

Toledo will make bid for cities conference

BY SALLY VALLONGO
BLADE STAFF WRITER

Local civic leaders yesterday began to lay the groundwork for bringing the annual Sister Cities International Conference to Toledo in 1996.

If plans work out, Toledo would celebrate its longstanding cultural relationship with Toledo, Spain, by playing host to the prestigious global gathering.

"It was exciting to see," said John Henry Fullen, executive director of Toledo Sister Cities International. "It was a brainstorming session.

Not only is Toledo a player in the international association, Mr. Fullen said, this city is an originator of the sister-city idea. Its bonds with the Spanish city date to 1931.

"We believe it's the longest sister-city relationship in the country," said David Shapiro, vice president of SSOE, Inc., and a lifelong Toledonian, who also is working on the project. While the international organization would mark 40 years of activity at the 1996 gathering, To-

ledo would celebrate 65 years of sisterhood.

In July, a delegation is to attend the annual Sister Cities International conference, this year in Louisville to make a pitch for 1996.

The conference, which attracts up to 1,000 participants from 100 countries, was held last year in Houston and is scheduled to open in Indianapolis in 1995.

Toledo has a lot to offer, Mr. Shapiro said, and a central factor is Toledo's important role in international glass technology.

One idea being floated is the development of a museum of technological and cultural progress with a Toledo emphasis. International Park is being considered as a site.

Mr. Shapiro said the idea, still in embryo stage, has received encouraging feedback from local glass companies, who might join a public-private consortium to develop the project and pay for it.

Blade Staff Writer Robin Erb contributed to this report.