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AESTHETICIZATION OF CONTEMPORARY URBAN PUBLIC SPACE. LUBLIN CASE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

8 April 2024 marked the 10th anniversary of the interdisciplinary conference ‘Towards Beauty. On the legal problems of the aestheticization of public space.’ Organized a quarter of a century after the beginning of the political transformation, the event signalled a shift in societal priorities. Having satisfied its basic needs, society began to recognize and pursue higher aspirations, such as the appreciation of the beauty of the surrounding space.¹ It was asked at the time, among other things, if legal provisions achieve beauty. Attention was drawn to the aesthetics/aesthetics of public spaces. They are part of the landscape, interiors, and landmarks, affecting the quality of life and the image of cities. P. Czyż noted that the issue of aestheticization, present in public discourse, is a specific cultural phenomenon related to the maturing social consciousness of Poles.²

The issue of aesthetics is primarily associated with ordering advertisements in public spaces, coloring buildings, and ensuring the visual coherence of land

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¹ Miłosz ZIELIŃSKI, “W stronę piękna przestrzeni miasta,” *Teka Komisji Urbanistyki i Architektury* 42 (2014): 277–301.

² Piotr Czyż, “Stan estetyczny przestrzeni a kultura korzystania z miasta,” *Metropolitan* 1, no. 1 (2014): 14–27.

development elements³. The Polish Landscape Award in 2024 was granted to the draft Resolution No. XXXVI/908/20 of the Krakow City Council of 26.02.2020 on establishing the principles and conditions for small architectural objects, billboards, advertising devices, and fences. Such resolutions, known as advertising or landscape resolutions, make it possible to make visual information more legible, protect space users from excessive sensory stimulation, and improve the aesthetics of public spaces.⁴

The importance of taking care of spatial and aesthetic order is highlighted in the National Urban Policy 2030, adopted on 14 June 2022. Among the solutions included in this document is strengthening of the priority for high-quality public spaces and the strengthening of the protection of landscape, cultural, and aesthetic values were indicated.⁵ “Beauty” was also among the three central values of the city formulated in the Wrocław 2030 Strategy and adopted on 15 February 2018. It points out that beauty manifests in images (views) and taste, smell, touch, and sounds. Wrocław has a rich tradition of caring for beauty. Thanks to the application entitled “Spaces for Beauty,” the city won the European Capital of Culture 2016 title. Beauty appears in the Study of Conditions and Directions for Spatial Development of the City (2017). On one of the first pages, we read: “Wrocław is to become comfortable and beautiful in every part of it.”⁶ Many other towns and villages also pay attention to beauty. Interesting initiatives (both national and local) are being implemented to involve residents in the beautification of cities. Green areas are being tidied up or re-created, pedestrian areas are being created, and water features are being created, which, by improving aesthetics, help to improve the quality of public spaces.⁷ The civic budget plays an important role in these activities.⁸ Cities’ efforts in shaping the landscape and public spaces are recognized through competitions, such as the ‘Best Developed Public Space in

³ Mariusz ANTOLAK, and Patrycja PAWELEC, “Dylematy estetyki i estetyzacji polskich miast wojewódzkich,” in *Inspiracje krajobrazowe* (Lublin: Polihymnia, 2017).

⁴ Renata GIEDYCH, “Gminna uchwała krajobrazowa – od teorii do praktyki,” *Biuletyn KPZK* 261 (2016): 120–137.

⁵ “Krajowa Polityka Miejska 2030,” Ministerstwo Infrastruktury i Rozwoju, accessed May 20, 2025, <https://www.gov.pl/web/fundusze-regiony/polityka-miejska>.

⁶ “Strategia Wrocław 2030,” Urząd Miejski Wrocławia, accessed May 20, 2025, <https://www.wroclaw.pl/rozmawia/strategia-rozwoju-wroclaw-2030>.

⁷ Anna GOŁĘDZINOWSKA, “Strategie tworzenia dobrej przestrzeni publicznej w małych i średnich miastach,” in *Problemy kształtowania przestrzeni publicznej* (Gdańsk: Urbanista, 2010), 114–127.

⁸ Agnieszka SZCZEPAŃSKA, Marek ZAGROBA, and Katarzyna PIETRZYK, “Participatory Budgeting as a Method for Improving Public Spaces in Major Polish Cities,” *Social Indicators Research* 162, no. 1 (2022): 231–252, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-021-02831-3>.

