

**City of Wilsonville, OR**

**SISTER CITY ADVISORY BOARD  
2021 - 2023 STRATEGIC PLAN**

DRAFT PREPARED JULY 2021



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# Introduction

As Wilsonville's Kitakata Sister City Advisory Board, we promote understanding, friendship, and cooperation with sister cities and sister countries all over the world. The City of Wilsonville and Wilsonville Kitakata Sister City Board is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion and will continue to promote peace, respect and mutual understanding within our local communities and sister cities around the world. We believe in people to people relationships and working together everyday to support and uplift the individuals and the diversity that make our communities beautiful.

The City of Wilsonville has had a Sister City relationship with the City of Kitakata, Japan since 1988. This 30+ year program. The program was long sustained through the dedication of the Wilsonville Sister City Association, a volunteer group that organized, raised funds and documented cultural exchanges prior to the establishment of this City board. In 2020/21, the City of Wilsonville transitioned this program to a city-funded/supported program and established an Advisory Board to guide and support the development and activities of the Sister City Program.

Historically, the cities have participated in a student exchange; local high school and middle school students from Kitakata stay with families here in Wilsonville, and students from Wilsonville stay with host families and participate in local activities in Kitakata. These exchanges have nurtured and increased understanding of different cultures, while creating wonderful memories and new friendships.

As the new Advisory Board evaluates opportunities to sustain and grow this program, the City hired SSW Consulting to facilitate a goal-setting process with the Board and develop a vision, goals, and actions to guide the team's work over the next three years.

Over the course of two virtual workshops in June 2021, and an in-person Board meeting in July, the Board developed a vision, goals and actions that are included in this Strategic Plan.

# Our Team

## **Kitakata Sister City Advisory Board**

Ashleigh Summerlin, Chair

Aaron Reyna, Vice-Chair

Adrienne Phillips

Tracy Sailors

Dave Schalk

Seiji Shiratori

Jason Jones

## **Wilsonville Staff Liaisons**

Erica Behler, Program Coordinator

Zoe Monahan, Assistant to the City Manager

## **Consultant/Facilitator**

Sara Singer Wilson, Principal/Owner



SSW CONSULTING

## About Kitakata

Kitakata is located about 4 1/2 hours northwest of Tokyo, within the Fukushima prefecture of Japan. The climate is warm in the summer and usually receives heavy snowfall in the winter. The population of Kitakata is approximately 52,000. Kitakata is well known for its delicious ramen and beautiful lacquerware.

## Mission

Our mission describes the purpose of the Board.

***The Sister City Advisory Board's mission is to encourage cross-cultural understanding and promote educational and economic exchange between the City of Wilsonville and their Sister City Kitakata, Japan.***

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## Vision

Our vision describes our desired future state and provides guidance to our goals for the next three years.

***The Wilsonville community celebrates our relationship with Kitakata through cultural immersion opportunities in education, food, business, and Japanese tradition.***

# Setting the Context

The recent transition to the Advisory Board/City supported structure in addition to the challenges presented by the global health pandemic warranted a review of the current context before setting goals for the Board. This section highlights the general context of the community, the program, and the Board. All organizations work in a context; there are larger environmental forces and trends that shape what is and is not possible just as much as the internal capacities and capabilities of a group. To better understand the context for the Sister City Program and Advisory Board, the team discussed the Strengths, Problems, Opportunities and Threats (SPOT). This SPOT Analysis enabled the team to visualize the larger context and identify themes and insights that could assist in setting focused goals aligned with the mission and vision of the team.

The graphics below highlight the themes that emerged during this discussion.

