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## Sister City International project exchange: providing resources for migrants

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**Sister City International Project Exchange: Providing Resources for Migrants**

**By**

**Claire Saldana**

**HONORS THESIS**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
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San Antonio, TX**

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## Background

In June of 2022, 50 migrants passed away in the back of a tractor-trailer after crossing into the United States from Mexico.<sup>1</sup> They had been abandoned on a dirt road in San Antonio where they died due to the unbearable heat of the enclosed trailer. This was shocking and heartbreaking to many all over the state, country, and world. Unfortunately, the smuggling of migrants is nothing new to the state of Texas. According to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), 232,972 migrants were encountered at the southern border in August 2023.<sup>2</sup> Most of the individuals entering the U.S. are not of Mexican Nationality; in fact, many are from Central and South America and Asia.<sup>3</sup> Border cities in Texas are running out of resources to assist the migrants coming in due to the influx of people. In general, the people who are flowing across the border would like to stay in their home country, but they are forced to leave due to corruption, instability, lack of opportunity, and persecution. Although this immigration crisis is a federal issue that can only be fully solved through federal legislation, this proposal seeks to create a plan for local governments to be able to assist in easing the strain on resources and the lack of assistance for the individuals seeking basic needs. In particular, I argue that the city of San Antonio can more effectively use sister-city relationships to create an exchange project where the cities and migrant resources centers (MRCs) work together to provide access to basic needs, clarify the legal migration process in both Mexico and the United States, and help individuals interested in continuing their travel plans so they can enter the United States through legal manners in ways that reduce the overwhelm on the cities along the border.

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<sup>1</sup> Edison, J., & Sviteck, P. (2022, 06 27). *At least 50 people found dead in abandoned 18-wheeler in San Antonio.*

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Customs and Border Protection. (2023, 09 22).

<sup>3</sup> Gramlich, J. (2024, 02 15). *Migrant encounters at the U.S.-Mexico border hit a record high at the end of 2023.*

## Sister Cities International

The idea of sister cities emerged as part of the response to the devastation from World War II. Many European and Asian nations were heavily destroyed and needed assistance in rebuilding. Nations and their people lost connection with each other, both culturally and economically. The impact of the Holocaust and the brutality of the war made it evident that, to avoid another war like this, new initiatives for connection were needed.<sup>4</sup> The United States, led by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had previously served as Supreme Allied Commander in Europe during WWII, led with a mindset of “maintaining world peace.”<sup>5</sup> With that goal in mind, Eisenhower sought to create a program that would bring together people from different cultures and prove that although different, people can work together and learn from each other’s differences in morals and values. To achieve this, Eisenhower created the Civic Committee and stated that the goal of the program they were creating was to bring more awareness to foreign affairs to every citizen, not just in the U.S., but to the other citizens in nations that would be participating. In 1956, the President announced the creation of the People-to-People program at the White House Citizen Diplomacy Summit. According to Historian G. Joseph Hummel, the relationships created between two cities stem from the analysis of each city’s “cultural profile, geographical and commercial nature, and social characteristics...”<sup>6</sup> Eventually the program was renamed “Sister Cities International” and established that each city’s governing body, such as the mayor and city council, shall vote on an ordinance recognizing the official relationship. The program’s mission today is to follow Eisenhower’s goals through education, culture, and

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<sup>4</sup> Sister Cities International. (2006). *Peace Through People: 50 Years of Global Leadership*.

<sup>5</sup> The White House. (n.d.). *Dwight D. Eisenhower*.

<sup>6</sup> Sister Cities International. (2006). *Peace Through People: 50 Years of Global Leadership*. 47.

economy. This can be done through exchanges which can be any type of project or initiative with the involvement of both communities' leaders and volunteers.<sup>7</sup>

The City of San Antonio holds 12 sister city relationships in nine different countries across the world. The city is very active in maintaining these bonds.<sup>8</sup> Mayor Ron Nirenberg plays a key role in this effort, and he served as the chair of Sister Cities International from 2018-2020.<sup>9</sup> The city's first two sister city relationships are the focus of this exchange proposal. In 1953 the first relationship was established with Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico which has similar military and tourism industries as San Antonio. The second is with the city of Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico in 1974.