Poland.⁹ However, landscape and public space are still subject to intense pressure and are often appropriated by private users and investors. Despite this, is the aestheticization of public spaces in Poland progressing? Can this phenomenon be described as an aesthetic turn in space design and planning?

This study aims to identify activities related to the aestheticization of contemporary urban space. The city of Lublin, located in a peripheral area close to the eastern border of the European Union, was chosen as the research case. It is the center of the Lublin Functional Area, also referred to as the Lublin Metropolitan Area.¹⁰ Despite its peripheral location, which has been treated for a long time as a barrier to development, the city's position has started to grow over the past decade. There has been an apparent increase in the dynamics of change, among which both positive and undesirable effects can be observed. In 2023, Lublin was the European Youth Capital, and in 2029, it will be the European Capital of Culture. Lublin's development policy aims to create the best possible place for living, education, work, and leisure by implementing several programs and projects for and by the inhabitants.¹¹ In the light of the "Report on the State of Polish Metropolises," one of Lublin's greatest assets is its high quality of life capital, which consists of a perfect state of the environment, a sense of security among residents, and civic activity.¹²

1. PUBLIC SPACE IN THE CONTEXT OF AESTHETIC VALUES

Public space, understood according to the 'Charter of Public Space,' is an asset for all users, intentionally shaped by man following social principles and values to meet the needs of local and supra-local communities.¹³ It is an important building block of urban identity, a clear expression of the city's identity. It contributes to creating its image for external audiences and residents, enabling them to feel a strong identification with the landscape of their city. Public spaces are

⁹ Anna STEFAŃSKA, and Agnieszka CHUDZIŃSKA, "Qualitative assessment of selected factors of positive development of public urban spaces," *Space&FORM* 55 (2023): 205–224, <https://doi.org/10.21005/pif.2023.55.C-04>.

¹⁰ Mariusz SAGAN, and Piotr MALESZYK, ed., *Lublin 2030 – europejska metropolia?* (Lublin: Urząd Miasta Lublin. Wydział Strategii i Obsługi Inwestorów, 2018).

¹¹ "Strategia Lublin 2030" (Lublin: Urząd Miasta Lublin, 2021), <https://lublin.eu/biznes-i-nauka/strategia/s2030/>.

¹² "Raport o stanie polskich metropolii: Lublin" (Warszawa–Lublin: PwC, 2019), <https://www.pwc.pl/pl/pdf/raport-o-metropoliach-lublin-2019-pwc.pdf>.

¹³ "Karta Przestrzeni Publicznej," accessed May 20, 2025, https://obserwatorium.miasta.pl/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Karta-przestrzeni-publicznej_T.Markowski.pdf.

an integral part of urban space. They are usually unique and have cultural functions, which complicates their valuation. They can also generate development processes relevant to the city as a whole as they are an attractor, a product offered to potential residents. They are public goods that are the center of the city's life and its inhabitants, generating different types.¹⁴ Public spaces are shaped not only by administrative decisions but also by residents; they are the essence of urban life, integral elements of the urban fabric that are responsible for.¹⁵

A city's public space is the focus of positive and negative spatial, social, and economic processes. Consequently, activities for creating good public space often feature prominently in the provisions of program documents. It is a voluntary initiative of the local government, which assumes a positive impact of improving the quality of public space on solving the diagnosed problems or achieving the assumed development goals.¹⁶ Public spaces should be distinguished in planning documents, as public space is an element of the functional and spatial structure. However, municipal studies often neglect the issue of shaping the public space system. However, the lack of an adequate provision does not mean that public space does not exist in a given municipality.¹⁷ Squares and streets are often treated as communication spaces, while parks and other recreation areas are treated as green/green spaces. Their proper function is only referred to when the local plan is prepared. Although such a spatial policy secures the existence of public space in the city structure, it does not guarantee the preservation of the features important for its attractiveness, i.e., spatial continuity and coherence and well-thought-out interaction with the surroundings.¹⁸

In European Union documents, public space has been recognized as one of the key elements of urban development as part of implementing the 'return to the city' slogan. Public spaces are important for social life as places for meetings, entertainment, and recreation, and provide an escape from the nuisances of urban life – noise and pollution. Public spaces are unique and magical places with a special atmosphere and mood, convenient functional and spatial relationships, and high-use quality. Public spaces can vary in character.

