



Weekly Management Report

May 9, 2025

- 1. Memo** Year 1 Update: Sister City Visioning Report
and Strategic Plan, 2024-2027
Library Services Department

- 2. Synopsis** Downtown Burbank Partnership (PBID)
Meeting on April 3, 2025
Community Development Department

MEMORANDUM



BURBANK PUBLIC LIBRARY

DATE: April 30, 2025

TO: Justin Hess, City Manager

FROM: Eric Lashley, Library Services Director
VIA: Cindy Yee Akuin, Senior Administrative Analyst *CYA*
BY: Leslie Sandoval, Administrative Analyst I *L.S.*

SUBJECT: Year 1 Update: Sister City Visioning Report and Strategic Plan, 2024-2027

BACKGROUND

The Sister Cities International (SCI) program was established in 1956 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to foster global understanding and cooperation. Burbank joined this initiative in 1960, forming its first Sister City relationship with Solna, Sweden. This was followed by partnerships with Incheon, Korea (1961), Gaborone, Botswana (1975), Ota, Japan (1983), and most recently, Arezzo, Italy (2022).

The Burbank Sister City Committee (BSCC) is an independent nonprofit community group established in 1964 that has worked in partnership with the City of Burbank to organize various activities, primarily student exchanges.

To help provide consistent support for the Sister City Program, City Council approved an Administrative Analyst I position as part of the FY 2023-24 budget. After hiring an Administrative Analyst I in December 2023, staff initiated the development of a three-year strategic plan. In January 2024, the visioning process consisted of three public meetings with over 30 attendees and interviews with key stakeholders, including nonprofit leaders, BSCC members, cultural partners, and neighboring Sister City organizations. Based on community input and research, five areas of interest were identified. These priorities now guide the program's direction, with Year 1 focused on laying the groundwork for long-term success.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2024-2027

The Sister City Visioning Report and Strategic Plan outlines five key priorities to guide the program through FY 2024-25 to 2027-28. These priorities reflect community input, stakeholder interviews, and staff research, and are designed to support meaningful, sustainable international partnerships. A detailed overview of each goal is provided in Attachment 1: Sister City Visioning Report and Strategic Plan – 3 Year Plan, 2024-2027 April 2025 Update.

1. **Strengthen Sister City Relationships:** Engage and re-establish relationships with Sister City partners.
2. **Trade, Tourism, and Economic Development:** Develop strategies to encourage trade, tourism, investment, and business partnerships between Burbank and its current and prospective Sister Cities.
3. **Education and Learning:** Engage in learning and educational opportunities for all ages.
4. **Arts and Culture:** Celebrate cultural connections through arts and cultural activities.
5. **Administration and Operations:** Establish operational improvements, with focus on program administration, communication, marketing, and capacity building.

SUMMARY OF NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In the first year of the Strategic Plan, staff made significant progress in strengthening Sister City relationships, expanding educational and cultural programming, and enhancing internal operations to ensure ongoing program support. Some key highlights for Year 1 include:

- Hosted and coordinated delegation visits with Arezzo and Incheon, while also opening new lines of communication with Ota.
- Strengthened collaboration with the Burbank Sister City Committee and local high schools, resulting in record interest in the student exchange program.
- Initiated conversations with cultural organizations, including the Korean Cultural Center, to potentially co-host events and expand learning opportunities.
- Participated in Sister Cities International's trainings and engaged consulates from Japan, Korea, and Italy.
- Launched initial efforts in economic development and arts and culture by fostering new partnerships and engaging the community.
- Improved internal operations by onboarding new staff, updating materials for BSCC, and assessing year-round budgetary needs.

These accomplishments position the program for deeper engagement and impact in the years ahead.