Mayor Nirenberg recently visited sister city Gwangju, South Korea along with city council representative Manny Pelaez. Pelaez stated that the trip focused on the economic development of both cities as they met with large manufacturing industries.<sup>10</sup> Economic project exchanges tend to be the main goal of many sister city relationships across the globe. Although this is extremely beneficial, the relationship allows for other exchanges as well. Rolf D. Cremer et al. state that the sister cities have the ability to create exchange projects on any topic, but the U.S. relationships tend to revolve around democratic teachings.<sup>11</sup> Previously these relationships tended to revolve around cultural exchanges as President Eisenhower wanted people to get to know each other. However, Cremer argues that cities have started to focus on the commercial

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<sup>7</sup> Sister Cities International. (n.d.). *Exchanges*.

<sup>8</sup> City of San Antonio. (n.d.). *Sister Cities*.

<sup>9</sup> Talaat, S. (2016, January 18). *Nirenberg to Lead Sister Cities International Board*.

<sup>10</sup> Pelaez, M. (2023, 11 04). *District8Manny*. Retrieved from Instagram.

<sup>11</sup> Cremer, R. D., De Bruin, A., & Dupuis, A. (2003). International Sister-Cities: Bridging the Global Local Divide. *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 378-384.

aspect of these relationships as they feel more pressure to act on economic development.<sup>12</sup> A relationship cannot be successful solely on economic ties. Cremer also argues that these relationships must have a balance of cultural understanding and economic agreements.<sup>13</sup> This exchange seeks to continue strengthening these bonds through other avenues outlined by the organization.

Sister Cities International awarded San Antonio the best overall sister city program in 2019, 2021, and 2023.<sup>14</sup> Mayor Ron Nirenberg emphasizes Cremer's argument when he stated the relationships "require a lot of work and relationship building that happens at the civic level and citizen-to-citizen level."<sup>15</sup> Sherry Dowlatshahi serves as the Chief Diplomacy and Protocol Officer in the San Antonio Global Engagement Office.<sup>16</sup> Dowlatshahi, who coordinates the visits for the mayor and assigned council members, played another key role in acquiring this award. The city has held many celebratory events with leaders of their sister cities like the "All Mexico-U.S. Sister Cities Mayor's Summit" held in sister city Guadalajara.<sup>17</sup> In order to continue this honor and serve as a role model to other cities within the organization the proposed exchange will expand on the relationship's abilities to address transnational issues at the local level.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> "United States: San Antonio Receives Sister Cities Internationals Award for Best Overall Program." *TendersInfo News*, July 23, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> City of San Antonio. (2023, 09 26). *San Antonio Wins "Best Overall" Sister City Program*.

<sup>16</sup> City of San Antonio. (n.d.). *About Us*.

<sup>17</sup> Sister Cities International. (n.d.). *SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS WINS SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL'S AWARD FOR BEST OVERALL PROGRAM*.

## **Sister Cities as a Natural Relationship for Resource Sharing**

San Antonio holds many sister city relationships all over the world, but the focus for this program will be the sister cities of Monterrey and Guadalajara, Mexico.<sup>18</sup> The *Centro de Bienvenida* (Welcome Center) in San Antonio was created through the partnership between the City of San Antonio and Catholic Charities.<sup>19</sup> Monterrey and Guadalajara also have migrant resource centers. However, in comparison with the MRC in San Antonio, the Mexican MRCs are solely run by nonprofits and are severely overwhelmed by the amount of people needing assistance. Both cities experience large amounts of migrants from other nations coming through their cities. However, according to migrant testimony people are beginning to settle down and seek asylum in these cities.<sup>20</sup> Mexico has its own faults within the asylum application system and protection from violence within these cities is not provided. This can be beneficial to the United States as it decreases the number of migrants coming in, but it will create a crisis similar to Texas. Targeting these major urban cities on opposite ends of the nation allows for coverage of the state for migrants crossing through. In order to serve the large population of migrants in these cities while politicians in Washington continue to debate comprehensive immigration policy reform, the local governments can provide essential resources to protect and keep migrants alive.

## **Southern Border Crisis**

The U.S. Constitution and the Supreme Court affirm that power over immigration policy is vested in Congress and the President.<sup>21</sup> Immigration policy is defined by Felipe Amin

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<sup>19</sup> City of San Antonio. (n.d.). *Migrant Support Services*.