¹⁴ Jagoda ADAMUS, "How Much Are Public Spaces Worth? Non-Market Valuation Methods in Valuing Public Spaces," *Gospodarka Narodowa* 314, no. 2 (2023): 66–89, <https://doi.org/10.33119/GN/163105>.

¹⁵ Kevin LYNCH, *The Image of the City*, Publication of the Joint Center for Urban Studies (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 2008); Matthew CARMONA, *Public Places. Urban Spaces. The dimensions of urban design* (New York – London: Routledge, 2021); Jan GEHL, ed., *Cities for People* (Washington: Island Press, 2010).

¹⁶ GOŁĘDZINOWSKA, "Strategie tworzenia dobrej przestrzeni publicznej."

¹⁷ GOŁĘDZINOWSKA, "Strategie tworzenia dobrej przestrzeni publicznej."

¹⁸ GOŁĘDZINOWSKA, "Strategie tworzenia dobrej przestrzeni publicznej."

However, the most important characteristics associated with them are accessibility and functionality. They should also be characterized by high aesthetic values.¹⁹ The presence in public spaces of individual elements with the character of attractors is important, constituting a visual distinguishing feature in the landscape, by which they are perceived as pretty and interesting. Numerous studies confirm the influence of such elements on people's presence in space.²⁰ The existence of interesting objects and artistic events in public spaces can elicit interactions among strangers.²¹ Attractions are also distinctive features that facilitate the identification of a meeting place. The aesthetics of public spaces, combined with their proper design and functionality, significantly impact the quality of public life.²² It affects the relationship between buildings and, above all, between people. It influences their perception of reality and themselves. As K. Chwalibóg emphasizes, the quality of public space is determined by the quality of the landscape that surrounds us.²³

A.B. Stępień notes that one supreme aesthetic value – beauty – is indicated, or many aesthetic values are assumed.²⁴ The classical understanding of beauty makes it a value related to proportion, perfection of shape, form, and structure. Qualities and their arrangements, objects lasting in time, states of affairs, and processes can be beautiful. The occurrence of something beautiful is conditioned by the object of gazing, which is harmonious, coherent and characterized by a particular finish. It should shine with its form and perfection, presenting itself as a whole. Equally important is the subject, who must be appropriately sensitized and oriented to perceive beauty. Various proposals for the conditions of beauty are emerging.²⁵ Aesthetic values sometimes also include sublimity (qualifiers: great, mighty, magnificent, threatening, mysterious, disturbing), tragedy, and comedy. The multitude and variety of what is aesthetically valuable hardly lend itself to scientific description, to sharp qualifications. K.H. Wojciechowski

¹⁹ Jan GEHL, *Life between Buildings: Using Public Space* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1987); CARMONA, *Public Places*; Dorota WANTUCH-MATLA, *Przestrzeń publiczna 2.0: miasto u progu XXI wieku* (Łódź: Księży Młyn Dom Wydawniczy Michał Koliński, 2016).

²⁰ Jack L. NASAR, "Urban Design Aesthetics: The Evaluative Qualities of Building Exteriors," *Environment and Behavior* 26, no. 3 (1994): 377–401, <https://doi.org/10.1177/001391659402600305>.

²¹ William Hollingsworth WHYTE, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (New York, NY: Project for Public Spaces, 2010).

²² WANTUCH-MATLA, *Przestrzeń publiczna 2.0*.

²³ Krzysztof CHWALIBÓG, "Jakość przestrzeni publicznej. Wprowadzenie," in *Jakość przestrzeni publicznej*, vol. 5 (Sopot – Warszawa: Polska Polityka Architektoniczna NIAiU – Wyd. Arche, 2022), 8–26.

²⁴ Antoni B. STĘPIEŃ, *Propedeutyka estetyki* (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1986).

²⁵ STĘPIEŃ, *Propedeutyka estetyki*.

distinguished.²⁶ The latter has been a condition of high aesthetic quality since antiquity, further facilitating orientation in space. The aspect of uniqueness is also important, referring to some debatable aesthetic categories.

