

# EXPLORING A SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP



# CASTEL DI SASSO, ITALY

Translated: Castle of Rock or Stone



# CASTLE ROCK, COLORADO



**Dear Mayor, Council Members and Town Manager,**

I have recently met with and briefly introduced the Sister City Concept with councilman George Teal who has also socialized the concept with Mayor Gray. I provided them both with the background that prompted my persistence with seeing the below opportunity come to fruition. At their initial recommendation, I offer with new hope, the opportunity for you to become the administration which is attributed to making something amazingly beneficial, interesting and fun happen for Castle Rock. With the many many important growth issues with our beloved historic Castle Rock, and you, the keepers of the town, this particular opportunity might lighten the air amidst things like managing the city's goals, major projects and infrastructure improvements, community growth to land use to finances and strategic planning.

**Premise:** As a Dept. of Defense Civilian employee I was offered the chance to serve our Agency as Liaison for all the US interests South of the Alps back in 2003 -2006. I could live in any country such as Italy, Turkey, Greece or even the Horn of Africa. My mother's family came to Colorado in the early 1900s from southern Italy so the choice was obvious... Italy it was. The town we ended up moving to and living in was just northeast of Naples in a hilltop town called Castel di Sasso (or loosely translated "CASTLE OF ROCK"). Being fully aware of Castle Rock, CO - I became good friends with the town and its administrators and the thought of Sister City was created.

Castel di Sasso's new mayor Antonio D'Avino, elected this past May, and I have also discussed this opportunity as well with the City manager and my very good friend Antonio Mastroianni – and, they are all-in on pursuing this relationship.

This little town in the hills of the Region of Campagna, and in the district of Caserta would be the winner of the Sister City relationship. The area is strongly old world with much of the area considered agriculture with vineyards, olive groves, livestock and small farms. The area is also home to the world-famous Mozzarella di buffalo (or mozzarella of the water buffalo) which is made there and there are several Casificio's or cheese making plants in the area.

Southern Italy has so many reasons to become involved in and explore - history, art, great food and a diverse natural landscape! However, tourism is not a thriving force for the commune of Castel di Sasso. This is undervalued as it a most wonderful and real-down-to-earth old world experience.

**Introduction to Sister Cities International:** This organization is a support organization created at President Eisenhower's 1956 White House conference on citizen diplomacy. Eisenhower envisioned an organization that could be the hub of peace and prosperity by creating bonds between people from different cities around the world. By forming these relationships, President Eisenhower reasoned that people of different cultures could celebrate and appreciate their differences and build partnerships that would lessen the chance of new conflicts. This organization has the framework to facilitate the administrative with toolkits and editable templates for important sister city documents like partnership agreements and visa support letters. I strongly recommend using this supporting organization with the dues being very low with a city size between 50,000 – 100,000 at \$810 yearly.

**Sister cities can find each other in strange ways:** Starting with friendly negotiations between policy leaders, business folks, or in our case just communities that share the same name or festival celebrations.

The basic premise of a Sister City is to promote peace through mutual respect, understanding and cooperation; one individual, one community at a time.

*Basically, EMPOWERING CITIZEN DIPLOMATS with interactions abroad.*

- By understanding and comparing cities to each other, it provides the opportunity to work together.
- Annual conferences might be held to provide support and to expand the Sister Cities International program
- Projects include community development, youth exchanges, and typical concerns of a nation: health care, the environment and public policy.

**What is this relationship:** After being officially bound at a signing ceremony, sister cities agree to share and contribute diverse ideas and activities between each other. This nonprofit citizen diplomacy community hope is to strengthen understanding and informational exchanges among cities with common interest but from diverse geographic regions. The partnership will promote cultural understanding, especially through the Youth.

Generally, sister cities can be extremely similar in structure or even geographically, but there are many successful opposite sibling pairings.

**What are the benefits?** Besides cultural promotion and international awareness, there are other fantastic opportunities created through the program.

- Cities can participate in grant programs towards global projects.
- Coordinators and volunteers get involved in the community to be fully aware of the vibe and personal issues in each city.
- Through meetings and conferences, it gives everyone the advantage to learn about new innovations, cultures and experiences abroad.

The relationship should and could include any organization that would want to participate for varied reasons. A few that would be most interested:

Chamber of Commerce – Schools (could be a real winner – exchange programs – joint projects, etc.)

Kiwanis Club - American Legion – Rotary – VFW - Catholic Charities - Neighborhoods/HOAs - Others

**For your Information:** Denver is the second-oldest sister city in the United States in its relationship with Brest, France, started in 1948. In 1947, Amanda Knecht, a teacher at East High School, visited World War II-ravaged Brest. When she returned, she shared her experiences in the city with her students, and her class raised \$32,000 to help rebuild the children's wing of Brest's hospital. The gift led to the development of the sister city program with Brest. Many of Colorado's towns/cities have become Sister Cities or "twin cities".

