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ZAMBOANGA CITY MAYOR VISITS TEXAS TO PROMOTE THE CITY AND EXPLORE COOPERATION

Houston, TX. Zamboanga City Mayor Khymer Adan Olaso undertook an official visit to Texas on 16-17 September 2026, during which he engaged local government officials, disaster management experts, and Filipino American community leaders in Houston, San Antonio, and College Station.

The Mayor was accompanied by City Tourism Officer Dr. Sarita Sebastian-Hernandez. The Philippine Consulate General in Houston coordinated the visit, which focused on city-to-city cooperation, tourism and cultural heritage, engagement with the Filipino American community, and best practices in disaster risk management and emergency response.

"Mayor Olaso's visit opens new doors for Zamboanga City in Texas, from potential partners in trade and tourism to practical lessons in keeping communities safe," said Consul General Gunther Sales. "The Consulate is pleased to have helped build these connections."

City-to-City Cooperation



Zamboanga City Mayor Khymer Adan Olaso with San Antonio City Mayor Gina Ortiz Jones.



Zamboanga City Mayor Khymer Adan Olaso presents San Antonio City Mayor Gina Ortiz Jones with a vinta, a cultural symbol of Zamboanga City.

On 16 September, Mayor Olaso paid a courtesy call on San Antonio Mayor Gina Ortiz Jones, a Filipina American. In a candid exchange, the two first-term mayors discussed their priorities in public service, the challenges of city management, and the heritage and traditions their cities share. Mayor Olaso also presented Zamboanga City's trade and connectivity opportunities, including the Zamboanga International Seaport.



LR: San Antonio City Chief Diplomacy & Protocol Officer, Ms. Sherry Dowlatshahi; San Antonio Filipino American Chamber of Commerce President Chona Day; Zamboanga City Mayor Khymer Adan Olaso; Philippine Consul General Gunther Sales.



Zamboanga City Mayor Khymer Adan Olaso (4th from left), San Antonio City Mayor Gina Ortiz Jones (4th from right), Philippine Consul General Gunther Sales (3rd from right), with city officials and Filipino American community leaders in San Antonio.



Members of the Zamboanga delegation with San Antonio City officials, led by Mayor Gina Ortiz Jones, and Filipino American community leaders in San Antonio.

The meeting was attended by leaders of local chambers of commerce and Communities Aligning Baguio and San Antonio Texas (CABSAT), the organization that helped establish the sister-city partnership between Baguio City and San Antonio.



Zamboanga Mayor Khymer Adan Olaso with Houston Chief of International Affairs Gigi Lee.

In Houston on 17 September, Mayor Olaso met with Ms. Gigi Lee, Chief of International Affairs at the Houston Mayor's Office of Trade and International Affairs. The discussion highlighted the significant contributions of the Filipino American community to Houston, particularly in healthcare, education, and business.



Zamboanga City Mayor Khymer Adan Olaso is welcomed at the Houston City Hall.

Tourism and Cultural Heritage



Representatives of the San Antonio World Heritage Center briefed members of the Zamboanga delegation.

At the San Antonio World Heritage Center, Mayor Olaso and Dr. Sebastian-Hernandez were briefed on how the City manages its two UNESCO designations, as a World Heritage Site and as a Creative City of Gastronomy. Officials explained that San Antonio develops its heritage programs in consultation with the community and treats its people as "living legacies" rather than history alone.

Like San Antonio with its historic missions, Zamboanga City offers visitors a unique experience rooted in its Spanish colonial heritage, from Fort Pilar to its living Chavacano culture. Dr. Sebastian-Hernandez shared the City's interest in seeking designation as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy.



The Zamboanga Delegation with representatives from the Philippine Consulate General at the World Heritage Center.

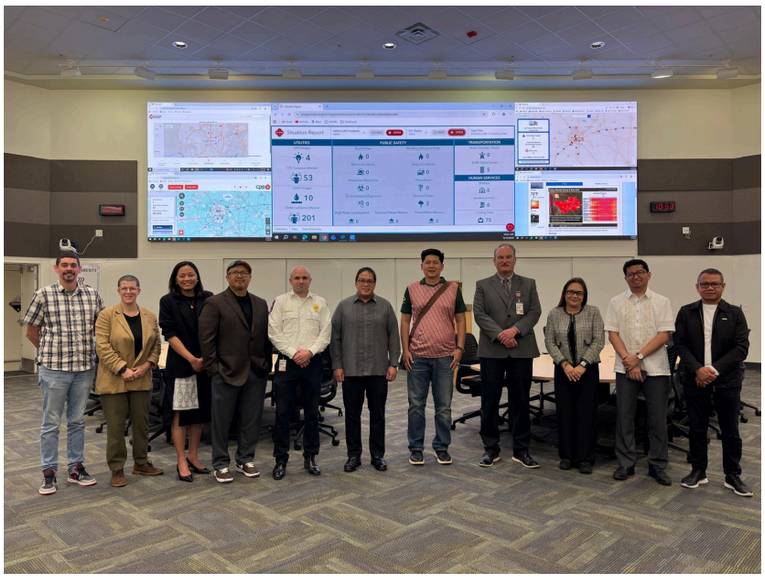
Dialogue with the Filipino American Community



Zamboanga City Mayor Khymer Adan Olaso meets members of the Filipino American community in Houston.

On 16 September, the Consulate hosted a town hall meeting at its Mabini Hall, where Mayor Olaso and Dr. Sebastian-Hernandez presented Zamboanga City as an emerging trade and tourism destination to Filipino American community leaders, including representatives of chambers of commerce and tour operators. The presentations covered investment opportunities in key sectors, plans to expand the Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority and Freeport (ZAMBOECOZONE), and the city's tourist attractions.

Strengthening Disaster Resilience



The delegation at the San Antonio Office Emergency Center.

In line with Mayor Olaso's priority on disaster risk reduction and management, the Consulate arranged visits to two leading institutions in the field. At the Emergency Operations Center of the San Antonio Office of Emergency Management, officials briefed the Mayor on the City's emergency planning, response, and recovery operations, including its data-driven approach to flooding, the city's number one hazard.



L-R: TEEX Program Director Ryan LeNorman; Zamboanga City Mayor Khymer Adan Olaso, Philippine Consul General Gunther Sales, Consul Tanya Gaurano, Zamboanga City Tourism Officer, Dr. Sarita Hernandez.

In College Station, Mayor Olaso toured Disaster City, a training facility operated by the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) that prepares first responders from across the United States. He observed live training exercises and spoke with instructors on site. Together, these visits gave the Mayor a firsthand look at best practices in disaster risk management, both in a controlled training environment and in real-world application at the city level.

Through these engagements, Zamboanga City strengthened its links with local officials and the Filipino American community in Texas and gained valuable insight into best practices in heritage promotion and disaster risk management.