Recent years around the world have brought a kind of ‘beauty turn,’ and the perception of beauty is linked to aesthetics. As M. Czepczyński notes, aesthetics is no longer the exclusive domain of artists, art historians, or philosophers. It is now also explored by cultural scientists, media scholars, psychologists, and geographers.²⁷ The need for beauty, deeply rooted in human nature, points to the importance of beauty in the surrounding space and signals directions for actions that could beautify urbanized space.²⁸ The beauty of public space and the cultural landscape encompasses almost all our lives and becomes a significant feature of the identity of modern cities. Moreover, it is always the result of a particular social compromise reached in a given place and time.²⁹

W. Kosiński pointed out that the value of beauty and goodness is worth considering together.³⁰ They are elements of landscape (visual) attractiveness and functionality of space. He described the issues of urban aesthetics as a fascinating and necessary field of research. The beauty of a city results from its location, position in the landscape, urban layout, and the architectural articulation of its buildings. In addition to form, the perception of a city’s beauty is influenced by non-visual and content factors, which enhance the purely aesthetic experience in a positive synergy. The beauty of a city evokes a sense of satisfaction and identification with urban space in its users. The aesthetic expression of a city is a lasting cultural value comparable to other achievements of high culture. Beauty is a particularly universal, timeless, transcendent factor in experiencing the attractiveness of a city. He also emphasized that public spaces are a particularly graceful subject in the problematic study of cities in terms of their beauty. This is because they constitute the “face of the city,” influence the creation of a city’s identity, and induce a sense of identification with it as an aesthetic entity.

The value of beauty has been highlighted in the European Commission’s ‘New European Bauhaus’ (NEB) initiative, which aims to improve quality of life and support high-quality design for sustainable development. Ultimately, it

²⁶ Krzysztof H. WOJCIECHOWSKI, *Problemy percepcji i oceny estetycznej krajobrazu* (Lublin: UMCS, 1986).

²⁷ Mariusz CZEPCZYŃSKI, “Piękny krajobraz jako dobro publiczne. Reprezentacje i estetyzacje przestrzeni miejskich,” *Ethos. Kwartalnik Instytutu Jana Pawła II KUL* 32, no. 3 (2019): 197–218, <https://doi.org/10.12887/32-2019-3-127-12>.

²⁸ Maria PORĘBSKA, “O potrzebie piękna w przestrzeni publicznej miasta,” *Czasopismo Techniczne. Architektura* 107, no. 3-A (2010): 155–163.

²⁹ CZEPCZYŃSKI, “Piękny krajobraz.”

³⁰ Wojciech KOSIŃSKI, *Miasto i piękno miasta* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo PK, 2011).

should increase environmental sustainability, inclusivity, and beauty. Aesthetics and sustainable design are not opposed to each other, but should be seen as inextricably linked.³¹ A beautiful environment is a greener environment. Aesthetics stimulates action. Appreciation of aesthetics has much to do with environmental intelligence. Aesthetic value is not a superficial thing – it is an ecological imperative. Pope Francis also pointed this out in the Encyclical ‘Laudato Si’, promulgated in 2015.³²

Beauty, the source of which is, among other things, well-designed public spaces, is revealed in colorfully varied images as well as sounds and smells.³³ Exposure to beauty perceived as multisensory stimulates reflection and action, provides a variety of aesthetic experiences, and develops intelligence, imagination, and emotional sensitivity. Poverty of experience, lack of sensory comfort, and neglected or poorly managed public spaces are associated with a reduced quality of life. According to J. Gehl, valuing the senses as a basis for behavior, action, and communication in space should be part of designing cities for people, i.e., vibrant, safe, sustainable, and healthy cities.³⁴ Nighttime creates unique conditions for activating the senses (especially non-visual senses).³⁵ A sustainable outdoor lighting policy aestheticizes public space, brings out local identity, and creates a unique atmosphere for the city. This policy should be aimed at creating functional and attractive spaces while rationally using resources and protecting the nocturnal scenic qualities by reducing light pollution. These measures will improve the quality of life and create user-friendly spaces.³⁶

³¹ Lance HOSEY, *The Shape of Green: Aesthetics, Ecology, and Design* (Washington: Island Press, 2012).

³² Sebastian BERNAT, Małgorzata FLAGA, and Wioletta KALAMUCKA, “The Shaping of Sustainable Landscape in the Context of the European Landscape Convention and the Encyclical *Laudato Si’*,” *Problemy Ekorozwoju – Problems of Sustainable Development* 12, no. 2 (2017): 123–131; Kasper JAKUBOWSKI, “Inspiracje *Laudato si’* do projektów z zakresu architektury krajobrazu miasta,” *Studia Ecologiae et Bioethicae* 15, no. 1 (2017): 59–68, <https://doi.org/10.21697/seb.2017.1.07>.

