The City of Kigali and the US city of St. Louis have signed a sister-city agreement intended to strengthen economic ties, attract investment and expand cooperation between businesses, universities and research institutions in Rwanda and the American state of Missouri.

The agreement, signed in Kigali on Tuesday, November 10, establishes a framework for collaboration in sectors ranging from agriculture and healthcare to technology, biosciences, education and urban development.

The signing took place during a trade mission to Rwanda by a delegation of more than 40 business leaders, political representatives and civic officials from St. Louis. The delegation was led by Mayor Cara Spencer and included St. Louis County Executive Dr Sam Page.

Kigali was represented by Fulgence Dusabimana, Deputy Mayor in charge of Urbanisation and Infrastructure.

Dusabimana said Rwanda had created conditions intended to attract investment, citing security, a clear development vision and policies designed to facilitate business. He said the partnership should be assessed through the benefits it delivers to residents.

“City partnerships can best be measured not only by the agreements we sign, but by the changes we bring to the lives of our people,” he said.

He said Kigali wanted the arrangement to connect companies from both cities, encourage investors to explore opportunities in each other’s markets, support joint projects and promote technology transfer and knowledge-sharing. Cooperation between universities, research institutions and young people was also among the priorities.

Spencer said St. Louis had expertise in agriculture, research, healthcare and innovation that could be shared with Rwanda. She praised Kigali’s infrastructure and community development initiatives, describing the agreement as the beginning of a long-term relationship.

“We want St. Louis to become a bridge connecting Kigali with the United States, just as Rwanda is a gateway to Africa,” she said.

Page said closer links between St. Louis’s economic capabilities and Rwanda’s growing economy could lead to investment and job creation. He said the partnership should involve businesses, schools, cultural institutions and communities, not only government authorities.

The agreement identifies agriculture and agricultural technology, biosciences, healthcare, information and communications technology, urban planning, infrastructure development, environmental sustainability and workforce development as areas for cooperation.

It also provides for educational and cultural exchanges, including collaboration between universities and research institutions, as well as opportunities involving sports and tourism.

Kigali is St. Louis’s 17th sister city and its first new partner since Rosario, Argentina, joined the programme in 2017. The St. Louis Economic Development Partnership said the relationship is intended to develop economic, educational and cultural connections between the two cities.

The trade mission and the agreement provide a platform for closer engagement. Turning that relationship into lasting economic benefits will depend on the businesses and institutions that take forward the proposed cooperation.