

THE HISTORIC CENTRE OF WARSAW WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY (Ref: 30)

The proposed buffer zone of World Heritage property

1. Area of the property (in hectares)

- a. Area of the inscribed property: ok. 25.93 ha
- b. Area of the proposed buffer zone: 666.78 ha

2. Description of the proposed buffer zone:

The buffer zone covers diverse parts of the city, which took shape over the centuries, and was demarcated based on the historic 17th and 18th century line of the city's embankments on the left bank of the Vistula River and the river-related complexes on its right bank. The boundaries were delineated on the basis of the following premises:

- on the left bank, the boundary overlaps with the Sigismund Embankments (according to T. Zarębska's interpretation), with necessary corrections made to account for subsequent development strata, such as the esplanade of the Citadel, the development of Bank Square, the Saska Axis, and the grid street plan in the southern zone;
- on the right bank, the boundary runs along Jagiellońska Street, by virtue of the scope of influence of the World Heritage Property;
- the northern boundary was demarcated at the Gdański Bridge, the southern – at the Świętokrzyski Bridge. The two bridges constitute major viewpoints overlooking the panorama of the Old Town.

The boundaries of the buffer zone run along the following streets: Zygmunta Słomińskiego – Bonifraterska – Sapieżyńska – Wałowa – Świętojerska – Generała Władysława Andersa – Nowolipki – the boundary of the Monument of History – Generała Władysława Andersa – Solidarności – the boundary of the Monument of History – Elektoralna – Chłodna – Plac Za Żelazną Bramą – the boundary of the Monument of History – Świętokrzyska – Mikołaja Kopernika – Tamka – Świętokrzyski Bridge – Sokola – Zamoyskiego – Jagiellońska – Stefana Starzyńskiego – Gdański Bridge.

The buffer zone encompasses the area of the Residential City of His Royal Majesty, situated within the 17th century Sigismund Embankments and enlarged to include the residential quarters along the Royal Route on the southern side, the foreground of the Citadel on the northern side, and the area of three private towns on the right bank of the river. Each of these areas was developed in a different manner and showed a different architectural style depending on the time of its construction. The inclusion of the area within the buffer zone is dictated by the need to preserve the integrity of historic city complexes created in the following centuries. They are linked each other, and to the Old Town, by a number of spatial, historical and functional relationships. The complex include: The New Town, The Royal Route, Western outskirts, Powiśle, Right-bank Warsaw districts. Additional historic information about area of the proposed buffer zone in annex.

3. Justification for the modification:

The buffer zone was created in order to preserve the spatial relationships between the Property and other historic complexes, as well as to protect the cultural landscape and the panorama of the city. The urban landscape which gradually emerged over the centuries and took final shape during the post-war reconstruction constitutes an integral area. The demarcation of the buffer zone is necessary in order to shape the historic landscape of the city and its surroundings in a harmonious manner. Spatial studies have demonstrated that the described area should be brought under control to address the

pressure exerted by new high-rise investments, now increasingly shaping the panorama of the city. The buffer zone in its proposed form will enable the managers of the UNESCO World Heritage Property to control and protect the panorama of the Old and the New Town.

4. Contribution to the maintenance of the Outstanding Universal Value:

The historic centre of Warsaw is a unique example of comprehensive reconstruction, which rebuilt a deliberately and completely destroyed city. The physical reconstruction of the city was fuelled by the inner strength and determination of the Polish people, which made the reconstruction of the destroyed heritage on a scale unprecedented in world history possible.

