



Tacoma Sister Cities

City Manager's Office
City Council Study Session
August 4, 2026
Item 1

Agenda for Today

- History of the Sister Cities Program
- Transition of the Program to the Mayor's Office
- Our International Relationships
- Current Initiatives
- Ways to get involved

Sister Cities History



- Sister Cities International was created at President Eisenhower's 1956 White House conference on citizen diplomacy and creating bonds between people from different cities around the world.
- Tacoma has been involved from the very beginning with Sylvia Sass named to the Inaugural Founders Circle by Eisenhower himself. Our first Sister City relationship was formed in 1959 with Kitakyushu, Japan.



Sister Cities History



- Sister Cities was a committee under the city's CBC structure until 1993 when it moved to an independent nonprofit model.
- The City provided much of the coordination and management of the programs of Sister Cities through 2017 when the role shifted to more of a liaison role.
- February 2025, strategic realignment of city services led to moving the program into the Mayor's Office from CED.



Types of International Relationships

Sister Cities

- Highest level of formal relationship
- Approved by City Council

Friendship Cities

- Serve as a first step toward deeper relationships
- Typically time limited
- Approved by City Council

Provisional Friendship Cities

- Emerging relationships
- Can be established by MOU by the Mayor, or by motion of the Sister Cities Council

Our International Relationships

Sister Cities

- 1959 – Kitakyushu, Japan
- 1978 – Gunsan, South Korea
- 1986 – Aalesund, Norway
- 1992 – Vladivostok, Russia
- 1994 – Fuzhou, China
- 1994 – Davao City, Philippines
- 2000 – Taichung, Taiwan
- 2000 – Cienfuegos, Cuba
- 2008 – El Jadida, Morocco
- 2012 – Biot, France
- 2016 – Boca Del Rio, Mexico
- 2017 – Brovary, Ukraine
- 2025 – Split, Croatia
- 2026 – Garden Route Municipality, South Africa (Elevated from George, 1997)

Friendship Cities

- 2005 – Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico
- 2006 – Mianyang, China
- 2006 – Maseru, Lesotho
- 2025 – Kochi, India

Provisional Friendship Cities

- 2016 – Wuhan, China
- 2024 – Tulua, Colombia
- 2024 – Ningbo, China
- 2024 – Putuo District, Shanghai, China
- 2025 – Nanshan District, Shenzhen, China
- 2025 – Mannheim, Germany

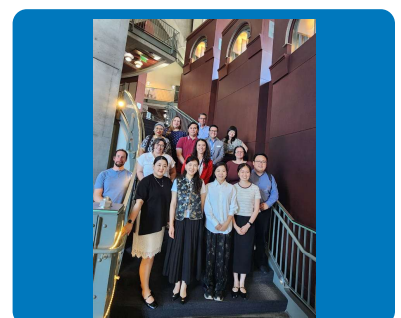
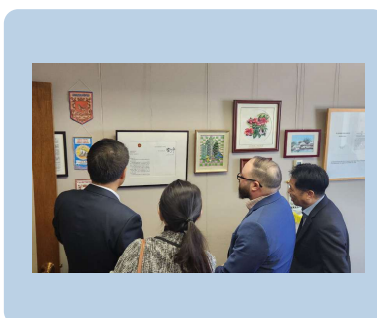
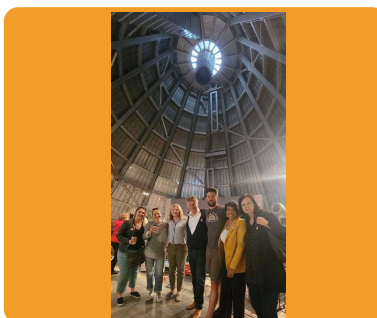
Youth Exchanges

- Exchange through Sports
- Sister Schools
- School Visits



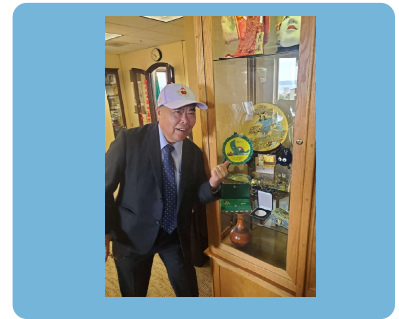
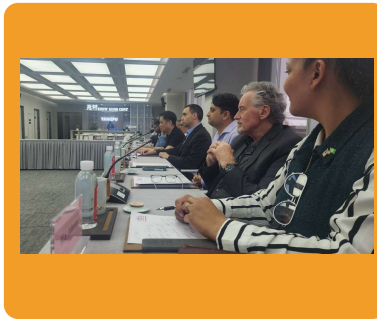
Cultural Exchanges