<sup>20</sup> Kendal Blust, M. B. (2019, August 3). *Tracing The Migrant Journey: On The Ground In Guadalajara, Mexico*.

<sup>21</sup> Congress, U. S. (n.d.). *ArtI.S8.C18.8.1 Overview of Congress's Immigration Powers*.

Filomeno as an action that regulates the flow of individuals into a specific area and social integration.<sup>22</sup> In the United States, local officials, such as mayors and governors, cannot create policies that directly affect any legal aspect of immigration. However, cities all over the United States have become homes for immigrants and their families. In September 2023, many Venezuelans began seeking asylum when the Biden Administration allowed temporary access to individuals fleeing from this specific nation.<sup>23</sup> The United States has had an influx of migrants coming into the U.S. through the southern border, which Texas shares about 1,254 miles of according to the Texas Department of Health and Human Services.<sup>24</sup>

Cities were completely overwhelmed by this surge. The city of Eagle Pass declared a state of emergency since they were running low on resources and money to support their migrant services.<sup>25</sup> The issues that border residents deal with reach to San Antonio as well, since it is the first major city on Interstate Highway 35. This sense of a burden on resources and the economy can influence citizens and community members to want anti-immigration policies to end the crowding and use of resources.<sup>26</sup> The Texas Legislature entered its third special session in October of 2023 to pass the governor's priority bills, including stricter immigration policy. Texas Governor Greg Abbot has not shied away from blaming the Biden administration for influx of immigrants at the southern border, and the lack of ability and authority for Texas to combat this surge of migrants. Although the crisis does exist, and immigration reform is needed to resolve these issues, the governor's policies such as SB 4 which has been passed are currently being

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<sup>22</sup> Felipe Amin Filomeno. 2017. *Theories of Local Immigration Policy*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>23</sup> Santana, R. (2023, 09 21). *What's behind the influx of migrants crossing the U.S. southern border?*

<sup>24</sup> Texas Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). *The Texas Portion of the U.S. – México Border*.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.



contested in court by the Department of Justice (DOJ).<sup>27</sup> The DOJ filed a law suit against Texas under the Constitution's Supremacy Clause and Foreign Commerce Clause, which only allow the federal government authority to implement immigration policy.<sup>28</sup> Regardless, cities and states are increasingly attempting to implement immigration policies to address the concerns arising from an ineffective federal immigration system. SB 4 would impede the immigration process by preventing border patrol from access to the border and restrict immigrants from claiming asylum. Municipalities cannot allow these laws to go into effect as it would increase police officer responsibility in federal matters they are not trained for and can lead to potential racial profiling of documented citizens.<sup>29</sup> Many cities in states New York, California, and Chicago have attempted to go against national and state policy and implement sanctuary policies.<sup>30</sup> Texas has a law in place that does not allow for any city to have a sanctuary policy.<sup>31</sup> However, the states continue to fight back by implementing preemption bills that take power away from municipalities. Yet the mandates they do require of the cities are not fully funded.<sup>32</sup> This is a complicated and contradicting issue when it comes to preemption laws at all levels. Immigration reform requires careful yet immediate action from the federal government as immigration has caused issue all over the country yet it also has benefits. Immigrants have a positive impact on cities as they bring skills and goods. According to a White House report by Cecilia Rouse, the

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<sup>27</sup> Uriel J. Garcia, P. S. (2024, February 15). Texas and Biden administration lawyers face off in court over new law making illegal border crossing a state crime.

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Office of Public Affairs. (2024, January 3). Justice Department Files Lawsuit Against the State of Texas Regarding Unconstitutional SB 4 Immigration Law.

<sup>29</sup> Garza, L. (2024, February 20). Leaders across state brace for SB 4 ruling, including those in Webb County and Laredo.

<sup>30</sup> Gulasekaram, Pratheepan, Rick Su, and Rose Cuison Villazor. 2019. "Anti-Sanctuary and Immigration Localism." *Columbia Law Review* 119 (3): 837-94.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors, and other members of the council the economic advantage of migrants is immense.<sup>33</sup> When migrants come to the United States and are incorporated into the labor force there is an increase in economic output, productivity, mobility, market efficiency, and innovation among other benefits. Cities benefit too much from these individuals to allow them to be pushed out. The International Organization for Migration states that cities need to be inclusive, safe, and reliant destinations for migrants.<sup>34</sup>

Deciding to migrate to the United States can be the only option for survival for many families. 5.3% of all migrants entering the United States come through the southern border.<sup>35</sup> A study by the Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities states that migrants crossing through Mexico from other nations, especially Central America, experience various acts of violence. These acts range from rape, robbery, kidnapping, etc. Most of these violent acts are committed against Central American women. This effects migrants' health and could even lead to death before they arrive in the U.S. 60% of the migrants crossing have died in Mexico during their<sup>36</sup> journey.

