

## Exhibit A

# Mestia-North Bend Professional and Cultural Exchange

*Encouraging smart growth while maintaining community and heritage during times of development pressure and increased recreational use*

## Vision

To establish a non-exclusive framework of cooperation and to facilitate collaboration between the City of North Bend and Townlet of Mestia, Republic of Georgia. An intercultural exchange in ideas, long-range planning methods, and other areas of mutual interest to help strengthen the mechanisms for smart growth and cultural resilience in these parallel communities.



*Mestia in February 2018 – photo by Jesse Reynolds*

## Synopsis

An opportunity for a professional and cultural exchange with Mestia, a town in the Upper Svaneti Valley of the Georgian Caucasus has presented itself to the City of North Bend, facilitated through the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The Mayor of Mestia is interested in pursuing a mutually beneficial exchange. If the City accepts, the nature and terms of the exchange would be designed to be an insightful experience for both municipalities. North Bend would mentor Mestia in planning methods such as growth management, concurrency, public engagement, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Mestia would provide insights to North Bend regarding maintenance of cultural heritage while fostering a premier outdoor recreation destination.

The ADB fosters such mentor-mentee relationships through a mechanism that is referred to as Twinning. Often this relationship is done between utility providers or municipalities. One example of a successful Twinning venture is between the Cities of Edmonton, Alberta and Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

North Bend would act as a mentor to Mestia regarding several planning-related topics such as growth management, citizen participation, comprehensive planning, and development concurrency. This opportunity would help give North Bend exposure to a different way of dealing with similar changes as an outdoor destination. North Bend staff and elected officials would be engaging in advisory roles during the exchange, presenting the opportunity to learn new things by assisting a peer from a foreign country. North Bend could also market its engagement as being a socially responsible outdoor community, helping bolster our outdoor brand. Broadly, the benefits of opening the community to a foreign friend would be intangible, providing insights and experiences that are difficult to explain in writing.

The North Bend side of the exchange would be managed by Jesse Reynolds and would be executed in a way that will not interfere with existing and future planning workload. The ADB may provide funding support up to \$35,000 for travel, lodging, and other trip-related expenses for both North Bend and Mestia.

## Background

During Jesse's final project with his former employer he supported an urban development planning project for several regions in the Country of Georgia through the ADB called [Georgia: Livable Urban Areas: Integrated Urban Plans for Balanced Regional Development](#). One of the four focus regions included Mestia. Mestia is the cultural center of one of the regions being studied, Upper Svaneti. While working in the region Jesse couldn't help but see parallels to the City of his future employment, North Bend, and how each community could provide insights to the other helping each reflect on their unique situation regarding rapid growth and outdoor recreation. North Bend could provide insights on how to manage growth through development regulation, concurrency, and visioning a future through comprehensive planning and the use of GIS. Mestia could share a rich history of Svan culture and insights on how to maintain local amenities while experiencing explosive growth in outdoor recreation.

While helping create a long list of potential projects Jesse proposed an exchange between Mestia and North Bend, referred to as 'Twinning' within the ADB, which was then accepted as a beneficial action by ADB's program manager. Today, the ADB, the Consultant Project Manager Niels Van Dijk, and Mestia are in favor of the exchange. If North Bend is in favor the exchange can be executed.

### Asian Development Bank TA-9220 Project

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved the Technical Assistance (TA) 9220-GEO: Livable Urban Areas: Integrated Urban Plans for Balanced Regional Development on 4 November 2016, to help Georgia mainstream integrated urban development in a participatory manner by enhancing the planning of selected urban area clusters and prioritizing urban investments, to achieve more balanced regional development. The Government of Georgia's strategic priorities for the regions focus on building economic competitiveness through accessible tourism development, cultural and historical heritage conservation, local economic development, and agribusiness. The TA has initiated a programmatic and integrated urban development approach. The projects prioritized for financing will be prepared and linked with follow-on investments and other relevant project preparatory activities for preparing procurement-ready projects under a proposed Sustainable Cities Development Investment Program in 2019-2020. The Twinning opportunity between North Bend and Mestia could be a part of this program.

## Mestia Profile

Mestia, a conglomeration of Svan hamlets totaling just under 2,000 permanent residents, is the cultural and economic center of the Svan people in the Upper Svaneti region of the northwest corner of the Country of Georgia. This community has had a strong cultural existence since before the golden age of Georgia in the 13th century. This community is nestled within the Greater Caucasus Mountain range containing several glaciated peaks reaching above 4,000 meters, containing some of the most exceptional mountain terrain in Europe. This community is witnessing a rapid expansion of adventure tourism, focused on hiking in the summer season and skiing in the winter season. The community has been successful in channeling recent tourism growth in a way that benefits the community and culture, but this is under threat. Further tourism growth is inevitable even though the town has limited accessibility (one road connection and a small airport with infrequent flights). A highway tunnel connecting to Georgia's main East-West road is proposed to be built in 2022, decreasing travel times from the nation's capital of Tbilisi considerably, especially during winter months. Mestia would like to encourage further growth in a more controlled fashion.

Mestia is a unique mountain town that presents a culturally authentic experience for visitors while maintaining its rich cultural history. The community successfully balances its unique culture and has mastered hospitality for those who visit from all parts of the globe. There is great potential in the youth, as was evident in a youth outreach exercise conducted by Jesse Reynolds introducing GIS to 13-19-year-old students in March 2018.