## SPOT MATRIX

### STRENGTHS

- + We have a long-term relationship with Kitakata, established friendships with citizens there
- + Budget and staff support from the City
- + We have a strong program now with the exchange problem - we have a good foundation to expand on
- + We have new energy with the new members of the group - take the things to the next level
- + Through the recent zoom meetings with Kitakata - for the first time we are beginning to hear some of their wishes to match desires to goals

### PROBLEMS /CHALLENGES

- It is a challenge to get community involvement and participation outside of the committee
- Prioritize our ideas and develop a work plan - carry over this structure into our meetings
- Fundraising is needed to carry out the ideas and programs we would like to see
- Display the same level of cultural respect - need cultural etiquette training
- Challenge to put ideas into action...so many ideas, but we need a solid plan
- Where the City can help - how much the City wants to take on. The City hasn't had involvement in sending students. It has been coordinated by teacher and travel agent.
- Language barriers are really hard - timing, interpreters, etc.
- While we want to elevate, Kitakata has dedicated staff to this effort. We have constraints to implement our ideas
- Program continuity and turnover
- Ascertain what it is that Kitakata wants from Wilsonville - are we being straightforward in communicating this

### OPPORTUNITIES

- More interaction with the business community - how can we connect more with businesses?
- Beyond the 10-day trip, come up a program that offers a longer stay - more like an exchange student program
- Increase cultural awareness in the community
- Explore setting up a 501c3 for fundraising opportunities
- Form a "friends" group as a vehicle for fundraising
- With stimulus money for infrastructure, community health/wellness, is there an opportunity to partner with the City for a Kitakata Plaza, meditative trail, etc.?
- Expand awareness for students beyond those studying Japanese in high school
- Utilize technology and things like Zoom to build relationships prior to the next visit
- Gain a better understanding of what our colleagues in Kitakata would like to see
- Cover the costs for chaperones that go with the students
- This strategic planning could be an opportunity to engage with Kitakata - share our plan and see where the alignment is on our visions
- We have established key relationships - we can use this as a launching point
- Survey the group - multiple choice to show what's possible and
- Also what does the Wilsonville community want? This will help to build support - lots of ways to do this - city survey, facebook groups, etc.?

### THREATS /UNCERTAINTIES

- ⚡ What will the future of travel look like post-pandemic?
- ⚡ How long will we be operating in this remote space? In person meetings, travel, another cohort of students

EXTERNAL



## 2021-2024 Goals + Actions

**Goal 1: Strengthen the relationship between Kitakata and Wilsonville through the development of a shared vision and goals.**

**Goal 2: Increase community awareness of the Kitakata Sister City program.**

**Goal 3: Engage Wilsonville's youth in the Sister City Program through expanded education and offerings.**

**Goal 4: Develop fundraising goals and priorities for the Kitakata Sister City program.**

**Goal 5: Foster economic ties, make connections, and build awareness of the Sister City program in the business community.**

**Goal 1**      **Strengthen the relationship between Kitakata and Wilsonville through the development of a shared vision and goals.**

**Target**      **Host 2-4 Zoom meetings per year and one in-person business meeting.**

| Actions |   | Project Lead      | Implementation Timeline |
|---------|---|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1.1     | Develop and send a survey to solicit program input and gain clarity on interests from partners in Kitakata. Align the resulting data with future programming. | Adrienne Phillips | Nov. 10                 |
| 1.2     | Invite the Kitakata city officials and committee members to Wilsonville for a post-COVID reunion.   | TBD               | TBD                     |
| 1.3     | Conduct outreach to parents of visiting Kitakata students and chaperones to determine what activities would most benefit the students.                        | TBD               | TBD                     |

## Goal 2      Increase community awareness of the Kitakata Sister City program.

### Target      Publish content monthly and host 2-4 events per year.

| Actions |  | Project Lead   | Implementation Timeline |
|---------|--|----------------|-------------------------|
| 2.1     | Identify events and develop a schedule for Sister City events. (Ideas to consider include Cherry Blossom Viewing, Cooking classes, Forest Bathing, Raijio Taiso) | Advisory Board | TBD                     |
| 2.2     | Coordinate messaging before all Sister City sponsored events to ensure the relationship between Wilsonville and Kitakata is highlighted.                         | Advisory Board | TBD                     |
| 2.3     | Work with Board Members to submit monthly articles to the Wilsonville paper and/or Boones Ferry Messenger.   | Erica Behler   | ongoing                 |
| 2.4     | Collaborate with the new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee on sharing information about these groups with the community.                                 | Jason Jones    | TBD                     |
| 2.5     | Use multi-media such as YouTube clips on the website to advertise upcoming programs and events and highlight other program activities or offerings.              | Sruthi Menon   | TBD                     |
| 2.6     | Coordinate outreach materials/content to highlight Asian History month each May.   | Aaron Reyna    | TBD                     |

