

## **Foreigners as Residents: A Taichung Asset to be Polished**

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1. Taichung city is a young city in a constant search of souls and minds. About 100 years ago, there were less than 8,000 people residing in the city center where we call downtown. Today there are more than one million people calling Taichung home, sweet home. The city has become the 135<sup>th</sup> largest city in the Asia region, and still growing. Taichung is also the third largest city of Taiwan, the largest city in central Taiwan. At present, there are more than 100,000 college students living in Taichung, 1,000 of which are from other countries.

2. As a growing city, Taichung has become homes to people with diverse backgrounds. Among them is the group of “foreign tourists and residents with foreign nationalities.” Foreigners are in reality local residents with phonetic and cultural disability in various degrees. If properly assisted, residents with foreign nationality are no different from native residents in terms of daily needs. On the other hand, if tactically channeled, residents with foreign nationality can be a great asset to any host city.

3. So far, the city of Taichung has demonstrated not so much in hosting close to 20,000 foreign residents with 72 nationalities. Data from the Taichung city Police Department show that by ranking, people from Viet Nam, Philippine, Thailand, and Indonesia register 74 percent of the foreign population (14,769). Ten other nationalities, ranging from USA, Japan, Malaysia, Canada, UK, South Africa, South Korea, Burma, Australia, and German take up another 23 percent (4,524). Overall, there are 14 nationalities that have more than 100 people residing in the city of Taichung. The remaining 58 nationalities have the other 3 percent of Taichung’s foreign residents (674).

4. What can be done and should be done on the parts of the city government and the general public? I proposed the followings as initial steps toward the building of a platform for inclusiveness and cross-culture interaction.

1. A Taichung City Foreigners' Assembly (TCFA), with at least 15 foreign resident-representatives appointed by the mayor, that meets at least four times a year to voice ideas and concerns. In essence, the move is to include the opinions from the foreign community into the municipal decision-making process.
2. An international village to be sited next to the Taichung Science-based Industrial Park, with English-based school and UN-spirited public space (with square, foods, shoppings, and religious establishments), as a focal point with both Taichung and international flavors. The village will be an inviting place where different cultures meet and shine.
3. An International House serves as tourist information headquarter (**I-center**) with capacity to arrange in-depth city guide and social networking. The non-profit headquarter can also provide office spaces for selective organizations with international ambition and connections.

5. The city of Taichung is famed for her mild climate, creativity and central location. However, as a young city, more need to be done to make the city of Taichung more user-friendly. By recognizing the special needs of foreign residents, Taichung can surely become an inclusive place where all dreams are possible and delightful.