*Local students collecting data with their phones during a GIS youth workshop in February 2018 – photo by Jesse Reynolds*

## North Bend Relation

As an attractive community with immense natural assets at the edge of a booming region we have seen immense growth the past few years. By 2020 we will have grown by 35% during the previous two-year period. This has placed great stresses on our community, but with a strong relationship between Council and Staff, and a well implemented regulatory framework, steps are being made to retain our small town charm while increasing our draw as an outdoor recreation destination. We have a lot to

share with a small community in a rural area in a developing country, through past experiences, as well as through teaching technical tools and methods we use today. The ability to share these experiences while simultaneously developing a kinship with a faraway town is priceless.

## Potential Areas of Cooperation and Insight

If this twinning opportunity were pursued both communities would intend to cooperate in the areas of long-range planning, natural hazards mitigation, recreational planning, economic development, and historic/heritage preservation, all in our mountainous settings. The expertise and solutions provided through this twinning opportunity will be those of the communities.

The dynamic between municipalities with Twinning opportunities is a mentor-mentee relationship, where North Bend would primarily be sharing insights and advice with Mestia. North Bend could share growth management techniques showing how we create a highly livable community through local, county, and state regulations, in addition to technical tools such as GIS. North Bend is fortunate to also have an opportunity to learn from Mestia, regarding the contents of an attractive tourist destination that maintains a strong cultural identity.

### Insights to Mestia

To cope with the conflicting interests of development and maintaining a rural character within a physically constrained area North Bend employs strict development standards, floodplain management, and long-range planning through stakeholder engagement with such data-driven planning tools as Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Below is a list of potential topics North Bend could assist Mestia with implementing.

- Growth management;
- Infrastructure concurrency with development;
- Environmental critical areas preservation;
- Floodplain management;
- Design standards for commercial, industrial and residential properties;
- Municipal planning workflow from comprehensive plan development to capital improvement project implementation;
- The use of GIS as an analysis and visioning tool;
- Outdoor recreation branding and marketing;
- Sharing responsibilities with special districts and non-profit agencies - Downtown Foundation, Si View Metropolitan Parks District.

Once a direct contact is made with Mestia specific topics can be defined and details can be developed. The aim of the partnership is to help Mestia implement initiatives related to one or more of the above topics. This will be decided during a reconnaissance visit to Mestia.

### Benefits to North Bend

As a community that is successfully preserving its rich culture and character while supporting a rapidly expanding outdoor recreation and tourism industry Mestia has much insights to share with the City.

Examples are:

- Maintaining urban form and character despite rapid development, including the refurbishment of 800-year-old Svan defense towers;
- A rich local food economy with most restaurants serving food and drinks made by Svan people with local ingredients;
- A ‘home-stay’ dominated hospitality industry more conducive to cultural exchange, maintaining traditional urban aesthetics, and keeping profits local;
- A thriving outdoor industry ranging from local farm visits to helicopter skiing;
- Engaged youth actively supporting their heritage and their thriving outdoor industry.

Having the opportunity to share these successes in Mestia and Svan culture would prove as motivation and insight for North Bend regarding how to better leverage its existing culture and physical environment toward bolstering its outdoor branding.



*Mestia Police Station and a Defense Tower Incorporated into new development – TA-9220 Tourism & Cultural Heritage Report*

## Reciprocal Opportunity Proposed

The specific agreement for exchange is to be determined in a way favored by both communities. The Project Manager, Niels Van Dijk, recommends 3 people from Mestia visit North Bend for 2 weeks, and up to 5 people from North Bend visit Mestia for 2 weeks after an initial reconnaissance visit by 1 person this spring, where subjects deemed pertinent by Mestia will be defined, and exchange parameters will be created. Exchanges can be funded by ADB up to \$35,000 total budget, for travel purposes only. Staff time is to be provided by North Bend in-kind, or donated by the individual participating. It is important to note the exact budget will be determined by the ADB only after North Bend commits to the exchange.

## Outreach and Participation

Since the CED Committee was first introduced this opportunity in mid-October some outreach has been conducted with local entities.

- **North Bend Downtown Foundation** – The North Bend Downtown Foundation was approached during their monthly meeting in November and their response was extremely favorable. They brainstormed several events involving town tours, hiking events, dinner at the Train Shed, and a possible presentation at the North Bend Theater. Deborah Landers’ response was the most

exuberant, for she has made it to the Georgia/Turkey border but was unable to enter at the time due to visa constraints.

- **Si View Metropolitan Parks District** – Executive Director Travis Stombaugh was approached about this opportunity and expressed interest in Si View’s contribution to the exchange
- **North Bend Community and Economic Development Department** – The Planning department is enthusiastic about leading this exchange and is open to meet with other recommended organizations.
- Other potential organization to be contacted - Compass Outdoors

## Conclusion

Twinning is an excellent opportunity for Mestia to learn applied planning from a town with parallels in the Pacific Northwest of the USA, as well as an opportunity for North Bend to learn how a village such as Mestia has developed through the centuries and is currently growing in a local and organic way that benefits average community members, not just a small number of outside investors. At this point the parameters of the exchange are flexible, and to be defined by the elected officials through interaction with staff, the Townlet of Mestia, and the Asian Development Bank. Once approved greater detail to the exchange will be developed. The exchange could happen as early as Spring 2019.



*Tetnuldi Ski Resort – TA-9220 Tourism & Cultural Heritage Report*