Mexico hosts many nonprofits that offer migrant assistance, yet migrants tend to experience the most violence within this nation. Access to safety, health care, and basic needs are a human right and must be preserved in this region. Migrant Centers are all over the world to

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<sup>33</sup> Rouse, C., Barrow, L., Rinz, K., & Soltas, E. (2021, 09 17). *The Economic Benefits of Extending Permanent Legal Status to Unauthorized Immigrants*.

<sup>34</sup> Felipe Amin Filomeno. 2017. *Theories of Local Immigration Policy*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.2.

<sup>35</sup> Fernández-Ortega, M.Á., Cerritos-Flores, R., Rodríguez-Mendoza, O. *et al.* Mexicans vs Central Americans: Violented Migrants Crossing Mexico. *J. Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities* (2023). 1.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

help migrants deciding to leave their country and provide the resources they may need along the way.

According to Felipe Amin Filomeno as law enforcement pertaining to immigration expands, the more access immigrants need to aid.<sup>37</sup> The Urban Affairs Review also points to the increasing need for welcoming policy instead of policy focused on policing and legal status.<sup>38</sup> In fact, anti-immigration laws have proved ineffective in keeping immigrants out of the U.S. and restricted from employment. Filomeno states that certain policy can result in barring immigrants from getting jobs or buying homes in the U.S. The people of cities with high migration like San Antonio and border cities begin to favor anti-immigration bills when surges of migrants cause overuse of resources and crowding in transportation areas.<sup>39</sup> This then leads to the increase in policies that criminalize and demonize immigrants coming to the U.S. However, Filomeno states that when municipalities work in collaboration with immigration organizations, equal and just policies are created. When immigrants are welcomed into the states it can increase the development of cities. This is the relationship that Texas should strive for in order to decrease the creation and implementation of xenophobic laws while increasing policies and initiatives that help immigrants at the local level. Finally, Filomeno states that studies have shown that cities will favor pro-immigration policy when the public is vocal and organized around this topic. Mobilization of these groups will only occur if community members are educated about the benefits and justification of immigrant rights and needs.

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<sup>37</sup> Felipe Amin Filomeno. 2017. *Theories of Local Immigration Policy*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.2.

<sup>38</sup> Huang, X., & Liu, C. Y. (2018). Welcoming Cities: Immigration Policy at the Local Government Level. *Urban Affairs Review*, 54(1), 3–32.

<sup>39</sup> Felipe Amin Filomeno. 2017. *Theories of Local Immigration Policy*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.2.3.

The United Nations Network on Migration has also established efforts to increase services and rights for migrants around the world.<sup>40</sup> Through the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) government actors at all levels, especially at the local level, have committed themselves to the twenty-three objectives for safe and orderly migration.<sup>41</sup> The ten guiding principles tie into what Filomeno stated about organizations and expansion on what policy must address. The policies should be people centered, have international cooperation, and be society driven. Through these goals, policies around the world can efficiently, equally, and safely serve migrants and citizens. This is a guiding agreement that all cities and nations should follow when creating immigration policy.

The literature has pointed to the border crisis needing a solution to help cities that are running out of resources and the need for access to basic needs for migrants along their journey. Although integration is the main recommendation for municipal policy, the cities also need to act in accordance with federal law and the resources provided. The United Nations has called on government officials to come up with policies and initiatives that serve migrants equally and humanely. The Federal government has yet to act on this issue and the Texas state legislature has not passed any bills that treat immigrants fairly and without xenophobic ideals. The call is on local governments to work with organizations to create fair policy and programs rather than working against each other. This policy proposal will address these needs without going against the federal and state government anti-sanctuary laws.

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<sup>40</sup> Migration, U. N. (n.d.). *The GCM in a Nutshell*.

<sup>41</sup> Migration, U. N. (n.d.). *GCM Objectives*.