**Goal 3**      **Engage Wilsonville's youth in the Sister City Program through expanded education and offerings.**

**Target**      **Double student participation in Kitakata programs and exchanges each year.**

| Actions |   | Project Lead        | Implementation Timeline |
|---------|---|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 3.1     | Conduct outreach with past chaperones and Kitakata students to determine what future opportunities that should be considered for itineraries. (Consider adding Hillsboro Hops game) | Ashleigh Sumerlin   | TBD                     |
| 3.2     | Revamp the recruitment and selection process to broaden participation in the exchange program.  | Ashleigh Summerlin  | TBD                     |
| 3.3     | Explore opportunities to add Japanese cultural classes for all age groups at the Community Center.  | Dave Schalk         | TBD                     |
| 3.4     | Identify and develop cultural outreach classes for Wilsonville youth. (Examples include a Japanese Tea Ceremony, interactive cooking class/demonstration, etc.)                     | Tracy Sailors       | TBD                     |
| 3.5     | Explore the expansion of the exchange program with Rotary to extend the stay for youth visitors.  | Adrienne Scritsmier | TBD                     |

**Goal 4**      **Develop fundraising goals and priorities for the Kitakata Sister City program.**

**Target**      **Develop an annual fundraising plan.**

| Actions   | Project Lead    | Implementation Timeline |
|---|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 4.1      Identify fundraising goals and develop a fundraising plan with clear actionable strategies.                | Seiji Shiratori | TBD                     |
| 4.2      Identify contacts, networks, and potential donors, businesses to engage as part of a fundraising strategy. | TBD             | TBD                     |



- Goal 5**      **Foster economic ties, make connections, and build awareness of the Sister City program in the business community.**
- Target**      **Develop 1-2 relationships per year.**

| Actions |  | Project Lead        | Implementation Timeline |
|---------|--|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 5.1     | Reestablish the relationship with the Wilsonville Chamber of Commerce.                                 | Erica Behler        | TBD                     |
| 5.2     | Host a video exchange to highlight specific businesses (beer, sake, agricultural products)             | Adrienne Scritsmier | TBD                     |
| 5.3     | Host a Kitakata meeting at Japanese businesses (options might include Toyota, sushi restaurants, etc.) | TBD                 | TBD                     |
| 5.4     | Partner with Sake One in Forest Grove to engage on Sake making exchange with Kitakata.                 | Ashleigh Sumerlin   | TBD                     |

# Implementation Plan

To maintain accountability to the goals and ensure two-way communication between the Board, Council, staff, the community, and our Sister City partners the following process has been outlined to support the implementation of the goals. This process will also support evaluating and tracking progress on the goals over the next three years.

## Goals, Actions + Timelines

The Advisory Board will assign "Project Leads" for each action to support the team in moving the goal forward and maintaining the alignment of the goals and strategies to the Board's overall mission and vision. The project leads will be staff, the Board, or specific Board members who will oversee the implementation and report progress. The Project Leads will provide estimated timelines for the strategies based on capacity and budgeted resources.

## Progress Reporting

Each January, the Advisory Board will provide the City Council with an update on the goals and actions. These updates will include any progress, challenges that need to be addressed, and/or recommendations or requests for additional Council direction. The Board may recommend updates and/or amendments to the plan. These updates will ensure the plan remains a living document that will continue to provide guidance to the Board.

The Advisory Board will also provide real time updates on actions as they progress and highlight the goals and actions in their communications and updates where applicable.





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