³³ Janusz SKALSKI, “Unifikacja krajobrazów miejskich. Znaczenie procesu percepcji w jakościowej ocenie przestrzeni publicznej Warszawy,” *Architektura Krajobrazu* 2 (2008): 4–13; Gehl, *Cities for People*; Hosey, *The Shape of Green*.

³⁴ GEHL, *Cities for People*.

³⁵ Beata FRYDRYCZAK, *Zmysły w krajobrazie* (Seria Krajobrazy 11; Łódź: Wydawnictwo Officyna s.c., 2020).

³⁶ Nick DUNN, and Tim EDENSOR, *Dark Skies. Places, Practices, Communities* (Abingdon–New York: Routledge, 2024).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Lublin is a city with district rights located in eastern Poland, the capital of the Lublin Voivodeship, and it is an administrative, economic, scientific, and cultural center. The city covers an area of 147 km² and is inhabited by approximately 330,000 people (data from 2023). In terms of population, it ranks 9th in Poland but is the largest center in the eastern part of the country. Situated within several physical-geographical regions (Nałęczowski Plateau, Świdnicki Plateau, Giełczewska Upland), it is characterized by a varied relief. This relief is associated with the Bystrzyca River valley (a third-order river, a tributary of the Wieprz River), the Czechówka and Czerniejówka River valleys (fourth-order rivers, tributaries of the Bystrzyca River), and numerous dry valleys cutting through the loess plateau.³⁷ The relief has determined the main features.³⁸ Due to the varied terrain, the city's area is characterized by relatively high.³⁹

Apart from its natural conditions, the city's assets are its rich history (the Union of Lublin) and multiculturalism. Situated until the middle of the 20th century in central and nowadays in eastern Poland on important transport routes connecting East and West (e.g., Kraków–Lublin–Vilnius), it is an important place where cultures meet and intermingle. Until World War II, it was an ethnically diverse city. In 2007, Lublin's historical architectural and urban ensemble was declared a monument of history due to the need for protection on account of its historical, tangible, and intangible values, which are inextricably linked to many important events in Polish history. Elements of exceptional structural and landscape significance were protected: Castle Hill with its historic castle buildings, the Old Town Hill within the limits of the former city walls, a section of Krakowskie Przedmieście (the current promenade) and the Bernardine and Brigidine monastery complexes, integrally linked to the urban defense system. Due to its rich cultural values, embedded in the varied relief of the area, Lublin is a city with exceptional scenic values, manifested by the possibility of admiring diverse panoramas of the Old Town complex.⁴⁰ However, it is subject to the visual pressure of advertisements.⁴¹

³⁷ Jerzy SOLON, *et al.*, "Physico-geographical mesoregions of Poland: Verification and adjustment of boundaries on the basis of contemporary spatial data," *Geographia Polonica* 91 (2018): 143–170, <https://doi.org/10.7163/GPol.0115>.

³⁸ Jolanta RODZOŚ, Leszek GAWRYSIAK, and Anna BOCHRA, "Rzeźba terenu a organizacja przestrzeni miejskiej Lublina," *Annales UMCS sec. B* 60 (2005): 35–45.

³⁹ Ewa TRZASKOWSKA, and Paweł ADAMIEC, ed., *Krajobrazy Lublina: roślinność naturalna* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2016).

⁴⁰ Waldemar MARZĘCKI, "Szlak panoram Lublina," *Przestrzeń i Forma* 16 (2011): 507–514.

⁴¹ Szymon CHMIELEWSKI, Tadeusz Jan CHMIELEWSKI, and Agnieszka KUŁAK, *Presja wizualna jako problem audytu krajobrazowego* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczego, 2018).