The reconstruction of the historic centre of Warsaw significantly contributed to a change in the doctrines governing the manner in which the problems of urbanization and the conservation of urban quarters in most European countries were solved. It also illustrates the effectiveness of mid-20th century documentation and conservation techniques, including the use of 18th and 19th century iconography, which enabled the integral reconstruction of an intricate urban complex. The experience of nearly fifty years shows that the reconstruction of historic forms (in the political climate of Poland at that time) received greater social support than the building of new, culturally alien structures. The reconstruction of the oldest settlement of Warsaw likewise allows us to trace the historical development stages of an European urban complex, starting from an early mediaeval settlement, through the mediaeval town surrounded with ramparts and fortifications, up to the 19th century "Old Town" destroyed in the course of military operations and reconstructed after the war in the form of a housing estate. In its principles, the reconstruction had to meet the requirements of a residential area, consistent with the rules of urban planning and social policy in Central and Eastern Europe in the middle of the 20th century. The result was a unique housing estate based on mediaeval urban planning, with buildings reconstructed to reflect their shape at the beginning of the 19th century. On the other hand, the standard of the housing estate and its social structure were adapted to the rules accepted at the time of its reconstruction.

The reconstruction of the oldest settlement of Warsaw, the Old Town atop the high Vistula Escarpment, in its historical urban and architectural shape is one of the most important testimonies of Polish culture.

Without a buffer zone, the cultural landscape and, in particular, the panorama of the Old and the New Town, is under threat of destruction from new investment, consisting of buildings incongruous with the historic character of the area. Based on a spatial 3D model, analyses were carried out to assess the impact of high-rise buildings on the panorama of Warsaw in the context of the preserved historical views of the city. Subsequently, height limits were proposed for individual areas.

5. Implication for legal protection:

A large part of the buffer zone belongs to the "Historic urban complex with the Royal Route and Wilanów" established as a Monument of History by the decree of the President of the Republic of Poland issued on 8 September 1994. In accordance with the Polish law, the status of a Monument of History is granted to sites of particular cultural value. In addition, certain urban layouts, building complexes, and individual structures and archaeological sites are inscribed in the National Heritage Register of monuments, which acts as the basis form of the legal protection of monuments in Poland. Once the Property is protected as part of the Register, any research at, or modification of the monument requires official permission from heritage protection authorities. The basis of protection is furnished by the Act on the Protection of Monuments and the Guardianship of Monuments of 23 July 2003, along with its executive directives.

6. Implications for management arrangements:

The buffer zone is meant to create a protective layer surrounding the World Heritage Property, serving as an essential tool to support the management and protection of its outstanding universal value, and particularly the value of the panorama of the Old Town as seen from the left bank of the Vistula River. In order to ensure its effectiveness, rules and regulations must be implemented to provide adequate protection of the outstanding universal value of the Property. Moreover, the demarcation of the buffer zone should be considered as part of a broader, integrated urban development plan, which is designed to reconcile the needs of heritage preservation with the modern development of the city.

7. Maps – Annex.

8. Additional information

Annex: Additional historic information about area of the proposed buffer zone

Photographs:

Phot. Old Town and its immediate surroundings

Phot. View of the Old Town and the left bank of the Vistula River

Phot. New Town, northern part of the buffer zone

Phot. Western part of the buffer zone, Saski Garden

Phot. Krakowskie Przedmieście Street

Phot. Krakowskie Przedmieście Street, campus of the University of Warsaw

Annex: Additional historic information about area of the proposed buffer zone:

