



City of San Antonio

Legislation Details (With Text)

File #: 17-3016

Type: Miscellaneous Item

In control: City Council A Session

On agenda: 5/18/2017

Title: An Ordinance authorizing the City of San Antonio to enter into a Sister City Agreement with the City of Darmstadt, Federal Republic of Germany. [Carlos J. Contreras, Assistant City Manager, Rene Dominguez, Director, Economic Development]

Sponsors:

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments: 1. Draft Ordinance, 2. Final Agreement, 3. Ordinance 2017-05-18-0347

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
5/18/2017	1	City Council A Session	Motion to Approve	Pass

DEPARTMENT: Economic Development

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Rene Dominguez

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: City-wide

SUBJECT:

Sister City Agreement with the City of Darmstadt, Federal Republic of Germany

SUMMARY:

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 the City of Darmstadt, Federal Republic of Germany agree to collaborate for the mutual benefit of our communities by exploring educational, economic and cultural opportunities. Darmstadt would join ten other cities with the formal designation of San Antonio Sister City.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

San Antonio has long celebrated its deep and historic ties with Germany, including specifically with Darmstadt, dating to the 1840s when 40 young Darmstadt intellectuals came to Texas to found a colony in the Texas Hill

Country. A number of them settled in San Antonio, including Dr. Ferdinand Ludwig Herff, who served as the city's Health Officer and was instrumental in founding, along with the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio's first hospital, the Santa Rosa Infirmary. The infirmary would become Christus Santa Rosa whose Children's Hospital, considered one of the best in the country, serves over 100,000 outpatient visits annually.

Other reminders of the influence of German settlers can still be seen throughout the City, most notably in the historic King William District (named after King Wilhelm of Prussia) and the Beethoven Maennerchor, which just celebrated in 150th Anniversary.

In the present day, Darmstadt and San Antonio are aligned in multiple key industries: Darmstadt is considered the number one city for cybersecurity in Germany and is the center of a thriving startup scene and the presence of the European Space Operations Centre makes Darmstadt the unofficial Aerospace Capital of Europe. Southwest Research Institute already has an important connection with Darmstadt as they developed two of the instruments used on the Rosetta Mission and have worked with Darmstadt engineers at the Space Operations Center for the past 12 years. Also, in alignment with San Antonio's biomed focus, Darmstadt hosts the global headquarters for Merck, the pharmaceutical giant. In addition, both cities have UNESCO World Heritage sites and place a premium on educational and cultural exchange.

Mayor Taylor and Councilwoman Viagran first visited Darmstadt during the UNESCO World Heritage Announcement ceremony that took place in Germany, in 2015. A Letter of Intent was signed then between the two cities on July 2, 2015. Mayor Taylor then signed a Friendship City Agreement, in San Antonio, with the Lord Mayor of Darmstadt, Jochen Partsch, on April 29, 2016, creating the first such formal relationship between San Antonio and Germany, a key target country for the City, according to the San Antonio Trade and Investment Strategy.

Through the signing of a Sister City Agreement, Darmstadt and San Antonio will jointly support continued efforts to strengthen relations and promote economic cooperation, bilateral trade and cultural and educational exchanges in fields including IT/cybersecurity, heritage tourism, aerospace, biomedical/health care and renewable energy.

San Antonio currently has two sister cities in Mexico (Monterrey and Guadalajara), two in Spain's Canary Islands (Las Palmas and Santa Cruz de Tenerife), five in Asia (Kumamoto, Japan; Gwangju, Korea; Kaohsiung, Taiwan; Chennai; India and Wuxi, China) and one in Africa (Windhoek, Namibia). If a Darmstadt Sister City relationship is approved, it would link the City's industrious and prosperous German past to today's efforts to identify educational, economic and cultural opportunities for the benefit of all citizens.

ISSUE:

Sister Cities International requires the signatures of both Mayors and ratification of the agreement by the respective city governments. In following the protocol of Sister Cities International, the governments of Darmstadt and San Antonio acknowledge the importance of intent to approve the Sister City Agreement. This agreement will increase educational and cultural exchanges, foreign direct investment, trade and tourism which will broaden and deepen the relationship between Darmstadt and San Antonio.

ALTERNATIVES:

City Council could choose not to approve a Sister City Agreement with the City of Darmstadt, Federal Republic of Germany. However, this would be a missed opportunity to establish trade and investment potential and to encourage mutual understanding and friendship through educational and cultural exchange.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Sister City Agreement between the City of Darmstadt, Federal Republic of Germany and the City of San Antonio, Texas contains no specific commitment of funds. However, the International Relations Office budget supports ongoing sister city programs.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the Sister City Agreement between the City of Darmstadt, Federal Republic of Germany and the City of San Antonio, Texas.