



SALT LAKE CITY TRANSMITTAL

To:
Salt Lake City Council Chair

Submission Date:
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From:

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Director Signed Date
03/18/2025

Chief Administrator Officer's Signed Date
03/21/2025

Subject:
Sister Cities 2024 Annual Report

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Document Type
Information Item

Budget Impact?
☐ Yes
☒ No

Recommendation:
See Attachment

Background/Discussion
See first attachment for Background/Discussion

Will there need to be a public hearing for this item? *
☐ Yes
☒ No

Public Process
The department sent the report to the mayor on January 31, 2025.

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ERIN MENDENHALL
MAYOR



LORENA RIFFO JENSON
DIRECTOR

DEPARTMENT of ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
CITY COUNCIL TRANSMITTAL

Jill Love, Chief Administrative Officer

Date Received: _____
Date sent to Council: _____

TO: SALT LAKE CITY COUNCIL
CHRIS WHARTON, CHAIR

DATE: MARCH 17, 2025

FROM: LORENA RIFFO JENSON, DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SUBJECT: *SISTER CITIES ANNUAL REPORT 2024*

STAFF CONTACTS: *KATIE MATHESON, MARKETING & RESEARCH MANAGER, DIPLOMACY OFFICER, KATHERINE.MATHESON@SLCGOV.COM*

DOCUMENT TYPE: *INFORMATION ITEM*

RECOMMENDATION: *REVIEW SISTER CITIES 2023*

BUDGET IMPACT: *N/A*

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION: The Sister Cities Program experienced a landmark year in 2024, marked by increased ongoing funding from the City Council and Mayor's Office. This critical support enables the program to enhance Salt Lake City's global engagement through humanitarian, economic, educational, cultural, and sustainability exchanges. With the announcement in July of 2024 that 2034 Winter Olympic Games will be held again in Salt Lake City, the program is poised to bolster our city's international presence and strengthen its identity as a world-class city through diplomatic initiatives.

Notable achievements this year included Mayor Mendenhall's delegation visit to Matsumoto, Japan, which reaffirmed our commitment to this longstanding partnership and inspired innovative opportunities for economic, cultural, and educational collaboration. Additionally, the program also developed a robust framework for evaluating potential new sister cities and assessing the efficacy of existing relationships to ensure alignment with shared goals. With these accomplishments, 2024 demonstrated the significant potential of Sister Cities to support both global and local communities.

ATTACHMENTS: SISTER CITIES 2024 ANNUAL REPORT PDF



Peace Through People

SISTER CITIES

SALT LAKE CITY
SISTER CITIES
ANNUAL REPORT 2024



**PREPARED FOR SALT LAKE CITY MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS**

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STAFF AND
SISTER CITIES BOARD MEMBERS



DEPARTMENT of
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

2024 was a banner year for the Sister Cities program!

With farsighted support from the City Council and the Mayor's office, Sister Cities received an increased ongoing budget to expand the vast potential of the program. This positions Salt Lake City to more effectively engage with the global community through humanitarian, economic, educational, cultural, and sustainability exchanges.

With the 2034 Salt Lake City Winter Olympic Games less than a decade away, Sister Cities is well-equipped to spearhead our city's preparation for the Games through its diplomatic capabilities, expand our international presence, and invigorate our identity as a world class city.

Mayor Mendenhall's October delegation visit to Matsumoto, Japan, our city's oldest and strongest international partner, demonstrated the potential for the program to create new and exciting economic collaborations. Beyond the work of renewing our shared commitment for cooperation with our Japanese partners, the delegation returned to Salt Lake with "new eyes" and feasible ideas for potential economic, cultural, and educational partnerships.

This year, we also explored ways to support our friendship with the Ukrainian city of Chernivtsi in light of their country's war with Russia. The conflict has sparked new potential for Salt Lake City, along with the LDS Church, and state and Federal partners, to connect Utah-based businesses and humanitarian organizations with our Ukrainian partners.

Finally, this year we designed a process to evaluate potential new sister cities by considering shared humanitarian, economic, educational, cultural, and sustainability goals. We also developed a process to evaluate the efficacy of existing sister cities, and retire inactive relationships if appropriate.

Indeed, 2024 was a significant year for growth and exciting new possibilities for Salt Lake City and our Sister Cities Program. As always, we welcome your ideas for how our shared sister city relationships can better support our city and our local communities.