The research was mainly qualitative, descriptive, and exploratory. Their important element was the case study of Lublin. It was recognized that although the specificity of each city is unique, it was assumed that there are also many similar elements, processes, and problems for other cities in Poland. Using Lublin's previous experience in the aesthetics of public space, more effective actions resulting in an improvement of the quality of public space in other cities can be carried out to the satisfaction of its users. During the research proceedings, found materials (including current planning and strategic documents) were analyzed and field research (including observations) were conducted. Such an approach, based on the analysis of records of available data sources (desk research method), provides the basis for developing conclusions about the researched problem. These conclusions are then verified during field observations. In addition to the descriptive approach, the paper presents a critical approach. This stems from the desire to understand the growing problems. Recognition of errors allows for improvements and enhancements to the inadequacies of current mechanisms. Without detracting from the many successes of the city, which have been milestones in its development, there is still a need to verify and improve spatial activities. Without effective spatial organization and qualitative solutions, the benefits will remain partial.

Therefore, the research aims to identify aspects of urban space's aestheticization by analyzing planning and strategic documents, investments in revitalization projects, and participatory activities. In addition, attention was paid to sound as an element of public spaces. This is the author's research proposal, developed based on a review of publications and his reflections.

3. RESULTS

3.1. DOCUMENTS

The Regional Urban Policy of Lubelskie Voivodeship notes that the city squares are the most numerous and intensively used public spaces in the region's cities.⁴² Lublin has the highest potential of the leading public spaces. Public spaces in residential complexes play an important role in the city's structure, providing opportunities for integrating residents and their participation in numerous social initiatives. Green and waterfront areas also play a significant role.

⁴² "Regionalna Polityka Miejska Województwa Lubelskiego" (Lublin: Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Lubelskiego, 2017), <https://umwl.bip.lubelskie.pl/index.php?id=937>.

The main threats and crisis phenomena related to the formation of public spaces in the region's cities include:

- the degradation of the substance and its underinvestment, including in terms of infrastructure for the elderly and disabled, and the low level of security of the space,
- the phenomenon of ghettoization in gated communities results from the disintegration of existing housing structures. This is caused by the division of space into public and private, leading to the disintegration of the urban fabric and its progressive fragmentation,
- reducing the area of public spaces (development of land for other functions, mainly residential),
- the inadequacy of the planning instruments shaping public spaces stems from the lack of specific directions for their development in the studies of conditions and directions of spatial development; as a result, these areas are often omitted in new development projects; this leads to a lack of continuity in the development of public spaces within urban structures and contributes to the fragmentation of public spaces,
- the commercialization and privatization of public spaces, resulting from replacing traditional urban spaces with various commercial spaces, mainly commercial complexes.

In light of the document Strategy of the City of Lublin until 2030, the most important problems of Lublin include noise pollution, bad condition of facades and a vast number of advertisements, degradation of buildings, low quality of public spaces, fragmentation of spaces, and degradation of development.⁴³ However, The Municipal Programme for the Care of the Monuments of the City of Lublin for 2021–2024 draws attention to the city's high potential due to its preserved cultural heritage resources, rich history, and significant events in Poland.⁴⁴ Among the problems pointed out were the poor technical condition of part of the resource (the main reason is the lack of financial resources or the unregulated legal status of the property) and the insufficient protection of the cultural landscape. It was pointed out that there is no form of protection for monuments in Lublin, such as a cultural park. For several years, the legitimacy of establishing cultural parks (or a cultural park) in Lublin has been indicated in strategic and planning documents at the provincial and local levels. Establishing a cultural park would be an opportunity for the city's conservation services

⁴³ "Strategia Lublin 2030."

⁴⁴ "Gminny Program Opieki nad Zabytkami Miasta Lublin, na lata 2021–2024," accessed May 20, 2025, <https://lublin.eu/lublin/przestrzen-miejska/zabytki/dokumenty-programowe/gminny-program-opieki-nad-zabytkami/>.

to have a more significant influence on the historic space of the city and to actively manage its heritage.

In the Communal Revitalisation Programme of the City of Lublin for 2024–2033, improving the quality of life and social relations in the local communities in the revitalization area was adopted as the strategic objective.⁴⁵ Twenty-four revitalization areas have been designated (including the Old Town and the City Centre). Among the planned primary measures targeting public spaces are the following: “Green and blue infrastructure in the revitalization area,” “New space in the Tatar district,” “Development of the former Podzamcze area,” and “Błonia Culture Zone.” On the other hand, from the complementary undertakings, it is worth mentioning: “Creation or modernization of friendly public or semi-public spaces in the revitalization area,” “Programme of giving public spaces a local dimension,” “Programme of shaping local green and recreational spaces” and “Cultural Park.” Their effect would be, among other things, the aestheticization of public spaces.

