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Press Release

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U.S. speaker enhances the Chiang Mai Creative City Development Committee, highlights insights from Austin, Texas to stimulate growth and job creation in the north.

U.S. Embassy Bangkok, in collaboration with U.S. Consulate General Chiang Mai, assisted the Chiang Mai Creative City project by bringing Mr. Ben Ramirez, an economic development expert from Austin, Texas, to Chiang Mai to discuss the topic of “Creative Corridors.” The program is part of the U.S. Mission’s efforts to help stimulate job creation and local economic growth in Chiang Mai and northern Thailand.

Today (Sept 30, 2010) Mr. Ben Ramirez launched a presentation and discussion on “Developing a Creative City: Insights from Austin, Texas” at Chiang Mai University President’s Office on September 30, where they were joined by over 70 local administrators, politicians, business leaders, and academics. In the afternoon, he met with the Chiang Mai Creative City Development Committee to share and discuss in-depth methodologies for establishing creative and innovative economic development programs. On October 1, Mr. Ben Ramirez will have meetings with the mayor and officials of Lamphun Municipality and Director of Regional Investment and Economic Center I, the Thailand Board of Investment in Chiang Mai.

Mr. Ramirez is the International Program Manager at the City of Austin Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office, where he is responsible for government initiatives for international projects involving economic development, culture, and education. He has assisted numerous international business expansion efforts within the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) region and around the world.

Austin is America’s 15th largest city that boasts low costs of living and doing business, as well as a younger, well-educated population. The city’s focus on innovation has made Austin one of the fastest growing, educated and most innovative talent pools in the United States. Austin’s top industries are clean energy, convergence technology, creative and digital media, and life sciences. Austin’s major employers include AMD, Apple, Dell, Hoover, IBM, and Freescale. Gross metropolitan product (GMP) percentage of exports ranked 23rd among U.S. exporting regions.

In February 2010, the U.S. Embassy Bangkok and U.S. Consulate General Chiang Mai launched “Northern Thailand Creative Economy Conference: Opportunities and Challenges in the IT Sector” in Chiang Mai, which brought together U.S. IT firms based in Bangkok and Southeast Asia with northern Thai IT players to generate new business partnerships. A follow up conference

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in June highlighted the Florida High Tech Corridor Council as model for strategic collaboration in innovative economic development. The initiatives led to the establishment of the Chiang Mai Creative City Development Committee in August, on which U.S. Consul General Susan N. Stevenson serves as an advisor. The committee will draft an action plan and blueprint to turn Chiang Mai into a “Creative City.”

According to Consul General Stevenson, the U.S. Consulate General Chiang Mai is also working closely with the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok on the U.S.-Thai Creative Partnership, which aims to boost trade and investment between the two countries. “In direct support of the Thai government's Creative Economy initiative, the U.S.-Thai Creative Partnership is building such U.S. economic and cultural strengths as our universities, corporations, private foundations, NGOs, and government agencies to work together with Thailand's creative and innovative industries, including information technology, arts and animation. We are confident that Chiang Mai has the potential and strength to become a world-class creative city in the near future.”

For further details:

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