Ross Chambless, *Sister Cities Chair*



A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

The Sister Cities program is a vital initiative for Salt Lake City, fostering connections with Matsumoto, Japan; Keelung, Taiwan; Chernivtsi, Ukraine; Izhevsk, Russia; Torino, Italy; and Trujillo, Peru. These relationships transcend borders and cultures, uniting us in the shared mission of promoting peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation.

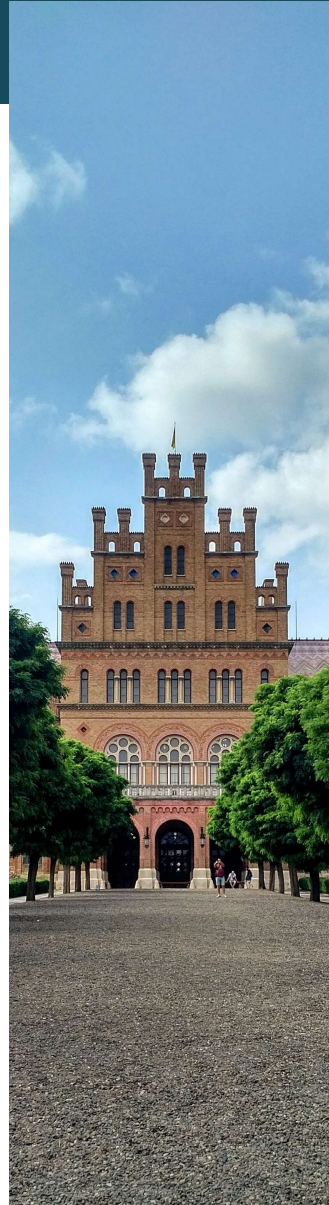
Sister Cities partnerships provide countless opportunities to strengthen global ties and enrich our community. Through cultural exchange programs, humanitarian efforts, educational initiatives, and economic collaborations, we build bridges that foster empathy, celebrate diversity, and create lasting friendships. These connections remind us of our shared humanity and demonstrate the power of collaboration in addressing global challenges.

The significance of the Sister Cities program goes beyond individual relationships. It is a testament to the value Salt Lake City places on diplomacy, cultural appreciation, and community engagement. By engaging in meaningful exchanges, we create pathways for dialogue, learning, and mutual support, even amidst a changing global landscape.

The heart of the Sister Cities program lies in its people. Our Board, composed of dedicated community members, works tirelessly to nurture and strengthen these relationships. Behind the scenes, local volunteers play a pivotal role in bringing our partnerships to life. Their passion and commitment are the driving forces behind the program's success, and we are deeply grateful for their contributions.

Thank you for your ongoing support and dedication to the Sister Cities program.

Sincerely,
Lorena Riffo-Jenson, JD, MPH
Director, Department of Economic Development



PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Salt Lake City Sister Cities Program fosters international cultural, educational, and economic exchanges by establishing partnerships with cities around the world. Through this program, Salt Lake City collaborates with its sister cities to promote mutual understanding, cultural appreciation, and community engagement. Activities often include student exchanges, arts and cultural events, professional development opportunities, and economic partnerships. The program seeks to strengthen global relationships and create a sense of unity across diverse communities.

REVIEW OF 2024 GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Complete:

- Filling of board member seats in Districts 2 and 7
- Matsumoto, Japan Delegation visit a success
- Student visit to Salt Lake City from Japan Matsumoto
- Secure more funding- exceeded goal
- Reconnected with Chernivtsi, Ukraine through August Mission (local non-profit)
- City Staff went to San Antonio for Sister Cities International Summit
- Sister Cities application process reviewed and updated
- Involved local Salt Lake artists for gifts exchanged with Sister Cities
 - Example: Out of the Blue (The Whale) statue gifted to Matsumoto, Japan.

