



CITY OF MARTINEZ

**CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
September 7, 2011**

TO: City Council
FROM: Mayor Rob Schroder
PREPARED BY: Mercy G. Cabral, Deputy City Clerk
SUBJECT: Adopt Stresa, Italy as a Sister City
DATE: August 29, 2011

RECOMMENDATION:

Consider a new “Sister City” relationship between the City of Martinez and the town of Stresa, Italy.

BACKGROUND:

A Sister City relationship is a broad-based, officially approved, long-term partnership between two communities. Sister City programs are unique in that they inherently involve the three main sectors in a community: local government, businesses, and wide variety of citizen volunteers.

Sister Cities find each other in many different ways. Sometimes it is a simple process, where two mayors meet and become friends, then involve the rest of their community. The Honorable Mayor of Stresa, Sindaco Canio Di Milla, and the Mayor of Martinez, Rob Schroeder, met last summer in Stresa when he performed a civil marriage ceremony for the Mayor and his wife.

It was the Mayor’s first visit to Stresa, but the Mayor’s wife and her extended family and friends have been vacationing there for many years. Both mayors immediately formed a most cordial relationship, and discovered that both cities, Stresa and Martinez, had so much in common, we decided to pursue our interest in becoming Sister Cities.

Martinez and Stresa both retain a strong sense of history and family and both are situated on bodies of water, Martinez on the Carquinez Strait and Stresa on Lake Maggiore. Indeed, some of the Italian fishermen who immigrated to the United States from the Piedmont region were among the first families of Martinez, and their ancestors reside in Martinez to this day.

Martinez is already a member of Sister Cities International, so there would be no costs associated with forming this partnership.

ACTION:

Motion to enter into a sister city relationship with Martinez, California and Stresa, Italy.



"Que dire du lac Majeur, des îles Borromées, du lac de Côme, sinon plaindre ceux qui n'en sont pas fous?"
(Stendhal, 1829)

"For however fanciful and fantastic the Isola Bella may be, and is: it still is beautiful"
(C. Dickens, 1844)

"I'm up here at Stresa a little resort on Lake Maggiore one of the most beautiful of the Italian Lakes"
(E. Hemingway, 1929)

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STRESA, ITALY

The famous town of Stresa (Italy, 5000 inhabitants, 200 m above sea level) enjoys a splendid location on Lake Maggiore in the Gulf of Borromeo, where it overlooks the eponymous islands, the main attraction in the region. Its beautiful countryside, architectural gems and mild climate combine to make Stresa one of the most popular tourist attractions in Italy. The **Borromeo Islands**, with their stunning palaces and ornamental gardens, are an unmissable destination for aesthetes. Luxury villas and opulent Art Nouveau hotels line the elegant lakeside, which is ideal for a tranquil stroll. Since the late 19th century Stresa has been renowned for its sophisticated atmosphere and genteel visitors, and today still enjoys an impressive roster of cultural, musical and meeting events.



HISTORY Stresa first appears on historical documents just before the end of the first millennium, when it was a small community of fishermen and peasants. During the Middle Ages, the town was a fiefdom of the lords of Castello and Visconti, but it was the Borromeo family-part of the Milanese aristocracy-who subsequently ruled the region and added the magnificent buildings that have made Stresa famous. In 1441, the Borromeos obtained part of the territory and by 1653 the entire district was reunited under their rule. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, the Borromeos commissioned palaces to be built on the islands of Bella and Madre. Stresa passed into Austrian hands in 1719, before coming under the rule of the House of Savoy in 1748. The town began to achieve its renown as a tourist destination at the beginning of the 19th century, when glamorous villas such as the **Villa Pallavicino** and Villa Vignolo were built. In 1906 the opening of the Simplon Tunnel heralded the start of widespread international travel. Trains on the London-Paris-Milan line began to call at Stresa station, and travellers and writers from all over Europe came to sing the praises of Stresa and Lake Maggiore, spreading their fame far and wide and enticing an ever larger number of people to visit. Every year, Stresa now welcomes hundreds of thousands of tourists from across the globe.



PLACES TO SEE A visit to Stresa is the ideal way to blend relaxation and culture in an enchanting setting that evokes the atmosphere of the belle époque. From Stresa it is easy to reach the three **Borromeo Islands**, which are steeped in artistic, historical and botanical appeal. On the islands of Bella and Madre there are sumptuous palaces and rare plant gardens where peacocks, parrots and pheasants roam wild against an exotic backdrop reminiscent of faraway lands. ... [READ MORE](#) »



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RELATED LINKS

STRESA SITES
 » [Stresa.org](#) - The historical web site, since 2000.

HOTELS The hotel boom in Stresa in the second half of the 19th century was sparked by the construction of the luxury Grand Hotel des Iles Borromees in 1861, the first of many hotels to spring up around the lake. By the beginning of the 20th century, Stresa's tourist success led another famous Art Nouveau hotel, the Regina Palace, to open (1908), followed by many others. Over the course of the last century, the number of establishments continued to grow to meet the demands of an ever-increasing number of international visitors. There are currently over 50 hotels of various types and sizes in Stresa, with [accommodation](#) for up to 3300 people. ... [STRESA HOTELS](#) »



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