### **Policy Recommendation: San Antonio Migrant Resource Center**

In order to help ease the number of migrants coming into Texas and overwhelming border cities including San Antonio, I propose an exchange between San Antonio and two of its sister cities in Mexico. This program is organized through their sister cities because it strengthens relationships across borders. By working across borders to address the needs of migrants, cities are building up the people-to-people core that President Eisenhower sought to achieve through Sister Cities International. The project also takes advantage of the sister city relationship beyond economic agreements, as recommended by Cremer. The overall goals are to ease the number of resources being used in border cities and San Antonio and provide a network of information across nations to help migrants as they travel through Mexico and the United States. Since the municipalities do not have the authority to create policy to help the border crisis, they can assist migrants coming in to create a travel plan in order to quickly get to their families or jobs they have lined up in other states within the U.S.

This program will also address the United Nations Global Compact for Migration objective number 15: access to basic services.<sup>42</sup> The GCM was created to address migration through an intergovernmental agreement. This agreement acknowledges the idea that migration is a topic that governments across borders at all levels must work in unison to govern effectively. Objective 15 asks for migrant resource centers in cities to cooperate with each other in order to provide access to healthcare and other resources safely and equally.

The City of San Antonio has one of the most successful Migrant Resource Center (MRC) model in the country. In November of 2023, San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg hosted mayors

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<sup>42</sup> Migration, U. N. (n.d.). *GCM Objectives*.

from all over Texas and Kentucky to visit and learn about the Center's success so they can use it as a model for implementation in their cities. In collaboration with Catholic Charities, the Migrant Resource Center has continuously assisted in the protection of migrant individuals, especially after the June 2022 deaths mentioned at the beginning of this policy memo. When Catholic Charities took primary control over the project in 2022, there was a decrease in the number of migrants sleeping in the parking lots and increase in cultural implementation in the food and surroundings in the center.<sup>43</sup> The city of San Antonio provides program funding using grant money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The San Antonio MRC is successful because it differs from other centers in many ways. The most important factor is that the center is classified as a transportation hub by San Antonio officials for migrants once they are released from Border Patrol. It is the city's priority to keep the center as a transportation hub that only allows for a 3-night stay to ensure the center can serve its capacity of 7,000 migrants per day.<sup>44</sup> Once migrants reach the MRC, they are assisted in arranging travel to their host city. The MRC offers phone charging stations, showers, meals, rest spots, local transportation, and overnight shelter.<sup>45</sup> Since the surge in September the city has tracked 24,940 migrants entering the city, but that number has quickly decreased since then.<sup>46</sup> Some cities like San Antonio were able to "ride out" the surge while others were immensely overwhelmed. In September, Catholic Charities announced they were not in need of any

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<sup>43</sup> Torres, R. (2023, 01 06). *Migrant center gets new name and approach with Catholic Charities at the helm.*

<sup>44</sup> Wilson, C. (2023, 09 21). *San Antonio migrant center full after Eagle Pass emergency declaration.* Retrieved from My SA

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> City of San Antonio. (2023, 10). *Migrant Dashboard.* Retrieved from <https://stories.opengov.com/sanantoniotx/published/fiHSF0BL>

assistance other than volunteers.<sup>47</sup> They had enough support from the city and other non-profits to continue to provide all their services financially.

San Antonio's sister cities in Mexico are the most important sister city relationships to the city as they are the closest and many of the migrants coming into San Antonio cross through Mexico to get to the U.S. To help both cities ease the number of migrants coming in and their needs, this plan will help the cities of Guadalajara and Monterrey create a partnership with migrant assistance nonprofits in the United States to create a similar MRC to that in San Antonio. Mexico may not be the final destination for families coming from Central America or other nations like Venezuela, however, by improving the resources provided on their way to the U.S. we can have a better system of resource use.