The list of Denver's sister cities includes:

Brest, France (1948)	Cuernavaca, Mexico (1983)
Takayama, Japan (1960)	Chennai, India (1984)
Nairobi, Kenya (1975)	Kunming, China (1985)
Karmiel, Israel (1977)	Axum, Ethiopia (1995)
Potenza, Italy (1983)	Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (2001)



## A little about Castel di Sasso:

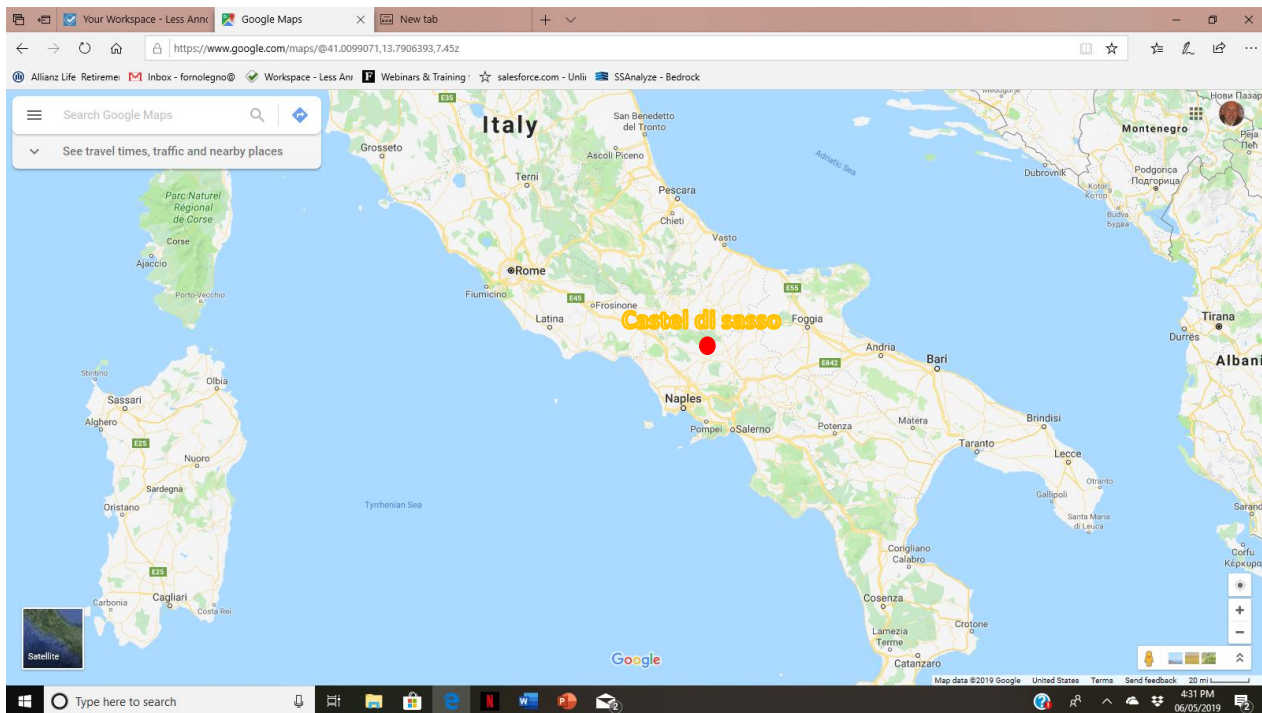
Population: about 1100 in the hilltop town but the township area has close to 10,000 (2017)

Zip/postal code: 81040 (interestingly 80104 in many area of Castle Rock)

Phone Area Code: 0823

Patron Saint: San Biagio, celebrated on 3 February (where the whole town turns out - a big event and a lot about big family meals – we could do the same and match some of the ole world recipes that they enjoy during this festival)

Small communities make-up the comune of Castel di Sasso include: Prea, San Marco, Sasso, Strangolagalli, Arbusti, Cisterno





"Sometimes they're just student exchanges, sometimes they're professorial exchanges, sometimes they're medical exchanges, sometimes it's humanitarian systems, and other times it's economic development" "But it all starts out with building the relationship."



Outcomes of these sibling partnerships do vary considerably. As a result of its relationship with Spoleto, Italy, the city of Charleston, South Carolina, has a huge Italian festival every year that generates millions of dollars for the local economy. The partnership between Tempe, Arizona, and Regensburg, Germany, inspires an annual Oktoberfest that raises money for student trips. Salisbury, Maryland, has a friendship with Tartu, Estonia, centered around a cyber-security exchange.

Our neighbors in Grand Junction have recently received National attention for their assistance provided in El Espino, its sister city in El Salvador. The annual spay and neuter campaign began in 2018 and has treated a total of more than 650 dogs and cats during two, three-day campaigns, in turn preventing of thousands of animal births in the first two years alone.

The campaign is part efforts to reduce the spread of disease and improve community health.

Castle Rock... let's find our own outcomes!

Thank you for the opportunity to present this wonderful opportunity. I trust you will advise me of your decision and next steps. I would be most willing to provide a short overview of the initiative to the council at the Council meetings as an agenda item or however you would like to proceed. I would be available to the staff for strategic planning, logistics, administration or just good ole discussion prior to approval and throughout the process.

My good friend Antonio Mastroianni has agreed to provide interpretive support going forward. Tony was born in Castel di Sasso and his family move him to America when he was eight. After Graduation he was the only one who wanted to return to Italy and became a 'local national' Director of Housing for the US Navy helping many of the families who are stationed in the Naples area. He has since become the Regional Manager for an American Defense Contractor and continues to live in Castel di Sasso with his wife Giuseppina and son Michele.

With High Regards,

*Stephen*

Stephen (Stefano) Crawford

(The piazza and church on top of the Rock..).



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