



## Report to City Council

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**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Brian Mohan, City Manager

**AGENDA DATE:** November 4, 2025

**TITLE:** BACKGROUND INFORMATION REGARDING THE SISTER CITY PROGRAM (REPORT OF: CITY MANAGER) (DISTRICT: NOT APPLICABLE)

**TITLE SUMMARY:** Background information regarding the Sister City Program

**DISTRICT:** Not Applicable

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### Recommendation(s)

That the City Council:

1. Review background information about Moreno Valley's Sister City Program and provide any necessary direction.

### SUMMARY

On October 21, 2025, Council approved a motion to agendize a future item to discuss reestablishing our Sister City relationships with San Juan de los Lagos. This report provides background information regarding the City of Moreno Valley's Sister City Program and its related activities.

### DISCUSSION

#### About Sister City Programs

While Sister City programs and relationships vary widely in organizational structure, they typically exist to promote goodwill and community advancement through cultural, educational, humanitarian, and economic development exchanges.

## **Moreno Valley's Sister City Program and History Overview**

The background information below was excerpted from the March 3, 2015, and June 14, 2016, Study Session staff reports that were provided to the council regarding this topic.

The City of Moreno Valley currently has a Sister City relationship with San Juan de los Lagos, Jalisco, Mexico, which was established by Resolution No. 93-57 on July 13, 1993. The majority of program activity was sponsored by businesses or paid for personally by participants. It is estimated that Sister City program-related exchanges went on hiatus in the mid-2000s due to the economic decline. In Fiscal Year 2011/2012, the \$1,100 program budget, which was previously used to host delegate receptions, was eliminated.

Because the Sister City program was largely a citizen-based committee with City Council and staff participation, there are a limited number of documents recording the program's activity. Conversations with individuals who had participated in the program assisted staff in preparing this report.

Sister City program activities included, but were not limited to:

- A Moreno Valley Unified School District (MVUSD) administered student exchange program;
- Goodwill exchanges to help the community of San Juan de los Lagos by providing Police and Fire protection training;
- Coordination for donations of vehicles, including a Riverside County fire truck, RTA bus, and an ambulance;
- Donation of a freezer to an orphanage courtesy of Waste Management;
- Goodwill exchange initiated by San Juan de los Lagos with the gift of art produced by a local artist for display at Moreno Valley City Hall;
- Loan of a sacred religious symbol -- Our Lady of San Juan de los Lagos -- that was on display at St. Christopher's church for a period of time.
- Several mutual exchanges of ideas based on cultural activities and shared government processes during Moreno Valley delegation visits to San Juan de los Lagos, and San Juan de los Lagos delegation visits to Moreno Valley.

## **Historical Timeline**

- 1991: Due to interest by the City Council, the City joined the International Trade Task Force. A Study Session was held on November 19, 1991, to review models for a Sister City program. The recommendation was not to pursue a formal Sister City International affiliation, but to be amenable to hosting international visitors.
- 1993: Resolution No. 93-57 established the adoption of San Juan de los Lagos as the City of Moreno Valley's Sister City. Minutes from the July 13, 1993, City Council meeting indicate that a relationship with San Juan de los Lagos had been under cultivation for a couple of years as a result of the direct connection that community member Romelio Ruiz established with San Juan de los Lagos.

A November 17, 1993, staff memo documents plans for the first San Juan de los Lagos delegate visit after Resolution No. 93-57 established the relationship.

