



Tales of Two Cities

Partnerships for Urban Sustainability





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- **eThekweni Municipality, South Africa**
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Introduction

The world continues to urbanize at an unprecedented pace and this year, for the first time ever, over half of the world's population will be living in cities. While cities consume a major share of the planet's resources and have often been the locus of the planet's most serious environmental problems, they also symbolize a hope for a sustainable future. Indeed, environmental sustainability in this urban millennium can only be achieved through cities' leadership, especially on issues such as climate change, biodiversity conservation or water resource use. Moreover, this challenge cannot be addressed by cities working in isolation. Partnerships between and among local governments, utilities, universities, businesses, non-governmental, community-based, or international organizations are therefore an essential mechanism for turning the abstract idea of collaboration into concrete joint activities. Whether through sister city relationships, twinnings, joint ventures or other cooperative initiatives, local partnerships have played a pioneering role in enhancing community interaction, finding solutions to shared problems, using limited resources more efficiently, and generating economies of scale through city action – thus increasing sustainability worldwide.

This publication profiles 12 examples of local government achievements towards sustainability and the specific partnerships with a variety of actors that have contributed to that success. They include:

- Five cases of local governments partnering with other local governments (the City of Växjö and Bohol Province, the cities of Duluth and Petrozavodsk, Phuket and the City of Greater Sudbury, Beitbridge and Musina, and Melbourne and Tianjin).
- Four cases of local government partnerships with international organizations (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Nairobi City Council, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) and the Shenyang Municipal Government, ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability and six African cities, and the International Centre for Sustainable Cities and eThekweni Municipality).
- Three cases of local governments linking with a range of academic and business partners (the Municipality of Betim and the Electric Company of Minas Gerais, the City of Bayamo and the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, and Aichi Prefecture and several local partners).

No matter where they are located, partners are inevitably confronted with the challenges of securing sufficient time, human and financial resources, building and retaining capacity, reconciling language or cultural differences, building trust, and overcoming the geographic divide. The 12 cases contained in this publication show that despite the challenges, partnering is indeed a rewarding endeavor.



Beitbridge, Zimbabwe & Musina,

Separated only by the Limpopo River, the communities of Beitbridge (Zimbabwe) and Musina (South Africa) realized that they had many common issues that could be better addressed by working cooperatively. The communities share a common culture and problems such as border crime, enforcement and security, health problems, and water resource management. These issues became the focus of collaboration between the officials from either riverbank.

In 2005 officials in both municipalities realized the potential for accelerated economic development on both sides of the river through greater cooperation and signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish an official twinning partnership. The twinning arrangement has led to the creation of specialized sub-committees (focused on tourism and conservation; women, children and health; transport, disaster management, safety and security; education, arts, sports, and culture; administration and economic issues; and environment and engineering) that address related issues and make recommendations to a Joint Implementation Committee that consists of senior managers. This committee, in turn, considers proposals from the sub-committees and makes recommendations for

policy implementation to the Joint Coordination Council, a six-member group that includes the highest political representatives of both municipalities.

One of the focus areas of the twinning project has been the management of water resources. The Limpopo River serves as the source of both urban and agricultural water for both municipalities and a discharge area for solid and liquid wastes. Before the twinning, the two



Beitbridge

Population: 104,000 (2002)

Area: 12,697 km²

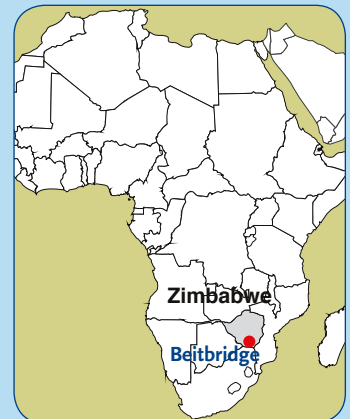
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South Africa

municipalities were using water resources and managing wastewater from the same basin with little or no coordination.

Both municipalities have agreed to implement and use an integrated water resources management approach for the river. The signing of the twinning agreement has increased the level of integration since both local authorities now share information on drinking water abstraction points, pollution points, as well as sampling points. Integrated supply and demand management have also been strengthened. Substantial efforts have been made to reduce water losses, pollution levels, as well as limit water demand. There is also a focus on attempting to restore the river's integrity while optimizing water use within the basin.