• **New Town.** “Fretha Novae Civitas” was founded in 1408 as a spatial and administrative entity independent of Old Warsaw. The early settlement in this area, however, is confirmed to date back to a period before the location of the city; this is true particularly of the Church of St. George, which was already in place as far back as 1155. The New Town first developed as a centre of craftsmanship and an agricultural base, probably around the village of Rybaki and the settlement by the church. Its planning and plotting plan was analogical to that of the Old Town. The market square, initially regular, owes its present triangular shape to the buildings later erected in its north-western part. Destroyed at the time of the Swedish Deluge, the New Town was rebuilt as an area filled with monasteries, residences, and some burghers’ houses. The buildings, initially wooden of semi-rural character, were rebuilt in brick as late as the 18th century. In 1791, the New Town was integrated with other parts of the city to form a single municipal entity. After its destruction during World War II, a fundamental part of the charter city was rebuilt in compliance with the same principles as were established for the reconstruction of the Old Town. In the absence of historical sources, however, a small area in the northern part was rebuilt not in its historical shape, but as new development, which remains a matter of controversy to this day. For many centuries, the river terrace at the foot of the escarpment was occupied by the Rybaki settlement. Initially a village, perhaps the oldest in the area, Rybaki later became an industrial street. The military operations of World War II led to its partial destruction; the remnants were pulled down to help expose the buildings located on the escarpment. What remained of Rybaki was a park avenue under the same name, but with an altered route. The areas of the New Town described above became part of the Monument of History. In 1831, its northern part (from Konwiktorska street) was barred from further development as the esplanade of the Citadel and additionally reinforced by two forts. After World War I, it became the site of the Traugutt Park and the sports complex of K.S. Polonia, and remains a recreational green area to this day. Its western part, including the parcels of the New Town and the Świętojerska jurydyka, were filled with tenement houses populated primarily by Jews, which, in the wake of the Ghetto Uprising, were almost completely razed to the ground.

The subsequent reconstruction preserved only the layout of the streets; the buildings currently in place are in no way representative of the original nature of the area. The areas described were included in the buffer zone with a view to protecting the panorama of the city.

- **Royal Route.** The Royal Route includes several streets running southwards in the direction of Wilanów, such as Krakowskie Przedmieście, Nowy Świat, Al. Ujazdowskie, Sobieskiego and Al. Wilanowska, along which the residential quarters of the elected kings of Poland were located. The buffer zone was restricted roughly to the mid-17th century boundaries of the city, to the Świętokrzyska Street. Successive Polish kings erected their private residences and founded monasteries on the Vistula Escarpment or in its vicinity; palaces of influential magnate families sprang up nearby, along with structures belonging to wealthy burghers. The architecture of the area is a magnificent combination of palaces, churches, and residential housing; it took shape over several centuries and reflected the unique political system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The structures situated on the eastern side of the street, on the top of the Vistula Escarpment, with gardens descending towards the lower terrace, largely contributed to the extraordinary landscape of the river valley and the city on the escarpment. The landscape is rounded out by 18th century buildings, with a regular garden opened to the public in 1727, perpendicular to the Royal Route on the western side. The architecture and the gardens were designed by architects and gardeners of European renown. Many buildings of the area were painted by Bernardo Bellotto (also known as Canaletto) at the end of the 18th century. The post-war reconstruction of destroyed or burned buildings largely preserved their 18th century nature and architectural nature. The reconstructed palaces now house a number of prestigious institutions. Between 2005 and 2008, Krakowskie Przedmieście underwent a comprehensive renovation, which made it regain its status as the most street place in Warsaw. The parts of the Royal Route described above became part of the Monument of History. Its southwestern part, covering the original area of starost's manor and the jurydyka of Bielno, lies beyond the Sigismund Embankments and the buildings of Krakowskie Przedmieście. It was included in the buffer zone, because it was reconstructed based on the same principles and many of its buildings retain their historic shape. Two historic squares were retained and the monumental buildings were reconstructed. It is only the outskirts, the Marszałkowska and Świętokrzyska streets, that, once widened, took on a new, uniform, social realist form. The areas described were included in the buffer zone with a view to protecting the panorama of the city.

