



Kassel-Dane Sister County Partnership

Goal: *Develop an ongoing active international Sister County partnership between Dane County and Landkreis Kassel, Germany to promote personal contacts between businesses and residents for economic development as well as environmental, cultural, transportation, and educational benefits.*

Outcome: *Increase the number of personal contacts between businesses and residents within the two counties by sponsoring activities designed to create long-term relationships.*

Benefits to Dane County

The benefits include:

- **Expanding cultural diversity options through cultural exchanges/exhibits.**
- **Increasing business contacts for imports/exports to Germany.**
- **Investing in Dane County high school students by enriching educational or sports contacts.**

Background/Purpose

The purpose of the project is to develop a county to county partnership with a focus on cultural, educational, and economic development activities. It will include all cities, villages, and townships in Dane County and emphasize the participation of rural areas where few formal resources exist for international contacts. *Note: While there is substantial interest in international relationships, public budgets are severely limited to other priorities.*

Dane County explored a “county to county” relationship, within Hessen, in the fall of 2007 and 2008. In August 2008, Landkreis Kassel and Dane County established a cooperative agreement to outline the scope of the partnership. The purpose of the agreement is to exchange ideas and build economic partnerships regarding renewable energy, regional transportation systems, workforce training and continuing education, cultural, and transportation exchanges.

The States of Wisconsin and Hessen (Germany) have maintained a rich state-to-state relationship since 1976. The WI Technical College System and WI Department of Public Instruction have coordinated numerous administrative, teacher, and student exchanges. Eight Dane County high schools have German language programs and student exchanges.

Why Kassel Landkreis?

Dane County has a rich German heritage dating back to 1850 when the first immigrants from Hessen settled in northwest Dane County. Today, Germany is Wisconsin’s fourth largest trading partner.

Kassel Landkreis has community characteristics like Dane County. It is a metropolitan area that is a two-hour drive north of Frankfurt. It is home to over 430,000 citizens. Our community profiles include an urban/rural mix. Both counties include major universities, technical colleges, manufacturing, and a strong arts community. Kassel is known world-wide for its international modern art exposition Documenta. This event is held every five years, and the next one is summer 2022.

This “Sister County” project will leverage connections already established through the current “Sister State” partnership agreement created by the State of Wisconsin and Hessen in 1976 and renewed again in 1998. Governors from each state signed the written agreements.

Dane County Task Force

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Past Projects

The task force has completed a variety of projects in the past 12 years – details of those projects can be found here:

<https://board.countyofdane.com/documents/Kassel-Dane-Bookletsept.pdf>

Duties of Task Force Members

(Time commitment is dependent on 3-5 meetings each year and 1-2 limited projects).

- Attend task force meetings. Respond to doodle polls to schedule meetings.
- Help plan and coordinate one project each year related to sending representatives and/or groups to Kassel, Germany.
- Assist in hosting activities when officials, artists, and business representatives come to Dane County.
- Help identify local resources and people that will support the taskforce and activities.
- Assist in soliciting financial and volunteer support from Dane County businesses, nonprofits, and community volunteers as needed.
- Collaboratively interact on a timely basis with Dane County administrative staff.
- Assist with recruiting new members when vacancies occur.
- If needed, complete county forms for reimbursement of minor costs.