- 1999: August 17, 1999, Staff report recommending the formalization of a Sister City Committee/Taskforce that was previously led by an informal group of community leaders, including members of the City Council, MVUSD, Waste Management, Riverside County Sheriff's Department, and Hispanos Unidos. The goal of the Committee/Taskforce was to improve accountability, organization, credibility, community involvement, and publicity.
- On March 3, 2015, staff provided a summary of the history of the City's Sister City Program (Program) to the City Council (Attachment 1). The direction by the City Council at that meeting was to contact San Juan de Los Lagos to gauge their interest in reviving the program/ relationship. A letter of inquiry was sent on behalf of (then) Mayor Molina in May 2015, and staff received confirmation in January 2016 that the current leadership in San Juan de Los Lagos is interested in reviving the program (Attachment 2).
- As of the posting of this report, staff is working to coordinate a video conference meeting to alleviate both agencies from travel costs at this time.
- Council direction included surveying the community to gain the community's perspective on the program. The survey that was administered over the 2015 summer, between June and September, yielded more than 2,900 views and netted 73 responses (Attachment 2). The majority of respondents indicated the following:
  - In favor of re-establishing the existing program, however, using current City resources was unfavorable;
  - In favor of reviewing new cities for consideration; and
  - Preferences for activities were cultural and student exchange programs.
- In September 2015, (then) Council Member Gutierrez and staff met with Moreno Valley Unified School District Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer, Dr. White and Dr. Kedziora, respectively, to gauge interest in a student exchange program. The outcome of the meeting was that if the City were to develop and operate a student exchange program, the District would support the effort. The level of support was undefined.

#### **Zacapu, Michoacan, Mexico: Proposed new City:**

- On February 8, 2016, the City hosted a small delegation of visitors from Zacapu, Michoacan, Mexico, led by its Mayor Presidente Municipal Gerardo Torres and included key staff representatives. The meeting was initiated by a Moreno Valley resident with ties to Zacapu, specifically to discuss the possibilities of creating a sister city relationship between Zacapu and Moreno Valley. Presidente Municipal Torres has since sent a letter establishing his desire to continue the discussions that would lead to a formal sister city

relationship (Attachment 2).

- There appear to be shared interests between Moreno Valley and Zacapu, which include a focus on youth development and economic development. Zacapu has a lot to offer in terms of rich culture, a growing economy, and a desire to exchange ideas. During their visit, officials from Zacapu indicated a large enough number of co-nationals in the Inland Empire to make a sister city relationship beneficial.
- There was no additional information after the 2016 timeframe.

### **Moving Forward (Excerpted from the June 14, 2016 Study Session)**

If the City Council decides to continue the pursuit of reviving the existing Sister City relationship with San Juan de los Lagos and/or consider a relationship with Zacapu or another city, points of consideration would include, but are not limited to:

- Moreno Valley's primary purpose of having a Sister City program. The primary purpose will help guide all future action and organizational models. For instance, if economic development is the primary purpose, working closely with the business community would be essential.
- Evaluate the level of community interest and identify resources.
- Consider a Sister City International (SCI) affiliation. The annual dues are \$1,030 (updated 2025); the cost is based on city population. The benefits of affiliation with SCI include access to expert resources, grant opportunities, training, and policy guidance.
- While such an affiliation is not mandatory, it may prove beneficial in enhancing the existing partnership with San Juan de los Lagos, as well as any additional communities that may become involved in Moreno Valley's program.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no Fiscal Impact with this action, but records indicate that in Fiscal Years 2002/2003, 2005/2006, and 2007/2008, the City expended up to \$2,600 on Sister City activities.

### **NOTIFICATION**

Publication of the Agenda.

### **PREPARATION OF STAFF REPORT**

Prepared By:  
Brian Mohan  
City Manager

Department Head Approval:  
Brian Mohan  
City Manager

### **CITY COUNCIL GOALS**

Advocacy: Develop cooperative intergovernmental relationships and be a forceful advocate of City policies, objectives, and goals to appropriate external governments, agencies and corporations.

Positive Environment: Create a positive environment for the development of Moreno Valley's future.

### **CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

- 1. Economic Development**
- 2. Public Safety**
- 3. Library**
- 4. Infrastructure**
- 5. Beautification, Community Engagement, and Quality of Life**
- 6. Youth Programs**

## Report Approval Details

Document Title:	STAFFREPORT_CM_SISTER_CITY.docx
Attachments:	- 03.03.15 Study Session - Sister City Program.pdf - 06.14.16 Study Session - Sister City Program Update - Proposed New City.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Oct 28, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Patty Rodriguez

Natalia Lopez

**No Signature - Task assigned to Dena Heald was completed by workflow administrator Patty Rodriguez**

Dena Heald

Launa Jimenez

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