Albert Mbedzi, Chief Executive Officer of Beitbridge Rural District Council, explains that the twinning arrangement has led to a “change of attitude and behavior” between staff from the two municipalities. Through visits and staff exchange programs, staff have had a chance to better understand how their counterparts handle various challenges. Through the cooperation between Beitbridge and Musina, the Limpopo River and the communities that depend on it will reap many benefits.



“... the partnership has led to a change of attitude and behavior ...”

Musina

Population: 40,826 (2001)

Area: 110 km²

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Duluth, U.S.A. & Petrozavodsk,

The City of Duluth (U.S.A.) and the City of Petrozavodsk (Russia) established their partnership in 1987 through Sister Cities International, a non-profit twinning organization. The cities share several similarities: both communities are located on lakes in northern climates, are surrounded by forests, and have economies focused on natural resource extraction.

Since 1987, nearly each year a delegation from one of the cities visits the other city to share and exchange information, knowledge, and local traditions. Themes for the exchanges have ranged from music, culture, and health to business development, sports, and water quality. Participants in the visits have included elected officials, municipal staff, journalists, university professors and students, businesspeople, and citizens. The partners are involved in various projects such as annual exchanges, fundraising

projects, and humanitarian assistance work.

In recent years the partnership has integrated sustainable development themes into the exchanges, a new area of activity for both partners. In 2004

Duluth invited Petrozavodsk to join the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign. In 2006 a delegation from Petrozavodsk visited Duluth to focus on water quality issues.

Duluth is located on the western shore of Lake Superior and Petrozavodsk is located on Onega Lake. The visit included tours of Duluth's water and sewage treatment plants, a trip on a marine research vessel on Lake Superior and an opportunity to exchange knowledge with city staff on their respective water initiatives.



Duluth

Population: 86,913 (2007)

Area: 226 km²

Municipal budget:

USD 78,001,700 (2007)

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Russia

In October 2007 a delegation from Petrozavodsk visited Duluth to focus on energy management issues. Duluth municipal staff shared their experience in implementing energy efficiency and greenhouse gas emission reduction projects in city facilities and suggested ways that Petrozavodsk can implement similar energy-saving projects.

For many years, the City of Duluth funded its twinning work through hotel and motel taxes collected by the city's tourism department and ran the program out of a city department. The twinning program has recently become a separate, non-profit corporation which will give it more flexibility to pursue other forms of fundraising.

For Duluth, the benefits of the partnership have been a better understanding of another culture, greater economic opportunities, and new activities for local youth. Dan Green, the City of Duluth's Facilities Operations Manager, credits strong community support and involvement in the partnership as one of the secrets of its success. Keeping the local community involved through the media and other publications as well as undertaking outreach activities is crucial to ensuring wide community participation. Mr. Green encourages other municipalities to get involved in partnerships and notes that partnerships are “not just about

offering something, they're also about learning.”

Vera Meshko from Petrozavodsk's External Relations Department explains that involvement in the partnership provides “a cultural insight for both parties. Those participating in the twinning projects find out about the approaches and ways of thinking of their counterparts abroad. Ultimately this brings down barriers which are sometimes created in the field of public politics.”



Petrozavodsk

Population: 266,600 (2002)

Area: 121.8 km²

Municipal budget:

RUB 2,142,000,000 (2006)
(USD 83,000,000)

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Melbourne, Australia & Tianjin,

The City of Melbourne (Australia) established its sister city twinning agreement with Tianjin (China) in 1980 and in 1998 opened a representative office in Tianjin to further facilitate sister city projects and events. In 2005, when Melbourne and Tianjin celebrated their 25th anniversary of sister city relations Tianjin's mayor Dai Xianglong visited Melbourne where he and Melbourne Lord Mayor John So signed a "Declaration of Commitment" to actively collaborate on a number of mutually beneficial environmental activities.

Melbourne

Population: 67,193 (2006)
daytime population :
732,200 (2004)

Area: 36 km²

Municipal budget: AUD 208 million (USD 180, 458, 720) (2005)

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Specifically, the two mayors agreed to "undertake projects that promote the exchange of environmental and urban management strategies to enable Melbourne and Tianjin to take leadership roles in dealing with the complex environmental and community challenges associated with rapid technological and urban development." The City of Melbourne's International Relations Department partnered with the Tianjin Environment Protection Bureau (EPB) to meet the new commitment.



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