



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:

Agenda Item Number: 38

Agenda Date: January 30, 2025

In Control: City Council A Session

DEPARTMENT: Economic Development Department

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Brenda Hicks-Sorensen

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

This ordinance approves a Sister City Agreement with the Island of Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain.

SUMMARY:

This ordinance approves a Sister City Agreement with the Island of Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain. While most Sister City Agreements are made between cities, there is precedent to foster relationships between different governmental entities, with the proposal here to initiate an agreement between the City of San Antonio and the Island of Lanzarote, thereby creating a broad-based, long-term partnership between two communities in two countries. San Antonio currently has two sister cities in Mexico, three in Europe, one in Africa and six in Asia. Should it be approved, Lanzarote would be San Antonio's fourth Sister City in Europe.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Sister City Program, administered by Sister Cities International, was initiated by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956 to encourage greater friendships and understanding between other nations and U.S. cities, counties, and states. In order to foster those goals, the people of San Antonio and Lanzarote agree to collaborate for the mutual benefit of our communities by exploring educational, economic and cultural opportunities.

Historic ties to Lanzarote stretch back to the founding of San Antonio. It was through King Phillip IV of Spain, whose growing concern for the protection of the territory of New Spain, that an intriguing relocation proposal was made to the citizens in the Canary Islands. The proposal requested that Canary Island families would relocate to New Spain at the expense of the King to establish a stronghold in the New World. Many answered his call throughout the islands and the Island of Lanzarote provided the majority of participants. On March 27, 1730, these families boarded the ship España headed for a new life in an unknown world.

A year later, 16 families consisting of 56 individuals arrived and settled in the Villa de Bejar creating the Plaza de Las Islas Canarias on what is now known as Main Plaza. It was through the efforts of these individuals that the first civil municipal government in the Texas was established founding what is now known as San Antonio.

As we approach the 300th Anniversary of the founding of our first civil government, the over 1,100 registered descendants of the Canary Islands Descendants Association are proposing that our ties to the Island of Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain be recognized as an integral part of our history by extending a Sister City Agreement, completing an initiative that began several decades ago.

More recently, extensive collaborative work has been done with input by architects from the Canary Islands on the redesign of Main Plaza, also known as Plaza de las Islas Canarias. A six-member delegation from Lanzarote, led by the President of the Lanzarote Island Council, visited San Antonio in 2024 to leverage historic ties and to explore and form new strategic partnerships.

ISSUE:

Sister cities are identified for consideration based upon historical, cultural, and economic ties beneficial to residents of both communities. Consideration is also given to alignment with the Metro Priority Plan and additional data analysis. Sister Cities International requires the signatures of both mayors and ratification of an agreement by the respective city governments, as means of acknowledging the intended commitment. For this reason, City of San Antonio protocol for Sister City designations requires approval via City Council ordinance.

ALTERNATIVES:

City Council could choose not to approve a Sister City Agreement with Lanzarote. However, not approving this agreement would be inconsistent with the City of San Antonio's emphasis on cultivating cultural, educational, and economic development ties with cities and regions of historic significance to San Antonio.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This ordinance does not have a fiscal impact.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the Sister City Agreement between the Island of Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain, and San Antonio, Texas.