

# Consolidation of Local Governments in Japan and Effects on Sister City Relationships

Consulate General of Japan, San Francisco  
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# Background

- Many Japanese municipalities are very small, having as few as 200 residents
- Municipalities in Japan provide a wide range of administrative functions that require skilled workers such as building engineers and civil engineering inspectors
- Due to the current difficult position of financing the broad scope of local government functions, the total debt of local governments now make up 40% of Japan's GDP, or about 1.8 trillion dollars.
- Japan's rapidly aging society promises the need for even more social services and programs.
- Emerging technologies and increasingly mobile residents present the need for an expansion of residential area policy.



# Benefits of Merging Municipalities

# 1. Improved Convenience

- Expansion of residential area per city government
- Increased access to administrative service counters
- More convenient elementary and junior high school zones
- Use of other municipalities' public facilities



## 2. Development of Services

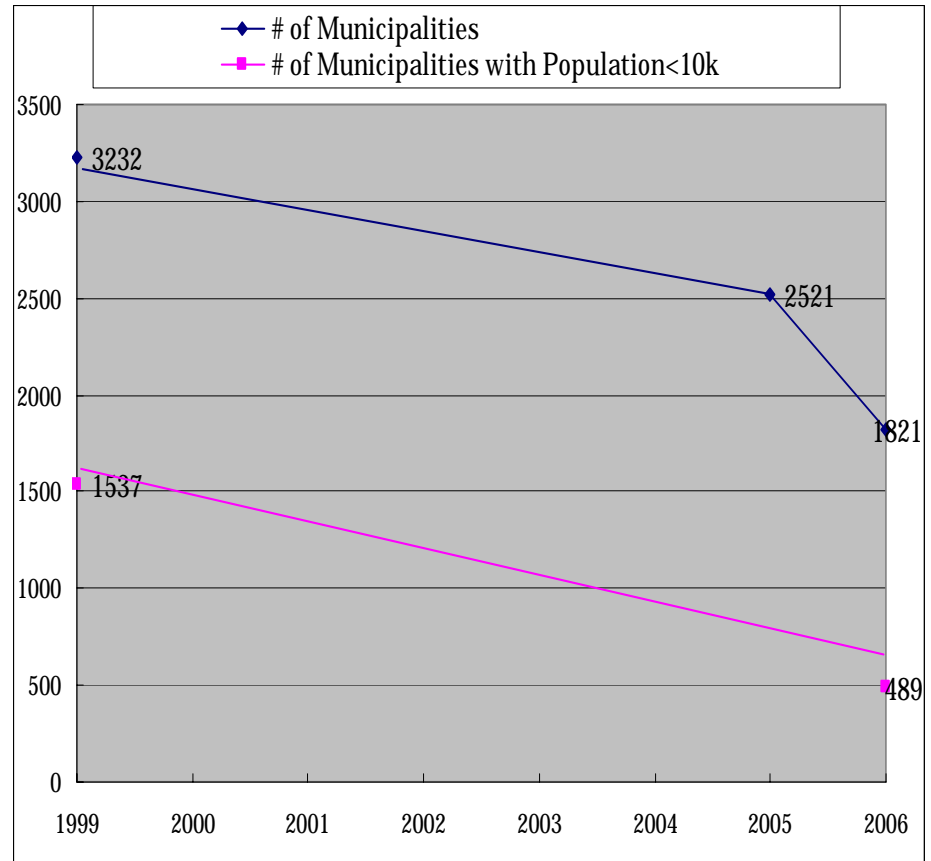
- Upgrading and diversification of administrative services
- Implementation of special and sophisticated services which previously were not possible

# 3. Streamlined City Planning and Financing

- Prioritized investment and construction of high-grade facilities to operate as the core of the community.
- Implementation of city planning from a wide-area perspective in such fields as road and public funding facility construction, land use and zoning.
- Increased efficiency in the management sector and improved distribution of human resources and budget.
- Decentralization of National and Prefectural role in local governing resulting in increased local control and responsiveness to residents' specific needs.