CONCLUSION

Looking ahead, the Sister City Program will continue building on the progress made in Year 1 by deepening international relationships, expanding cultural and educational offerings, and creating stronger connections between Burbank and its Sister Cities. Key goals over the next two years include developing ongoing communication protocols with partners, producing economic and tourism profiles, and exploring new avenues for cultural exchange and sector-specific collaborations. The program will also strengthen local partnerships, increase visibility through year-round events, and formalize operational frameworks with the BSCC. These efforts are expected to enhance mutual understanding, align activities with local priorities, and open new opportunities for economic and cultural exchange. Ultimately, the Sister City Program adds meaningful value to Burbank by promoting global awareness, celebrating diversity, and creating enriching experiences for residents of all ages.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Sister City Visioning Report and Strategic Plan – 3 Year Plan, 2024-2027
April 2025 Update



**CITY OF
BURBANK**

Sister City Visioning Report and Strategic Plan (2024-2027)

APRIL 2025 UPDATE

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Introduction

◆ MISSION

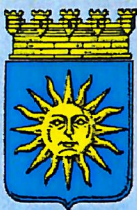
Through its Sister City program, the City of Burbank fosters meaningful connections and broadens local and global impact with economic, educational, and cultural activities.

◆ VISION

Burbank Sister City inspires a global perspective linking Burbank to international partners.

Burbank's Sister Cities

Burbank established its first Sister City relationship with Solna, Sweden, in 1960. This was followed by Incheon, Korea, in 1961; Gaborone, Botswana, in 1975; Ota, Japan, in 1983; and Arezzo, Italy, in 2022.



Solna,
Sweden



Incheon,
South Korea



Gaborone,
Botswana



Ota,
Japan



Arezzo,
Italy

Strategic Priorities for 2024-2027

This strategic plan was developed through community input sessions and stakeholder interviews conducted from January to April 2024. Based on the data gathered, five goals were identified as priorities for the Sister City Program for Fiscal Years 2024-25 through 2027-28:

Goal #1: Strengthen Sister City Relationships

- Engage and re-establish relationships with Sister City partners.

Goal #2: Trade, Tourism, and Economic Development

- Develop strategies to encourage trade, tourism, investment, and business partnerships between Burbank and its current and prospective Sister Cities.

Goal #3: Education and Learning

- Engage in learning and educational opportunities for all ages.

Goal #4: Arts and Culture

- Celebrate cultural connections through arts and cultural activities.

Goal #5: Administration and Operations

- Establish operational improvements, with focus on program administration, communication, marketing, and capacity building.

Goal #1: Strengthen Sister City Relationships

Objectives

1. Develop partnership with Arezzo, Burbank's newest Sister City.
2. Deepen relations with Incheon and Ota; work to re-establish relations with Gaborone and Solna.
3. Establish policy for adding new Sister Cities.

Notable Accomplishments: Year 1

- January 2024: Incheon Delegation Visits Burbank with former Mayor Schultz.
- July 2024: Celebrated the 40th Anniversary of Sister City relationship with Ota.
- September 2024: Participated in signing ceremony and delegation visit with Arezzo with former Vice Mayor Perez.
- March 2025: Coordinated a municipal waste tour with Incheon representatives (cancelled due to inclement weather).
- September 2025 (*In progress*): Delegation Visit for Incheon Landing Ceremony with Vice Mayor Takahashi.
- Opened communication to further sister city exchange partnerships and other opportunities with Ota and Incheon.
- Participated in Sister City International and Southern California Sister City meetings and trainings to understand about how other SCs are established; governance; best practices and administrative procedures.



Goal #1: Strengthen Sister City Relationships

In Progress

1. By 2026, develop messaging and greetings to Sister City partners as appropriate, such as for the New Year, changes in leadership, partnership anniversaries, or culturally significant occasions, to re-engage with each Sister City.
2. By 2026, coordinate with Mayor and City Manager's Office for upcoming invitations and acknowledgements.
3. By 2027, initiate quarterly check in with each Sister City on areas of collaboration.

Outcome

Burbank and its Sister Cities have a deeper understanding of each other and can align activities with local goals.



Goal #2: Trade, Tourism, and Economic Development

Objectives

1. Review economic development priorities and strengths for each Sister City and analyze opportunities for Burbank.
2. Explore opportunities for foreign direct investment (FDI) in Burbank, in coordination with the City Economic Development Strategic Plan.
3. Assess possibilities for targeted tourism campaigns to attract visitors from Sister Cities.