In Progress/Ongoing:

- Finding youth representation for advisory board
- Fill board openings in districts 1 and 9
- Digitizing of past Sister City documents and images
- Meeting with community members with past knowledge of city relationships
- Annual Planning involving subcommittees
- Organization of previous delegation gifts

SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP UPDATES



Team members Joshua Pulah and Katie Matheson tabling at Festa Italiana

TORINO, ITALY:

Committee Members:

Nicole Pessetto, John Wilson

Summary:

In September, the Board in collaboration with the Italian Civic League, participated in Festa Italiana to celebrate Italian culture, heritage and food. During the event, Counsel Chair Petro introduced the Sister Cities program, underlining its highlights and mission. The Sister Cities staff and board members engaged the public with an Italian descent activity. The participants were asked to pin where their families were from on a large map of Italy. The public responded enthusiastically at the opportunity to share their heritage. Overall, the event was a success, hopefully trailblazing the road for future tabling opportunities.

Current Programming Status:

When staff reached out to contacts in Torino, they requested that Salt Lake City reach out in the future to reinvigorate the relationship when capacity opens up for them.

Key Similarities with Salt Lake City:

- Hosted Olympic Winter Games (Tornio - 2006)
- Geography - Surrounded by mountains
- Sports and Recreation - soccer teams
- Higher education
- Diversity efforts with small businesses
- Industry, commerce, and trade “crossroads”

Recommended Opportunity for Connection:

- 2034 Winter Olympic Games
- Higher education
- Cultural exchange

SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP UPDATES - CONTINUED

TORINO, ITALY CONTINUED:

About:

Torino is located in northwest Italy, with a population of approximately 890,000. The city is recognized for being a major European political center. It was Italy's first capital city in 1861, and was home to the House of Savoy, Italy's royal family. Even though much of its political significance and importance was lost in World War II, it became a major European crossroad for industry, commerce and trade, and currently is one of Italy's main industrial centers, being part of the famous "industrial triangle", along with Milan and Genoa.

Torino is well known as the home of the Shroud of Turin, the football teams Juventus F.C. and Torino F.C., the headquarters of automobile manufacturers FIAT, Lancia and Alfa Romeo, and as host of the 2006 Winter Olympics. Several International Space Station modules, such as Harmony and Columbus, were also manufactured in Torino.

In 2002, Torino, Italy and Salt Lake City worked to forge an Olympic City relationship between the two cities. Conversations included the former Vice Consul, Dr. Giovanni Maschero, former Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson, and former Mayor of Torino, Sergio Chiamparino, each seeing opportunities in cultural exchange with the relationship. In October of 2003, the cities established a Friendship City relationship, and in January 2007, Mayor Anderson officially signed the documents for establishment of the Sister City relationship.

SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP UPDATES - CONTINUED

MATSUMOTO, JAPAN:

Committee Members:

Ross Chambless, Jane Kim

Summary:

2024 was a very active and exciting year for the relationship between Salt Lake City and Matsumoto, Japan.

From July 20 to the 30th, Board Chair Ross Chambless and his wife Ikue, along with the Matsumoto City Sister City committee and their Chamber of Commerce and Industry, organized a continuation of the "International Life School," a 10-day-long visit for a group of four high school students and one adult coming from Matsumoto. The visit included homestays with local families, morning classes at the English Language Institute at the University of Utah, a picnic with the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) on Pioneer Day, a float trip down the Weber River, and visits to Snowbird and the Natural History Museum. A reception was held at the Salt Lake Arts Council "Art Barn" where the visiting students gave farewell speeches in English.

The International Life School program was previously managed annually by Salt Lake resident Gwen Springmeyer from 1980 until 2018. According to the Matsumoto Chamber of Commerce, a total of 866 youth from Matsumoto have participated since 1980.

In early October, Mayor Erin Mendenhall led a delegation of 22 members from Salt Lake City to Matsumoto. The delegation was largely interested in studying the potential for arts and local craft-related exchanges. The delegation included the Mayor and her staff, along with Councilman Darin Mano, Felicia Baca, Executive Director of the Salt Lake City Arts Council, Ben Kolendar with World Trade Center Utah, Dee Brewer with Downtown Alliance, Blake Thomas, Director of the Department of Community and Neighborhoods for Salt Lake City, and Angela Brown, founder of SLUG (Salt Lake UnderGround Magazine), and Craft Lake City. Board members Ross Chambless, Annie Quan, Maddie Mortensen, and Sheri Sorenson also participated. Bob and Gwen Springmeyer, longtime participants in the Matsumoto relationship since 1978, came as well.

SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP UPDATES - CONTINUED



Mayor Erin Mendenhall and Mayor Yoshinao Gaun with gifts exchanged on the 2024 Delegation Visit to Matsumoto, Japan.

