



SISTER CITY AGREEMENT

Between

West Bend, Wisconsin, USA

and

Pazardjik Republic of Bulgaria



Desiring to promote long-lasting, mutual goodwill and understanding, the City of West Bend, in the State of Wisconsin, the United States of America, and the City of Pazardjik, Bulgaria, do hereby formally agree to enter into a Sister City relationship.

WHEREAS, it is to the mutual benefit and advantage of the cities of West Bend, Wisconsin, USA and Pazardjik, Bulgaria and the citizens thereof, to enter into an agreement by which cultural and educational interchanges and economic cooperation may be cultivated; and

WHEREAS, the City of West Bend and the City of Pazardjik desire to develop cultural, educational and economic exchanges;

THEREFORE, the undersigned representatives of the above named cities agree to promote such exchanges and firmly believe this affiliation will permanently establish a foundation stone for the development of the City of West Bend and the City of Pazardjik in addition to strengthening the bonds of friendship between the people of our two communities and in this process will contribute to the promotion of peace, amity and goodwill among all the world's peoples.

We will endeavor to promote mutual understanding and cooperation through an interchange in culture, education, economy and other fields and to promote the prosperity and welfare of the people of our two communities.

Signed, the 26th day of April, 2001.

Michael R. Miller

MAYOR

West Bend, Wisconsin, USA

Ivan Kolchakov

MAYOR

Pazardjik, Republic of Bulgaria

Our Visits

In early February 1997, City Administrator Dennis Melvin read about a new program which partnered United States cities with cities in developing and transitional countries. The partnerships were to provide technical assistance in improving municipal management and improving the delivery of services. Participation in the International Resource Cities Program was one of those rare opportunities for staff development that one usually only reads about. In the Fall of 2000, the City of West Bend was honored to be selected as a participant and to be paired with Pazardjik, Bulgaria.

Over the next 18 to 24 months, the City would send four, three person staff delegations to Pazardjik for approximately 7 to 10 days. Pazardjik would send three, three person staff delegations to West Bend during that same time period. Airfare, lodging, and meal costs would all be paid by the United States Agency in International Development (USAID). The City's role would be to provide the staff-time to facilitate the partnership.

During that time a great deal was learned about Bulgaria, a part of the world that few people in this country have known about. Our goal was to engage in a process of evaluation of management issues and economic development planning in general. As a result of the work from the partnership between West Bend and Pazardjik, results have been generated that can serve Pazardjik for the long-term future as well as other Bulgarian communities.



The formal partnership with Pazardjik began with the initial trip in October 2000. This trip was primarily an introductory trip, but thru discussions of some of the major issues confronting Pazardjik, the process of narrowing the focus of the program was begun. The first trip to West Bend was similar in reverse, but produced an action plan identifying three specific projects for the partnership: (1) create a business development plan for Pazardjik's economic development zone; (2) develop a request for proposal for the development of Ostrova Park; and (3) develop a management plan to create a Geographic Information System for the city.

From the beginning, there were very positive results on the GIS plan. The economic development project moved slower at the beginning, however, it was a great opportunity to find out specifics of how things operated in Pazardjik, and for West Bend to show a complete picture of how we engaged in economic development.

By July 2001, at the end of the second visit to West Bend, the economic development project had gained momentum with a recommendation to create a separate, three-position ED department, and a more detailed list of tasks for a broader economic development strategy. The GIS plan was also proceeding well with completion of a needs assessment of desired information sets, and appointment of a GIS supervisor. Further discussion of the needs assessment produced a first draft of a prioritized list of data layers.

After the fifth exchange, we had a chance to review preliminary designs for Ostrova Park improvements and discuss a citizen input survey.

By the end of the program, the partnership has seen a great deal of success. The Ostrova Park project was expected to proceed cautiously throughout the two years, with financial issues ultimately a concern in proceeding with total redevelopment. During the last exchange, city staff helped dedicate a "West Bend" area within the Park, complete with new equipment and landscaping, and a plaque honoring West Bend.

With the GIS, the process of soliciting staff input, conducting a detailed needs analysis, and then establishing priorities for implementation was very fruitful. In spite of some institutional barriers at the national level that surfaced toward the end of the project, the process itself is one that can be replicated elsewhere. Since a GIS department was ultimately created, the concept of GIS was also institutionalized within the Pazardjik organizational structure.

Similarly, creation of a new economic development department solidified the importance of economic development. Local businesses and lenders were engaged in dialogue about economic development, and two marketing brochures were created to help stimulate both local and national/international investment interest. The Economic Development zone design was completed, and a plan for sale of the lots, and infrastructure financing was prepared for Municipal Council action. For the longer term, we also identified future industrial sites that we in the US would give anything for.



We are also proud that our partnership with Pazardjik has now developed into the first formal Sister City arrangement created by Twinning Program partners. That would not have been possible without the contacts from this program. City staff were welcomed into their community as if they had been lifelong friends, and now we are. We are still very appreciative of the sympathy and understanding we received in Pazardjik during our September 2001 visit.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the technical twinning program. This site is not in English.

History and Characteristics of Pazardjik

The Pazardjik Region has been inhabited since the most ancient times, proven by numerous open villages settlements. Pazardjik was initially established as a natural commercial centre in the region over 500 years ago. Favorable climatic conditions and excellent natural resources have destined the development of the town during all these years such that today Pazardjik is the centre of one of the most prosperous municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria. It is a center of antique culture, created by Thracians, Greeks and Romans. The expositions of the museum in Pazardjik are rich and quite interesting. It is also home to a drama theatre, regional puppet theatre, musical theatre, symphony orchestra, regional library, art gallery and many other

cultural institutions. The region is the birthplace of profound poets, writers, artists, composers and cultural figures of national and European significance.

The city of Pazardjik is situated in Southern Bulgaria, in the central parts of the Upper Thracian valley and north of the Rhodope mountains, along the Maritsa River. Pazardjik is 110 km away from the country's capital city, Sofia and 36 km from the second largest city in the country, Plovdiv. Trade was the grounds for the original establishment of the town of Pazardjik over 500 years ago. Today, trade and services are among the fastest growing businesses on the territory of the municipality.

The people are primarily of the Eastern Orthodox religion with some Muslim. There is a large minority population of Roma, of about 25,000 – 30,000. The overall unemployment rate is about 20%, but the unemployment rate for the Roma population could be as high as 98%.

Nature has been generous with the people from the Pazardjik Region. They have been gifted with the most beautiful recesses of the fatherland – the Rila Mountains, the Rhodopes, Sredna Gora, and the Thracian Valley offering a variety of recreational and holiday opportunities. The climate is trans-continental in the flat areas and mountainous in the eastern slopes of the Rila mountain and the high uplands of the Rhodopes. In the flat areas, spring comes earlier, and in the mountainous ones – autumn. The surrounding mountains form a precipitation shadow. The region's priceless wealth is the thermal mineral waters or "hot springs" used both for industrial and living purposes.

Pazardjik is among the leading manufacturers of canned fruit and vegetables of unique taste, well-known throughout the world. The sector offers unlimited opportunities for investment and there has been particular interest by major international companies for the production of pepper powder, fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables (cherries, morrello-cherries, pears, wild fruits, tomatoes, cucumbers), plantations for orchard saplings and establishment of new processor plants.

Other Information on Pazardjik

To see a movie on Pazardjik put mouse over picture area, and to stop playing move mouse away from picture and hit escape button. This movie is approximately 17 minutes. (Unfortunately this movie is narrated in Bulgarian)

[Click here](#) to see online newspaper in the Capital of Sofia.