Notable Accomplishments: Year 1

- Gathered initial ideas from Economic Development during visioning process.
- Developed relationships with local Consulates (Japan, Italy, and Korea).



Goal #2: Trade, Tourism, and Economic Development

In Progress

1. By 2026, research and develop economic profiles of each of our current Sister Cities.
2. By Spring 2025, follow up meeting with Economic Development to better understand City strategy with foreign direct investments (FDI) and opportunities for partnership.
3. By 2027, explore tourism development with hubs such as Incheon (attract visitors to major tourism here WB Visitors Center, Universal Studios, health tourism – Cancer, ER).
4. Ongoing: Track neighboring cities' strategy in attracting foreign business via Sister City strategy (this is one of their prime initiatives in forming new relationships with Sister Cities).
5. Ongoing: Consider local businesses that have representation and find ways to boost their business through coordination as part of Sister City (e.g. creative arts sector, martial arts, food/dining, wine); Sister City representative at downtown Cultural Market).
6. Ongoing: Consider sectors that may benefit from information exchanges (e.g. Woodbury University architecture program visits the Florence area (Arezzo), musical/choral programs (Arezzo), filming (Arezzo), renewable energy, sustainability (Botswana) post-production and animation (Korea and Florence), sustainability and livability (Sweden).

Outcome

Burbank's local economy is strengthened through mutually beneficial business and tourism activities with Sister Cities.

Goal #3: Education and Learning

Objectives

1. Offer learning and educational opportunities for Burbank residents.
2. Continue support for youth development, through activities including student exchanges and youth leadership opportunities.
3. Explore professional or sector-specific learning and information sharing opportunities (medical, entertainment, government).

Notable Accomplishments

- Dedicated staff member supporting student exchange program yielded in positive results:
 - Interest in student exchange program has grown exponentially after coordinated marketing efforts and relationships with partners:
 - In past years, 5–8 students served as active delegates; in 2025, over 100 participants attended recruitment events, resulting in 29 applicants for 10 available positions.
 - Nine qualified chaperones interest to fill 2 delegate positions.
- Burbank High School and John Burroughs High School each have a teacher advisor and student representatives leading their respective Sister City clubs.
- Facilitated conversations with partner cultural organizations to co-design events with the Library, including a program with the Korean Cultural Center on Korean customs and etiquette (September 2025).



Goal #3: Education and Learning

In Progress

1. By 2026, in coordination with community partners, identify year-round program schedule for educational and cultural events representing each Sister City.
2. By 2026, explore relationships with Japan Foundation LA, Japanese American National Museum, Japanese Cultural Center, Korean Cultural Center, Fondazione Italia (language school in Burbank), Italian American Museum, IKEA Burbank, Consulate General for all represented countries, and, local faith-based groups on educational programming.
3. By 2027, assess the feasibility of expanding exchange programs beyond the current two Sister Cities.

Outcome

Burbank residents of all ages are more knowledgeable about Sister Cities and have broader understanding of relevant global information and trends.