The formal visit to Matsumoto was roughly three and a half days. On the first day, the delegation met with Mayor Gaun and Council Chair Kamijo and their staff, and Mayor Mendenhall gifted a miniature-scale version of the 9th and 9th whale to Mayor Gaun. The group toured Matsumoto Castle, the Matsumoto Performing Arts Centre, and visited their beautiful new City Museum. On the second day, the group toured a miso factory, Matsumoto Brewery, the Matsumoto City Museum of Art, tried on traditional Japanese kimonos, and sang karaoke together. On the final day, Mayor Mendenhall delivered a speech about women in leadership to a group of middle and high school students, along with the mayor and other officials.

Current Programming Status:

- The delegation members who visited in October returned with many exciting ideas for potential collaborations. Here are a few ideas:
 - Partner with Harmons to create a “Sister Cities corner” to sell food products from our sister cities, such as Matsumoto miso, Japanese beer (Matsumoto brewery), Soba noodles, snacks, crafts, locally-made clothing, etc.
 - An exchange between local craft festivals
 - Temporary traveling museum exhibit exchanges
 - A Utah symphony visit performance to Matsumoto
 - Invite a local Matsumoto musical artist to perform at the Living Traditions festival or Utah Art Festival
 - Every August/September Matsumoto holds a local beer festival. This could be an opportunity to invite local Salt Lake City-based craft brewers to attend and market their products
 - Look at creating Salt Lake City's own city museum
 - Dee Brewer collected and shared observations on urban space management in Matsumoto and other cities in Japan

SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP UPDATES - CONTINUED

Key Similarities with Salt Lake City:

- Environmental Concerns
- Tourism industry and outdoor recreation
 - Nagano, Japan hosted the Winter Olympic Games in 1998. Salt Lake in 2002.
- Geography - both cities are near mountain ranges
- Interest in Tech/Robotics
- Want to create opportunities for their students
- Appreciation for craft beer

Recommended Opportunity for Connection:

- Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation.
- Utilizing Infrastructure of past Olympics.
- Health Care Information exchange
 - Japanese people culturally believe food is medicine.
- “PenPal” exchange for students either virtually or mail
- Tech/Robots
 - Tech is becoming more important to assist the elderly in Matsumoto as the population grows older.
- Cultural exchange



Students visiting SLC City and County Building from Matsumoto, Japan



2024 Delegation Visit to Matsumoto, Japan

SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP UPDATES - CONTINUED

MATSUMOTO, JAPAN CONTINUED:

About:

In 2023, Salt Lake City and Matsumoto City, Nagano, Japan celebrated the 65th anniversary of their Sister Cities relationship. Matsumoto holds the distinction of being Salt Lake City's first and oldest sister city, with additional ties through Olympic Sister Cities. The establishment of this relationship is credited to the mutual respect and admiration between the two cities, with the contributions of Japanese citizen Tamotsu Murayama playing a significant role. Murayama, a Japanese newspaper correspondent from Matsumoto, visited The Utah Nippo, a Japanese newspaper agency in Utah, in 1957. Witnessing the beauty of Salt Lake City and the Wasatch Mountains evoked memories of the Japan Alps surrounding Matsumoto City. Alongside Murayama, several individuals from Salt Lake City were involved in forging this connection, including Mayors Earl J. Glade and J. Bracken Lee, University of Utah President A. Ray Olpin, Mrs. Kuniko Terasawa, Henry Kasai (the President and owner of the Utah Nippo), members of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), and the wider Japanese community. The enthusiasm for international culture was reciprocated in 1957 when Murayama delivered a supportive message from Matsumoto City Mayor Tokuya Furuhashi to Salt Lake City Mayor J. Bracken Lee, leading to the formal declaration of the relationship in November 1958, thirteen years after the conclusion of World War II.