# Municipal Merger Progress Report

- By April of 2006 the total number of municipalities are expected to reach 56% of their 1999 numbers.
- By April of 2006 the number of municipalities with population under 10,000 will reach 32% of their 1999 level.
- Although consolidation of local government is carried out on a voluntary basis, the National Government has been providing financial and other kinds of support to promote mergers. This program will come to an end in April of 2006 and these incentives will be significantly lessened.




# **Suggested Process for Municipal Mergers**

As *advised* by the Council for Local Authorities and International Relations (CLAIR)


Establishment of merger council and discussion at the municipal level



It is suggested that the Merger Council consider and determine whether or not the new municipality will continue its previous Sister City affiliation before the merger is complete.



Sister Cities should explain to their counterparts in California the circumstances regarding the merger. This should include a request from Japan as to how the California Sister City would like to proceed or notification as to their decision regarding the continuation or cessation of the Sister City relationship.



Municipalities that choose to continue their previous affiliation with a Sister City in California are suggested to create a new affiliation agreement, under the authority and name of the newly merged municipality.



# Effects of Municipal Mergers on Northern and Central California Sister Cities

# 1. Minimum Effects

- From April, 1999, to the present, of more than 1500 municipalities that have merged as few as 30 municipalities, or 2%, have discontinued their Sister City affiliations. (According to CLAIR)

## 2. New Possibilities

- Potential for new exchange opportunities and expanded network of potential participants.
- If there is active interest on the part of residents of both cities, vibrant exchange will be likely to continue.

# 3. Prior to the Merger Finalization

- Communication and explanation of merger circumstance should come from Japan Sister Cities.
- This should be an opportunity for California Sister Cities to express their intent or willingness to continue Sister City relations.
- There have only been two cases of a discontinuation of Sister City in Northern and Central California (Reedley, Ripon) following a merger, and the final decision was made by those California cities.
- If you have not heard from your Sister City and are concerned that you may be affected by their municipal merger, you should feel free to be proactive and initiate the discussion.

# 4. Subsequent to the Merger

- On an official level, the new municipality should take over the responsibilities of prior partnerships.
- Exactly how the merger will affect the Sister City relationship will depend on the new city and Mayor.
- In the event that the official Sister City relationship is dissolved, there may be some cases where informal exchange will still occur with the original area (such as school exchange programs).



## Affected Sister Cities in Northern and Central California

32 Sister City relationships  
affected or to be affected by  
municipal mergers in Japan



## Mergers Completed (1999-2005)

### 24 Affected Sister City Relationships

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- San Jose – Okayama
- Stockton – Shizuoka (Shimizu)
- Richmond – Shimada
- Fresno – Kochi
- Visalia - Miki
- Antioch – Chichibu
- Berkeley – Sakai
- Santa Cruz – Shingu
- Mountain View – Iwata
- Salinas – Ichiki Kushikino (Kushikino)
- Sacramento – Matsuyama
- Porterville – Hamamatsu (Mikkabi)
- Santa Clara – Izumo
- Ripon – Sakurajima
- Yuba City – Toride (Fujishiro)
- Hanford – Setana
- Eureka – Kamisu
- Modesto – Kurume
- Livingston – Oga (Wakami)
- Monterey – Nanao
- Milpitas – Tsukuba (Kukizaki)
- Reedley – Tomi (Toubu)
- Pittsburgh – Shimonoseki
- Sonora – Kirishima



## Future Mergers (To be Completed by April, 2006) 8 Affected Sister City Relationships

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- Lodi – Kofu
- Cupertino – Toyokawa
- Fremont – Fukaya
- Mendocino – Omachi (Miasa)
- Rohnert Park – Hashimoto
- Sebastopol – Takeo (Yamauchi)
- Hollister – Kato (Takino)
- San Bruno – Narita