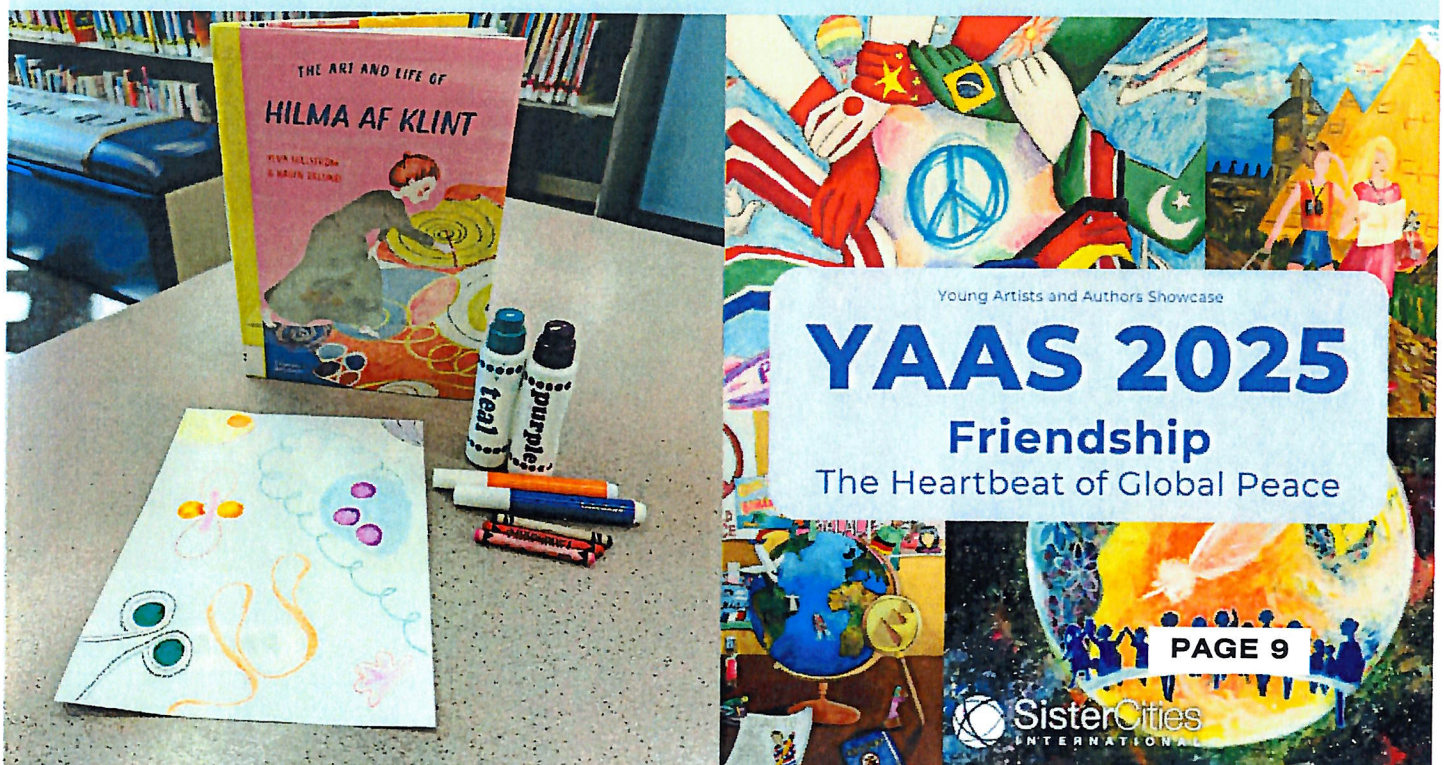
Goal #4: Arts and Culture

Objectives

1. Identify arts and cultural activities in partnership with Sister Cities and/or highlighting the culture of Sister Cities.
2. Deepen knowledge of successful arts and culture activities and exchanges among other cities with established Sister City programs.
3. Coordinate with the Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Department (P&R) arts staff to develop offerings that align with local goals.

Notable Accomplishments: Year 1

- Gathered initial ideas from P&R and Cultural Arts Commission during visioning process.
- Participated in Sister Cities International (SCI) arts and culture webinar to learn more about other global arts partnerships.
- Actively solicited participants in SCI's Youth Artists and Authors Showcase.