In 2023, Matsumoto City has a population of 243,000, and it continues to be renowned for its captivating features, with one notable highlight being its historic castle. Among the four castles in Japan considered national treasures, Matsumoto Castle stands out as a remarkable symbol. This architectural marvel is accompanied by beautifully landscaped gardens, complete with a moat, encompassing 90 acres at the city's core. Alongside the castle, Matsumoto is celebrated for various cultural and recreational attractions. These include the prestigious Saito Kinen music festival conducted by Seiji Ozawa, the renowned Suzuki Methods of Music, winter sports and games, wasabi farms, woodblock prints, buckwheat noodles, hot springs (onsen), silk culture, temari (colorful silk cord-wound handballs), and a plethora of modern and contemporary art museums. One museum in particular is the Chihiro Art Museum, founded by Chihiro Iwasaki. Ms. Iwasaki devoted her entire life for world peace through the arts, including her artistic depictions of children amidst the atomic bomb attack during World War II.

SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP UPDATES - CONTINUED

MATSUMOTO, JAPAN CONTINUED:



Students visiting SLC City and County Building from Matsumoto, Japan



Dinner and presentation at the Finch Lane Gallery with students visiting from Matsumoto, Japan



2024 Delegation Visit to Matsumoto, Japan



SLC Council Member Darin Mano at the 2024 Delegation Visit to Matsumoto, Japan.

SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP UPDATES - CONTINUED

TRUJILLO, PERU:

Committee Members:

Ahimara Suarez, Rose Kjesbo

Summary:

In 2024, Peru stationed a new Consulate in Salt Lake City. This transition, in addition to political turmoil in Peru, slowed down progress on the firefighter support request that came from a visiting Peruvian Congressman in 2023. Mayor Mendenhall met with the new Consul General, the outgoing Honorary Consul, and Sister Cities board members in January 2024.

Current Programming Status:

Due to losing a board member who was heavily involved with this relationship, the status of programming with this city is on hold until board members are brought up to speed. Once the new head of the subcommittee is brought up to speed, staff will need to follow-up on the penpal program.

Key Similarities with Salt Lake City:

- Geography - desert climate near Trujillo
- Urban Development and Growth
- Tourism
- Water Scarcity
- Inland commercial and transportation center

Recommended Opportunity for Connection:

- Environmental concerns - demand and misuse of water resources
- City development - affordable housing
- Education
- Cultural exchange

About:

Founded in 1534, Trujillo is arguably one of the most beautiful cities in Peru. Located 350 miles north of Lima, Trujillo is one of the most important economical centers of northern Peru. It serves as an inland commercial and transportation center for the surrounding farming areas.

SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP UPDATES - CONTINUED

TRUJILLO, PERU CONTINUED:

About Continued:

In the early 2000s, Peruvian residents of Salt Lake City, members of the Fraternidad Peruana de Utah, and locals from Trujillo gathered to discuss the establishment of a Sister City relationship between Trujillo, Peru and Salt Lake City. A meeting was also held in Trujillo with representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, the municipal government, as well as leaders from the industries of education, business, art and tourism. The Mayor of Trujillo drafted a letter, presenting this to the committee, establishing Trujillo as a Friendship City in 2005. In 2015, Trujillo officially became a Sister City with Salt Lake.

SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP UPDATES - CONTINUED

CHERNIVTSI, UKRAINE:

Committee Members:

Sheri Sorensen, John Wilson, Stacey Adams

Summary:

Throughout 2024 there were several events Sheri Sorensen helped organize to support many of the Ukrainian refugees. For example, during the Kris Kringle event many boot and coat donations were made for the kids as well as non-perishable food. Housing issues continue to be an issue for Ukrainian refugees. Issue comes from them not being permanent residents nor a steady income.

Refugees can now have a Ukrainian translator sit with them for a Utah Drivers Test. This is a big win as this driver's license issue has continued for some time.

Members of the Chernivtsi subcommittee held an introductory call with the Director of Economic Development/Head of International Relationships from Chernivtsi to discuss the relationship between the two cities and discuss opportunities to collaborate. Higher education, environmental issues, and cultural exchanges were discussed as possibilities for collaboration. A visit from the Ukrainian delegation in 2025 was discussed and there was unanimous support for this. The conversation was positive with much interest expressed from each side. The group agreed to schedule another call early in 2025 to discuss next steps.

Current Programming Status:

- City staff may begin coordinating a 2025 visit from the Ukrainian delegation.
- Christmas in January.

