

Policy Briefing Summary

City Council



Regarding:	Resolution to approve establishment of a Sister City partnership with Huehuetenango, Guatemala
Staff Contact(s):	Maxicelia Robinson, Deputy Clerk of Council
Presenter:	Edward Herring - Chairperson
Date of Proposed Action:	November 17, 2025

Issue

N/A

Background / Rule

The mission of the Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission (CSCC) is to promote understanding and foster relationships between citizens and organizations in the Charlottesville area and our sister cities through cultural, economic, educational, and humanitarian activities. The City of Charlottesville is currently a Sister City partner with Besançon, France; Poggio, Italy; and Winneba, Ghana.

Since the establishment of the Friendship City relationship between the City of Charlottesville and Huehuetenango, Guatemala, our cities have engaged in mutually beneficial exchanges rooted in cultural appreciation, educational connections, and community engagement. This relationship has grown steadily through active participation from both cities and with the support of local organizations, including the GuateMaya Alliance (formerly the Ixtatan Foundation), which has played a key role in fostering ties between our communities.

This partnership reflects values that align with the mission of the Sister City program, including cross-cultural understanding, grassroots collaboration, and people-to-people diplomacy. Huehuetenango and Charlottesville share many areas of mutual interest and potential for continued collaboration, from arts and education to sustainable development and civic engagement. Given the demonstrated commitment on both sides and the growing momentum of engagement, the CSCC and New City Committee fully supports the elevation of Huehuetenango to official Sister City status and recommends the City Council to approve this next step.

Analysis

On December 7, 2020, the Charlottesville City Council approved the establishment of a Friendship City relationship with Huehuetenango, Guatemala. Since that time, the conditions to advance to full Sister City status have been fulfilled:

1. Initiating the Request

- Proposals accepted by the Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission
- Community engagement conducted
- Proposal vetted and approved by vote for Friendship City status
- New City Committee formed

2. Active Engagement in a 3-Year Friendship City Relationship

- Regular Zoom meetings and communications with partners in Huehuetenango
- Visit to Huehuetenango in February 2023 by New City Committee Chair, Edward Herring
- CSCC grant-funded project for Huehue
- Huehue Book Drive initiative

3. Exploratory Visits Between Cities

- Huehuetenango delegation visited Charlottesville in November 2023
- Charlottesville delegation visited Huehuetenango in October 2025

4. Demonstrated Community Support

- Local volunteers from Charlottesville City Schools and the community have expressed interest in supporting the partnership.
- Commissioner Kristen Petros de Guex, a member of the Guatemalan community, is coordinating an informal community group of individuals and families from Huehuetenango and Central America, along with local residents who have cultural, linguistic, or personal ties to the region.
- The GuateMaya Alliance (formerly Ixtatán Foundation) will serve as the local advocacy group. Founded 23 years ago in the wake of the 1996 Guatemala Peace Accords, GuateMaya is a nonprofit organization operating in Huehuetenango and based in Charlottesville, VA.

Financial Impact

There will be no impact on the City's FY2027 budget.

Recommendation

It is staff's recommendation that the Charlottesville City Council elevate our existing relationship with Huehuetenango, Guatemala, from Friendship City to Sister City status.

Recommended Motion (if Applicable)

Motion to approve the resolution authorizing the establishment of a Sister City partnership between the City of Charlottesville, Virginia, and Huehuetenango, Guatemala, as well as approval of the Memorandum of Understanding as written and agreed upon by both cities.

Attachments

1. RES_Establish Charlottesville and Huehue Sister City Partnership
2. MOU_Charlottesville and Huehue Sister City Partnership
3. Draft Two-year Activity Plan