- Artist Exchanges
- Parks and Commemorative Landmarks
- Museum Exchanges



Economic Development

- Knowledge Exchanges
- Port of Tacoma shipping and warehousing
- Opportunities for Product exchanges and sales



Responsibilities

City of Tacoma

- Partner on hosting and leading delegations
- Manage Mayor and Council Travel and visits
- Support development of new relationships and processes
- Maintain government to government communications
- Manage Tacoma's SCI membership
- Attend Sister Cities Council Meetings as requested

Tacoma Sister Cities Council

- Partner on hosting and leading delegations
- Manage and report on budget, activities and projects
- Coordinate Friendship and Sister City Committees
- Maintain active communications with the City and Sister Cities International
- Encourage community engagement
- Attend Tacoma City Council Study Sessions as requested

Current Initiatives 2026 - 2027

TSC Signage Project on Tollefson Plaza

Installation in 2027

Tacoma Sister Cities Conference

Next Fall
October 2027

Increase Membership
by 50%
Increase Funding
by 50%
Increase Newsletter
signup by 50%

Sports Diplomacy
Tacoma Econ Trades
Dragon Boat MOU
Dormant and Engaged
relationships

Financial Report 2026 - 2027

Year to Date
Revenue
\$57,226

Year to Date
Expenses
\$50,092

Reserves For
Projects
\$68,943

Financial Position

Current Assets
\$115, 867
Current Operating Cost
\$46,924

Current committee initiatives People to People Diplomacy

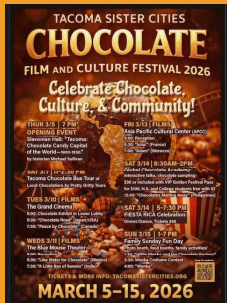
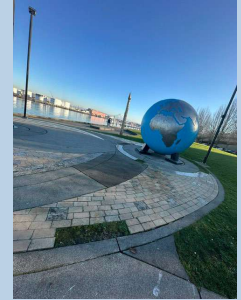


APCC hosted delegation



Chinese Reconciliation
Park Foundation
Partnership Tours and hosted
delegation

New Tacoma Neighborhood Council – Thea's Park

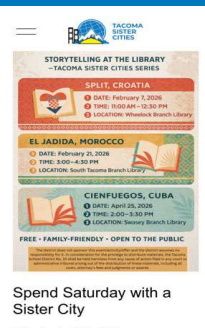


Tacoma Sister Cities Film Festival
Presented on City Line – TV Tacoma



Internship for Film Students
Partnership with
Blue Mouse Theater

Special Film Screening at the Grand Cinema



Storytelling at
the Library
Tacoma Sister
Cities Series

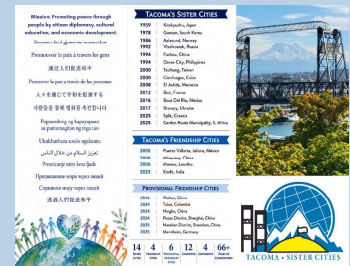


Spend Saturday with a
Sister City

Cienfuegos Committee Art work



New 2026 TSC Brochure



Tacoma Sister
Cities partnership
with TPS Fawcett
Elementary

History of
Tacoma
Chocolate
At the Slavonian
Hall



As we commemorate 70 years of citizen diplomacy, this is also an opportunity to look ahead. Tacoma Sister Cities has endured and thrived because of the commitment of volunteers, community, local partners, municipal leaders, international partners, and supporters who believe in the power of people-to-people diplomacy. That mission remains unchanged.

We are committed to strengthening the organization, improving transparency and governance, supporting our team, and positioning us for continued success in the years ahead. We are optimistic about the future, and we are grateful for your partnership as we begin this next chapter together.

Ways to get involved

Tacoma Sister Cities General Council Public meeting.

4th Wednesday at
APCC Hybrid

Share, Support, and Promote
TSC

Ask:

1. Volunteer as a Liaison to one of the committees
2. Become a member!

August 15th, 2026
TSC Membership retreat
Eastside Community Center
8:30am

September 19th, 2026
International Peace Day
at
Thea's Peace Park

October 24th, 2026
Passport around the world
at
Eastside Community Center

December 9th, 2026
TSC Winter Party



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CITY OF
Tacoma