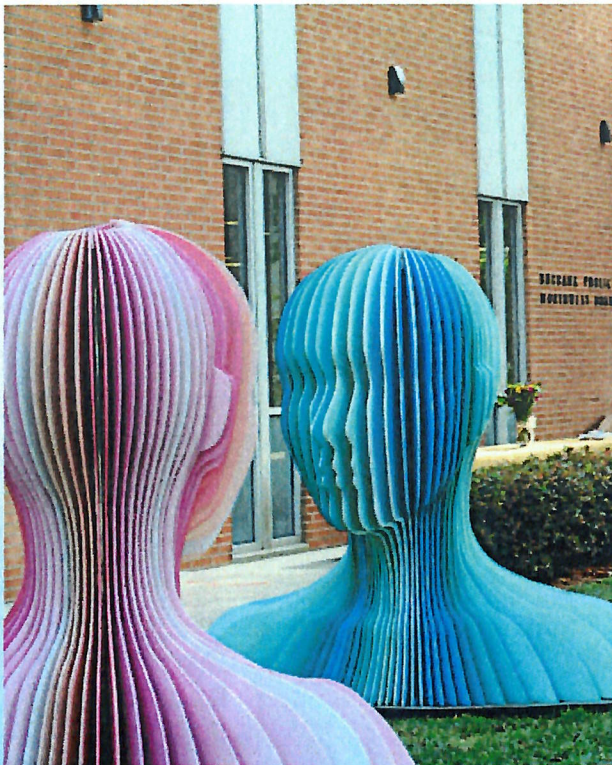
Goal #4: Arts and Culture

In Progress

1. By 2026, explores relationships with Japan Foundation LA, Japanese American National Museum, Japanese Cultural Center, Korean Cultural Center, Fondazione Italia (language school in Burbank), Italian American Museum of Los Angeles, IKEA Burbank, Consulate General for all represented countries, local faith-based groups on interest in arts and cultural programming.
2. By 2027, collaborate with community-based organizations (P&R, Arts Commission, nonprofits) that put on community events by offering opportunities to bring arts and cultural representation from our Sister Cities.

Outcome

Burbank's arts and cultural assets are highlighted on a global scale while arts and cultural understanding grows among residents.



Goal #5: Administration and Operations

Objectives

1. Document standards and best practices for current and new Sister City activities, including visits from dignitaries and requests for assistance from Sister Cities.
2. Based on pilot activities, analyze ongoing budgetary and resource requirements needed for Burbank's Sister City program.
3. Work with the independent nonprofit organization, Burbank Sister City Committee (BSCC), to establish and document mutual roles and responsibilities.

Notable Accomplishments: Year 1

- Training and onboarding from Senior Administrative Analyst to Administrative Analyst I.
- Revised student exchange materials and handbooks to assist with new BSCC leadership.
- Served as an advisory capacity with BSCC leadership.
- Created an initial budget assessment for year-round programming needs.



Goal #5: Administration and Operations

In Progress

1. By 2027, formalize relationship with Burbank Sister City Committee (non-profit, independent organization) is interested in bylaw change; coordinate that with an MOU – currently in research phase.
2. By 2027, bring a proposed recurring budget item.
3. Ongoing: Support BSCC in building by capacity and sustainability by increasing new membership.
4. Ongoing: Participate in learning and development trainings from Sister Cities International (SCI) and the SCI Southern California Chapter.

Outcome

Burbank's Sister City program is sustainable, effective, and efficient.



SisterCities
INTERNATIONAL



**CITY OF
BURBANK**

MEMORANDUM



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



DATE: April 28, 2025

TO: Justin Hess, City Manager

FROM: Patrick Prescott, Community Development Director 
VIA: Simone McFarland, Asst. Community Development Director 
Mary Hamzoian, Economic Development Manager
BY: Aida Ofsepien, Economic Development Analyst I

SUBJECT: Downtown Burbank Partnership (PBID) Meeting – April 3, 2025

- The Anna McNiven from the Burbank International Film Festival (BIFF) presented a sponsorship request for \$30,000, highlighting the festival's role in supporting independent filmmakers and promoting Burbank as a cultural hub. The 2025 event, scheduled for September 25–29 with an additional day added, is expected to draw over 3,500 attendees and feature more than 150 film screenings across six venues.
Although BIFF requested \$30,000 in sponsorship, the Board approved \$10,000 in alignment with it's budget.
- Kyle Kramer, Associate Transportation Planner from the City's Transportation Division presented a proposal to pursue Metro grant funding for pedestrian infrastructure improvements in Downtown Burbank, specifically Phase II of the San Fernando Boulevard Reconfiguration project and requested a letter of support from the PBID. The project aims to enhance walkability, safety, and overall accessibility in the area. The Board approved the support letter for the City's Metro grant application.

