

**TO:** MAYOR & COUNCILLORS  
**FROM:** INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND FRIENDSHIP CITIES  
COMMITTEE  
**SUBJECT:** **SISTER CITY VISIT TO MESA, ARIZONA IN 2024**  
**PURPOSE:** To seek Council approval for a Sister City visit to Mesa, Arizona.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** a delegation of Council be authorized to visit Mesa, Arizona in 2024; and

**THAT** representatives from Tourism Burnaby, Burnaby Board of Trade, Burnaby Board of Education, Simon Fraser University and British Columbia Institute of Technology be invited to participate in the Official Sister City visit.

### **1.0 POLICY SECTION**

The City of Burnaby maintains Sister and Friendship City relationships that meet the goals and objectives of Burnaby's International Relations and Friendship Cities Program.

A Sister City visit supports the following City policies: Climate Action Framework; Official Community Plan; Community Safety Plan; Transportation Plan; Economic Development Strategy; Environmental Sustainability Strategy; Housing and Homelessness Strategy; and Social Sustainability Strategy.

### **2.0 BACKGROUND**

Burnaby has a strong tradition of international sister and friendship city relationships. Sister and friendship cities have intrinsic long-term benefits for the community – like spreading economic and cultural awareness.

The Sister City relationship between Mesa, Arizona and Burnaby began in 1998 through a relationship between Rotary Clubs in both communities. Mesa is the second-largest city in a broad metropolitan area centered around Phoenix and is the third-largest city in Arizona. There's a fundamental commonality between the two communities, given that Burnaby is also part of a large metropolitan area and is the third-largest city in BC. Both communities are fast-growing, have a significant retail component, support the development of clean industry and are concerned about their respective environments. The two communities share common services and issues including affordable housing, historic preservation, regional transportation, traffic management, victim assistance programs, and crime prevention.

Since 1998, there have been several exchanges between Burnaby and Mesa. These exchanges have proven very successful and have resulted in mutually beneficial economic development, tourism and educational opportunities. Burnaby’s last visit to Mesa occurred in November 2016. In the summers of 2014, 2015 and 2019, Burnaby and Mesa participated in a student exchange. Mesa had invited Burnaby to visit in the fall of 2020; however, COVID pandemic did not allow for any such visits at that time.

**3.0 GENERAL INFORMATION**

In the past 10 years, Mesa, Arizona, has visited the City of Burnaby three times – 2014, 2018 & 2023. The most recent visit from Mesa (August 3 – 5, 2023) consisted of a 14 member delegation in celebration of our 25th Anniversary as a Sister City.

At its meeting held on January 11, 2024, the International Relations and Friendship Cities Committee received correspondence from Mayor John Giles extending an invitation in reciprocation to the City to participate in a Sister City visit to Mesa, Arizona from April 10 – 14, 2024, for a special celebration marking over 25 years of our Sister City relationship.

The visit is intended to focus on three key areas: Economic Development and Innovation; Transportation and Infrastructure; and, Arts and Culture.

**4.0 COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Not applicable.

**5.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The delegation would leave on April 10 and return on April 14, 2024.

The estimated cost per delegate is summarized in the table below:

Estimated Cost per Delegate	
Airfare (Economy Class Air)	\$750
Accommodations	\$1600
Meals	\$450
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,800</b>

Other additional estimated costs are summarized in the table below:

Estimated Cost	
Ground Transportation	\$3,500
Hosting Dinner	\$4,000
Tokens of Appreciation	500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8,000</b>

Sufficient funding is available in the Gaming Reserve within the International Relations budgeted line item for \$50,000. Approval is required in advance of the 2024-2028 Financial Plan Bylaw which will be presented to Council later in the Council Agenda under Bylaws.

On behalf of the International Relations and Friendship Cities Committee,

Councillor P. Calendino, Chair

Councillor J. Wang, Vice Chair

**ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Letter of Invitation from Mesa Mayor John Giles

**REPORT CONTRIBUTORS**

This report was prepared by Noreen Kassam, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer and Chief Financial Officer, and reviewed by Elaine Wong, Office Manager Mayor’s Office, and Denise Chak, Administrative Officer.

December 14, 2023

Mayor and Council  
c/o Sister Cities  
4949 Canada Way  
Burnaby, BC V5G 1M2

Dear Mayor Hurley,

I hope this letter finds you well. It is with great pleasure that the Mesa Sister City Organization and the City of Mesa invite you, esteemed staff and council members of the City of Burnaby, to join us in Mesa, Arizona, this spring for a special celebration marking over 25 years of our Sister City relationship.

We were honored to be invited to commemorate this significant milestone in Burnaby, and now we are eager to extend the festivities to Mesa. Our City has undergone remarkable growth and development since the last visit from our Burnaby counterparts. We believe your visit will offer an excellent opportunity to share Mesa's progress and discuss areas of mutual interest. We would like to focus on three key areas:

- **Economic Development and Innovation:** Mesa has made significant strides in economic growth, welcoming major technology companies like Amazon, Meta and Google, while also fostering a supportive small business environment and attracting diverse industries.
- **Transportation and Infrastructure:** Mesa prioritizes transportation and infrastructure, and our modern light rail system has improved urban mobility. We are pioneers in sustainable transportation, recently introducing one of the first fully electric fire trucks in the United States.
- **Arts and Culture:** Mesa's rich heritage and vibrant arts scene, including our dynamic Asian District, highlight our dedication to celebrating creativity and fostering cultural exchange. The Media Immersion and eXperience (MIX) Center, a collaboration with Arizona State University, and Mesa Arts Center are hubs for innovation and sharing timeless cultural experiences. During your visit, we will showcase Mesa's cultural diversity, local cuisine, and commitment to the arts.

We look forward to exchanging ideas with Burnaby to enhance the quality of life for our residents through mutual learning and experiences. The tentative dates for this celebration are set for **April 10-14, however, we can be flexible**. We are optimistic that your presence will further strengthen the ties between our two cities.

Sincerely,



Mayor John Giles