued interest on the part of the Shoreline Sister Cities Association or the friendship/sister city
- Failure to maintain an active membership roster to support the Shoreline Sister Cities Association's activities
- Lack of progress on the plan of action as outlined in the memorandum of understanding between the City and the Shoreline Sister Cities Association in with regards to the current annual plan of action
- Behavior on the part of the Shoreline Sister Cities Associations, its volunteers, or paid staff, that violates federal, state or local laws.
- Change in policy direction of the City Council in regards to international activities.