The Mexico MRCS will follow closely to San Antonio's model. Guadalajara currently houses the Rhizome Center for Migrants which provides legal aid and reintegration services, with support from Casa Del Migrante Scalabrini, another migrant aid organization.<sup>48</sup> In Monterrey, Casa Monaraca operates through the International Catholic Migration Commission.<sup>49</sup> These non-profits led by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) will provide volunteers and employees who will help run and provide services in the respective cities.<sup>50</sup> Giving main operations to CRS ensures the facility is run with a compassionate view, as Catholic Charities has done in San Antonio. The physical building in which the MRC will be housed must be large enough to assist

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<sup>47</sup> Ibarra, D. (2023, 09 22). *Neighbors living behind Migrant Resource Center in San Antonio have mixed feelings about influx*. Retrieved from KSAT

<sup>48</sup> Aldea Arcoiris Impulsando Caminos sin Fronteras Casa del Migrante Scalabrini, A. (n.d.). *About us*; The Rhizome Center for Migrants. (n.d.). *About*. Retrieved from <https://rhizomecenter.org/about/our-mission/>

<sup>49</sup> Alba, L. E. (n.d.). *Casa Monarca. Humanitarian Aid for Migrants*. Retrieved from ICMC.

<sup>50</sup> Catholic Relief Services. (n.d.). *CRS in Mexico*.

at least 600 migrants a day, which should be about 71,000 square feet.<sup>51</sup> To ensure security the centers will have security screenings at a single entrance to the buildings. This allows migrants to have peace of mind as they are living and sleeping overnight in the center.

The first step for cities to take is to create this official partnership with the non-profits. Both cities should also provide funding to get the MRCs operating. San Antonio and the nonprofits are refunded for the funds they spend on the center through FEMA.<sup>52</sup> The centers in our sister cities will apply to the equivalent national emergency fund. If the organizations do not qualify, the cities will apply to the Mayors Migration Council's Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees.<sup>53</sup> This fund was specifically created to assist municipalities in funding inclusive programs that address migrant needs. The location of each MRC being in these two specific cities allows for the collaboration to reach opposite sides of Mexico. Considering the need for this program to be up and running in the shortest time frame, the cities should look for any unused property they own first, rather than finding land to build a new building.

The shelter will be classified as a transportation hub. Migrants will only be able to stay overnight for up to three days. This rule allows the MRC to successfully shelter and assist the maximum number of migrants. The centers will provide migrants with short-term transportation to get as close to the southern border as possible. Once migrants have arrived at the border, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security will transport them to the San Antonio MRC. Once they arrive in San Antonio the center can help migrants get to their next destination. Other options that can be offered are plans to travel to states with "Right to Shelter" policies in place. The three

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<sup>51</sup> Torres, R. (2023, 01 06). *Migrant center gets new name and approach with Catholic Charities at the helm.*

<sup>52</sup> City of San Antonio. (n.d.). *Migrant Resource Center Frequently Asked Questions.*

<sup>53</sup> Mayors Migration Council. (n.d.). *Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees.*



MRCs will work together to share information and data about the needs of migrants and plan for expected surges. Texas cities will be able to prepare better for the different needs of migrants quickly arriving. This model will help other Texas and Mexico sister cities to create or reform their MRCs as well.

Finally, this policy asks all three centers to implement a success and improvement measurement tool, to ensure that the centers are continuously being updated to meet the specific needs and security that migrants have a right to. Requiring an exit survey can be daunting and ineffective, since it would be another step migrants must endure after filling out paperwork and travel plans. However, knowing what is working, what needs improvement, and what needs to be eliminated are vital pieces of information for any organization. The migrants should be encouraged to complete the exit surveys so they can make the MRC more effective for the next group. If there is any mistreatment it must be addressed immediately, using publicly available policies for resolution, to keep in line with the UN GCM requirements and ideals. This aspect of the center can bring accountability and continued success to the programs.

Once this program is implemented other Texas cities can follow this model with their sister cities to create a larger network of resources and information. When there is more public awareness of migration benefits to a city's development there will be an increase in policy advocates at the state and national level. Filomeno also suggests that the more inclusive the United States is with immigration policy the more migrants home nations will invest in development of the country.<sup>54</sup> When citizens have more pull factors than push migration rates

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<sup>54</sup> Felipe Amin Filomeno. 2017. *Theories of Local Immigration Policy*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.5.

will decrease. The more institutional development there is the more sustainability there will be in these nations allowing for families to build safe and healthy lives in their home countries.

Local officials must create a relationship with migrants to align with the UN GCM goals for migration governance. Until those types of policies are passed, this program is the most effective strategy to make progress at the local level and spread awareness to communities. It leverages pre-existing positive relationships with other cities facing similar problems. It will also aid in increasing the knowledge of the effects of local immigration policy in order to improve and expand at the national level. This is the first step to equal and humane immigration policies in the United States.

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