- **Western outskirts.** Situated near the seat of government and the area where the Sejm convened, the area was a dream location for palaces, residences of magnate families, church dignitaries, and wealthier court officials. The Długa and Senatorska streets, together with the linking Miodowa and Bielańska streets, induced a relatively uniform and ordered development of the area, with gardens and front courtyards facing the entrance. Just as Krakowskie Przedmieście, they were designed by the best architects. The area, however, was not subject to any urban planning rules. Up until the middle of the 20th century, many picturesque backstreets sprang up here, contrasting with the monumental development of the key squares, where the Grand Theatre, the complex of bank buildings and the Ministry of the Treasury, Hipoteka, and the Great Synagogue were erected in the 19th and early 20th century. Gaps between existing buildings were built up with more modern structures, which contributed to the dense layout of the centre, including the most important buildings of the city until the outbreak of the Second World War. The reconstruction of this area focused mainly on the palaces, which were converted to serve public functions. Some buildings were left unreconstructed, and a new communication route, the WZ route, was introduced, with a tunnel in the vicinity of the Old Town, which successfully connected the two banks of the Vistula River, only minimally affecting the historic layout. Empty spaces were filled with modern buildings (of varying quality) and green areas. The entire area of the western outskirts is part of the Monument of History. The buffer zone was enlarged to include the western part of the Saska Axis.

• **Powiśle.** Powiśle is an area between the Śląsko-Dąbrowski and Świętokrzyski Bridges and the Vistula Escarpment, including the historic jurydykas of Mariensztat and Stanisławów. In the course of time, the bed of the Vistula River moved farther away from the escarpment, making it possible to enlarge the port quarter. Dobra, Browarna, and Topiel streets, and the streets perpendicular to them, were built up with granaries, warehouses, and, later, industrial structures. Annual floods and the nature of the buildings are to account for the fact that very few of the original historic structures have survived to date. The reconstruction of Mariensztat, or, more properly, the reinterpretation of its historic architecture in the style of the Old Town, is one of the most successful projects carried out in post-war Warsaw. The complex includes the area of the historic jurydyka of Aleksandrya, developed and built-up up until the 1930s. This part of the city did not suffer significant damage during the war. Powiśle and the wharf areas have recently been undergoing a period of intensive development. In the 1970s, the wide strip along the Vistula River was annexed for the purposes of heavy municipal traffic. Several years ago the Wisłostrada highway was partially deepened; reclaimed areas and substandard post-industrial building sites were zoned for development related to higher education. This is also a potential investment area. With the exception of Mariensztat, the area did not become part of the Monument of History; it was, however, included in the buffer zone in order to protect the panorama of the city.

• **Right-bank Warsaw districts.** Up until the end of the 18th century, the towns of Praga, Gołędzinów and Skaryszew were separate entities, both in terms of administration and functional-spatial arrangement. With the exception of the bridge founded by Sigismund the Old in 1568, the greatest engineering feat of 16th century Europe, and seasonal ice crossings, communication between the parts of the city was limited to rafts and boats. Today, the two parts of the city are connected by two bridges in this section of the Vistula River. Numerous natural disasters, floods, plagues, and, above all, warfare often destroyed the right-bank settlements. The storming of Praga in 1794, the last episode of Tadeusz Kościuszko's Insurrection, put an end to their normal functioning; the destruction was later completed by Napoleon. The demarcation of a military zone on the grounds of Gołędzinów and parts of Praga made it impossible to build permanent structures on the site, and the area subsequently served the needs of the army. Later, it became the site of Praski Park, and in the 1920s, parts of it were converted into a modern zoological garden. The only area to retain its original development is Skaryszew; along with parts of Praga, it was built up at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. A river port was built in the interwar period in the southern part of the area. Right-bank Warsaw was not destroyed during the war and most of its residential buildings have survived to this day. Industrial structures are successively being replaced or adapted to suit their new functions. The views from this side of the Vistula River and the bridges are essential for the historic panorama of the city. Preserved paintings of Warsaw, including the famous one by Bernardo Bellotto (Canaletto), were all created on the right bank of the river. The buildings on the Praga side, on the other hand, are extremely important for the observation points situated at the edge of the escarpment in the Old Town, overlooking the right bank. This is why the area was included in the buffer zone.



Phot. Old Town and its immediate surroundings



Phot. View of the Old Town and the left bank of the Vistula River



Phot. New Town, northern part of the buffer zone



Phot. Western part of the buffer zone, Saski Garden



Phot. Krakowskie Przedmieście Street



Phot. Krakowskie Przedmieście Street, campus of the University of Warsaw