

Paide, Estonia, much like Westminster By Megen Wessel, Times Staff Writer
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The town of Paide lies halfway between the capital city Tallinn and the university town of Tartu in the heart of the country.

After being forced into the former Soviet Union in 1940 after 22 years of independence from centuries of Swedish and Russian rule, the country regained its freedom in 1991.

Now, Estonia's two primary national objectives are to be part of the European Union and NATO.

In Paide, which is one of the oldest towns in Estonia and is celebrating its 710th birthday this year, officials say the development of business and foreign investments are also key.

Paide got its name from the white building material - limestone - used when the town was constructed.

This is a similarity shared with Westminster, which also has ties to limestone.

But there are other similarities between the two municipalities. Each has tree-lined streets and a prominent Lutheran church in the downtown area.

Paide Mayor Tonis Koiv said the city is interested in cultural affairs and has visions of new industrial and housing areas and hiking-biking trails.

In Westminster, some of those ideas are already happening, such as the restoration of the Carroll Arts Center, the building of the Wakefield Valley Community Trail, the development of new industrial areas and the restoration of the Fenby Farm Line Kiln, said Thomas B. Beyard, director of planning and public works for Westminster.

Beyard was one of two city staff members who visited Estonia last month.

Paide's City Hall is also used as a symbol of Paide much like Westminster's City Hall.

Westminster officials are hoping to strengthen the partnership between the two cities this fall, with the presentation of \$1,000 toward a skatepark in Paide during a visit from Koiv.

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