Key Similarities with Salt Lake City:

- Surrounded by mountain ranges - the Carpathian Mountains
- Higher Education
 - Chernivtsi University and Utah
- Green Spaces

SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP UPDATES - CONTINUED

KEELUNG, TAIWAN:

Committee Members:

Annie Quan, Matilyn Mortensen

Summary:

Staff turn over has been happening in Keelung, which has made the restarting of this relationship slow. This year, efforts were put towards gathering historical information about the relationship from community member Mrs. Yee.

Historical books about the Sister City relationship were scanned for city record. A meeting was held with Chief Brown to discuss the sister city relationship, since the police department has been an important part of past relationships with Keelung. He is interested in being a part in the future.

Current Programming Status:

- Digitize photos from Mrs. Yee.
- Ascertain the staff situation to see if the relationship can move forward this year.

Key Similarities with Salt Lake City:

- Environmental Concerns
- "Port" Cities - Keelung has the 7th largest port in the world
- Geography - surrounded by a mountain range
- Tech interests
- Outdoor Tourism

Recommended Opportunity for Connection:

- Discussion of water conservation and drought
- Discussion of air quality
- Pros and Cons of the tourism industry on the local area
- Tech Lake City - Keelung's mayor graduated from MIT
- Cultural exchange

SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP UPDATES - CONTINUED

KEELUNG, TAIWAN CONTINUED:

About:

Keelung, an international trade and business center, has a population of 372,000 and is located 18 miles northeast of Taipei on the Northern Coast of Taiwan overlooking the Pacific Ocean. It has an active seaside port, supporting vital economic industries of fishing, ship building and military activities. Keelung also has many beautiful parks and ancient temples and is known to be one of the wettest cities in the world with an average of 214 days of rain a year.

The Keelung Sister City Relationship with Salt Lake City was initiated in 1979 by Salt Lake City Mayor Ted Wilson. In 1981 the Police Department from both cities became affiliated as a Sister Relationship. The relationship between the Keelung and Salt Lake Sister City helps to develop municipal partnerships and provides opportunities for city officials and citizens to experience and explore other cultures, promote cultural understanding and economic development. For the duration of their relationship, the two cities have participated in an exchange of culture, art, music, business and education. Visiting delegations have participated in annual celebrations such as Days of '47, honoring the Mormon Pioneers.

SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP UPDATES - CONTINUED

IZHEVSK, RUSSIA:

Committee Members:

Olga Efimova, Matilyn Mortensen

Summary:

Due to the nature of the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, we had no contact with our Russian Sister City this year. Olga Efimova has expressed concern about reaching out to her contacts in Izhevsk because it could create trouble for them with their Federal government.

Current Programming Status:

- Uncertain if Izhevsk should be made an emeritus city because of inability to contact

Key Similarities with Salt Lake City:

- Value Arts and Education
- Health Care Focus
- Higher education
- Science/tech innovation

Recommended Opportunity for Connection:

- Future student exchanges
- Health care knowledge exchange
- Higher education

About:

Izhevsk is the capital of Udmurt Republic, Russia, a large industrial, cultural and scientific center with a population of 652,000. It is located in the European part of Russia between the Volga River and the Ural Mountains.

SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP UPDATES - CONTINUED

IZHEVSK, RUSSIA CONTINUED:

About Continued:

The history of the partnership between Salt Lake City and Izhevsk started in 2003 as a Friendship Relationship. A joint resolution of the City Council and the Mayor of Salt Lake City approving the establishment of a "Sister City" relationship between Izhevsk, Russia and Salt Lake City, Utah was adopted in October 2011. With the help of volunteers within the organization, the Sister City relationship offers opportunities to experience cross-cultural activities including the exhibition of children's paintings from the Izhevsk Art School. Ongoing exchanges such as these in the fields of business, culture and education, promote a mutual understanding to the benefit of citizens in both cities.

Izhevsk is renowned for its great educational, intellectual and scientific-research and attracts investigators from different fields held within twenty-three scientific centers. Four state universities, three private universities and ten colleges provide professional training in multiple occupational areas, such as medicine, art, law, education, engineering, science, agriculture, and etc. Izhevsk has a rich cultural life. Five theaters, four concert halls, sixteen recreational centers and clubs, fifty libraries, twelve art schools for children, six cinemas and six museums are found here. One of the greatest Russian composers Peter Tchaikovsky was born and spent his childhood near Izhevsk. Every spring different music festivals devoted to Tchaikovsky's creative works are held.

SISTER CITY ADVISORY BOARD

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