



Frequently Asked Questions

April 2014

1. **Why are sister city relationships so important?** Immediately following WWII Sister City relationships began to spread rather quickly. In fact, one of the most prominent of these relationships was forged between two mayors of towns on either side of the French-German border. Having just survived an incredible horror, the two committed to never allowing citizens of their cities to meet again across a battle-field. Their rationale was that in fostering opportunities for collaboration, the communities would be woven together and resist the urge to demonize the 'Other,' as is so common in times of war.

President Eisenhower, inspired by this vision, promoted a people-to-people initiative in 1956 to involve individuals in citizen diplomacy, with the hope that personal relationships, fostered through sister city, county, and state affiliations, would lessen the chance of future world conflicts. He created Sister Cities International (SCI), a nonprofit citizen diplomacy network that creates and strengthens partnerships between U.S. and international communities. SCI promotes peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation. SCI currently represents more than 2,500 communities in 134 countries around the world.

2. **Why did you choose Nablus?** During a visit to the West Bank the summer of 2011, we were looking for a community with whom to foster a formal relationship. Nablus stood out from all the others, primarily because of the many parallels between Nablus and Boulder. Most notable were the following...
 - Nablusis are considered the friendliest in the West Bank and Boulder is known for its friendly and warm reception;
 - Both are university towns with highly educated and progressive citizenry;
 - Both cities are nestled in foothills;
 - The populations are quite similar: Boulder ~100,000 and Nablus ~130,000;
 - Both cities have popular pedestrian shopping areas in the heart of town;
 - Being in semi-arid climates, both communities face similar challenges with water.

3. **Why should Boulder become a sister city to a city in Palestine?** Boulder is resource rich, while Palestinians are archeologically and antiquity-rich - making for abundant exchange opportunities.

Palestinians are an important part of the contemporary world context. We share a heritage that is often forgotten and overlooked.

Palestinians are a people struggling to find a space in the world, one of the least understood peoples in the world today. Palestinian culture is as rich and multi-faceted as our own, yet is often subjected to an array of negative stereotypes and depictions that lack an understanding of the magnitude of their humanity.

We share ecological challenges and there are many opportunities to learn from each other in this regard.

Boulderites are a highly educated and worldly citizenry, relishing opportunities to satiate their curiosity to learn about the peoples of the world. It is this very nature that contributes to several decades of a thriving sister city program with connections to many diverse cultures.

4. **Why do you need City Council's approval - can't you do all the same activities without it?** Sister city programs promote peace through people-to-people relationships and vary greatly from basic cultural exchange programs to shared research and development projects between cities. Sister cities offer the flexibility to allow connections to form between communities that are mutually beneficial and take on issues that are most relevant for the partners.

With City Council's approval the BNSCP will have access to grants, resources, and opportunities that are available to members of [Sister Cities International](#) (SCI), to support their developing effective projects. In addition, official sister city status will contribute to SCI's vision of recognized friendship spanning the globe.

Further, institutionalizing relationships facilitates and enables activities that the citizens of both cities engage in and will result in significantly easing the humanitarian efforts in Nablus. Formalization of relationships is conducive of accountability to citizens of both cities.

5. **Is there a citizen group in Nablus, similar to the group here in Boulder, that is involved in this sister city relationship?** Yes, and, similar to the group in Boulder, they are growing more formal and established all the time.

Some of our partners in Nablus are professors at An Najah University, Director of Project Hope, the largest NGO in the West Bank, school teachers and administrators, and yoga teachers.

In the summer of 2014 delegates from Boulder will meet with the organizing committee members and work together to further develop a plan for weaving our communities together.

6. **Why should a City Council member vote to approve Nablus as a sister city when your project is divisive for the community?** The BNSCP has stimulated healthy and lively debate and discussions in the community. Connections between members of the Boulder community that did not previously exist have revealed a common desire to strive toward understanding and friendship across perspectives.

Boulder, like many other places in the world, is divided around Israeli / Palestinian politics; the Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project does not engage in this dialogue and remains focused on our mission and desire to understand real people with real lives.

Indeed many of Boulder's seven current sister city relationships were considered controversial by some prior to City Council's approval, however you may be challenged to find someone in Boulder who does not appreciate the contribution that these relationships have made to the greater Boulder community. Perhaps most noteworthy of them is the Dushanbe Tea House.

7. **You are asking City Council to take sides in an international conflict, and local governments really should not get involved in international politics.** Sister cities were designed to foster understanding and citizen diplomacy. They are deeply committed to staying out of politics of nations and groups. Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project is not asking City Council to weigh in on international politics; we are asking for no more than Sister City approval.
8. **What about forming a three-way relationship - Boulder, Nablus and a 3rd city in Israel?** We would certainly provide support and guidance to any group wishing to partner with an Israeli city.

A 'three-way' arrangement effectively politicizes our relationship and would dilute citizen-to-citizen efforts in forming a close friendship bond with the people of Nablus.

9. **Who are your members?** Membership is open to all, as per Resolution 631, Section 2, Item 3 (Boulder City Council resolution on Sister City relationships); all individuals' beliefs are welcome. Currently we have a membership of 95 who are of multiple religious affiliations, ethnic and racial identities, and a broad range of ages and socio-economic status. We represent a diverse cross-section of the Boulder community.

We have a 10 member board of directors. You can learn more about the leadership of the Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project by sending an email to admin@bouldernablus.com and requesting biographies of the directors.

10. What is your connection to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement? The Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project has no relationship with the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement.
11. Could the Nablus city government be using your project to promote Palestinian propaganda? It is possible that the municipality of Nablus hopes to increase tourism, facilitate commercial ties, promote development and other activities that are common of city governments through its sister city relationships.
12. Is Palestine on the State Department Warning/Alert List; is it safe to travel there? Being on the watch list would not be unique amongst Boulder's other sister cities. These are current sister city nations on the warning list:
- [Israel, The West Bank and Gaza Travel Warning](#)
 - [Kenya Travel Warning](#)
 - [Mexico Travel Warning](#)
 - Cuba is not on the warning list however has been illegal for American citizens to travel to during much of the Yateras-Boulder sister city relationship.

Dozens of our own members have traveled to and/or lived in Nablus (or the West Bank) for extended periods. There are several well-established organizations based in Nablus that specialize in hosting student interns for months and years at a time. All participants return not only expressing no concerns about safety but overwhelmingly rave of life-changing experiences.