

Honorable Mayor and City Council members,

We are excited to submit this request seeking your support to establish a sister city agreement with Veracruz Llave, Mexico. We believe that this designation would be of benefit to our City for many generations to come.

Veracruz Llave is a city in Mexico which is known for its preservation and exploration of indigenous and historic cultural traditions. From architecture to theater, music and dance, Veracruz Llave continues to be the birthplace of great artists and teachers who inspire new generations to study and continue the artistic cultures of Mexico.

This same spirit and dedication to cultural traditions is mirrored in our beautiful city of Watsonville. We see this in the Portuguese, Japanese, Filipino, Croatian, and Mexican traditions, arts and performances that are preserved within each community. These active and longstanding community efforts offer living examples of the General Plan principle of Building Community Identity.

Watsonville's Esperanza del Valle (EDV) is well-known for the artistic quality and authenticity of the dances the organization studies and performs. Few people are aware of what is required to create the many performances that EDV contributes to communities throughout Watsonville. First, it is the extraordinary dedication of community members, parents and youth who study, practice, and fundraise. But what is even less known about EDV's organization is its strong collaborative relations with artists and educators in Mexico, specifically Veracruz Llave.

Beginning in 1990, EDV's Artistic Director, Janet Rachel Johns, successfully established and nurtured a longstanding relationship with the master instructors from the Ballet Folklórico del Puerto de Veracruz de la Universidad Veracruzana. EDV had the honor of working with the renowned "father of the *son jarocho*," a classic folkloric dance form, Professor Mario Cabrera Salgado of Boca del Rio, Veracruz, Artistic Director of the Ballet Folklórico del Puerto de Veracruz. EDV has hosted Professor Cabrera in Watsonville on two occasions, accompanied by the current Artistic Director of the Ballet Folklórico del Puerto de Veracruz, Maestro Daniel del Valle Hernandez. In return, this past June, 12 youth and 10 adult dancers of EDV travelled from Watsonville to Veracruz for a 10-day dance symposium.

As you can see, EDV has established a strong cultural exchange with Veracruz Llave, involving multiple generations of Watsonville residents. We believe a sister city designation with Veracruz Llave will be lasting and lively because it will be anchored by two respected institutions: the Ballet Folklórico del Puerto de Veracruz in Mexico and Esperanza del Valle in Watsonville. This year, in collaboration with Cabrillo College and the University of Veracruz the first annual dance and music conference will be held in Santa Cruz County. Dancers and musicians will arrive from Veracruz ready to conduct instructional and informational workshop sessions for local youth and adults. Many of these sessions will be held in Watsonville. This is one more opportunity that these institutions will partner in, in the effort to attract and engage young people, so that they stay actively involved with their heritage culture throughout their adult lives

A sister city designation would give official recognition to this valuable collaborative relationship and to EDV long history in the City of Watsonville. It would offer encouragement to our youth, knowing that their efforts are recognized by their City, and to their parents and families that work so hard to support their education. It would also support EDV's work hosting teachers and youth from Veracruz Llave and sending dancers of all ages to experience dance education and community performances in Mexico. By continuing to grow and develop these exchanges, EDV hopes it will inspire more cultural collaborations by other sister city organizations and support the flourishing of community identities throughout our City. The potential is there.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to answering any questions you may have.