The Study of Conditions and Directions for Spatial Development of the City of Lublin lists the areas in the city structure predisposed to function as public spaces. These are: traffic routes (former tracts, streets) (7), squares (11), gardens, parks and forests (21), greens, squares, Jordan gardens (3), cemeteries (5) as well as promenades and boulevards at the Zemborzycki Reservoir and in river valleys (Fig. 1).⁴⁶ It was noted that key public spaces should be complemented by a system of public spaces accessible directly from residential areas. Due to its important social and cultural role, the study limits vehicular traffic in public spaces. In addition, it was emphasized that the cultural landscape of Lublin has not received comprehensive studies and methods of protection (e.g., lack of appropriate care for the exposition of panoramas and views). The development of local plans for eight public spaces began in 2021 and has now been completed for most of them. The 2024 resolution initiated planning work for a further twelve public spaces.

The Study of the Viewing Values of the City of Lublin was prepared in 2011. Its main objective was to develop guidelines to preserve the value of the historic layout of the Old Town and the City Centre and the panoramas and building

⁴⁵ “Gminny Program Rewitalizacji dla miasta Lublina na lata 2024–2033,” accessed May 20, 2025, <https://lublin.eu/lublin/przestrzen-miejska/rewitalizacja/aktualnosci/gminny-program-rewitalizacji-dla-miasta-lublina-na-lata-2024-2033,23,2128,1.html>.

⁴⁶ “Studium uwarunkowań i kierunków zagospodarowania przestrzennego miasta Lublin” (Lublin: Urząd Miasta Lublin, 2019), <https://bip.lublin.eu/strategia-i-planowanie/planowanie-przestrzenne/studium-uwarunkowan-i-kierunkow-zagospodarowania-przestrzennego-miasta-lublina/>.

lines included in the conservation protection zone.⁴⁷ The document contains documentation and valorization of strategic views of Lublin, identification of spatial connections, important compositional elements, visual obstacles, and factors negatively affecting the urban landscape. The planning part formulates principles for the protection of the viewing values of the Old Town areas, restrictions on new development, and suggestions for improving the presentation of the landscape. Based on an analysis of the development and topography of the city, landscape protection zones and special areas have been delineated, which form the basis for specific planning decisions. Some of the guidelines were separated and described as so-called thematic programs. The study also proposes measures to promote the city's landscape values.

In 2020, a draft advertising resolution of the Lublin City Council was drawn up on the principles and conditions for small architectural objects, billboards, advertising devices, and fences, their dimensions, quality standards, and types of construction materials they may be made of. The purpose of the resolution is to introduce rules and conditions that contribute to the protection of the urban landscape, maintenance of the spatial order, protection of the identity and traditions of the city, and improvement of Lublin's image. To this end, the draft resolution sets out two zones. The first zone includes the historic city center area with its immediate surroundings, including the foreground of the Old Town and Downtown panorama. The second zone comprises the remaining areas of the city. To date, however, the advertising resolution has not been adopted.

The Climate Change Adaptation Programme, adopted in 2019, includes measures for using blue-green infrastructure to revitalize public spaces and create new parks, squares, 'climate courtyards,' pocket gardens, and connections between urban green areas.⁴⁸ It was pointed out that through the proposed activities, there will be, among other things, an improvement in the aesthetics of public spaces and the neighborhood of green areas. Well-maintained public space will have a positive impact on the landscape, social behavior, and an increase in joint responsibility for the shaping of shared space. In 2022, a task team was established to develop "Urban and planning guidelines in shaping public spaces in the context of adaptation to climate change for the City of Lublin."

⁴⁷ "Studium wartości widokowych miasta Lublin" (Urząd Miasta Lublin, 2019), https://bip.lublin.eu/download/gfx/bip/userfiles/_public/import/strategia-i-planowanie/planowanie-przestrzenne/inne-opracowania-planistyczne/studium_wartosci_widokowych.pdf.

⁴⁸ "Plan Adaptacji do zmian klimatu Miasta Lublin do roku 2030," accessed May 20, 2025, <https://bip.lublin.eu/strategia-i-planowanie/ochrona-srodowiska/plan-adaptacji-do-zmian-klimatu-miasta-lublin-do-roku-2030%2C3%2C28275%2C2.html>.

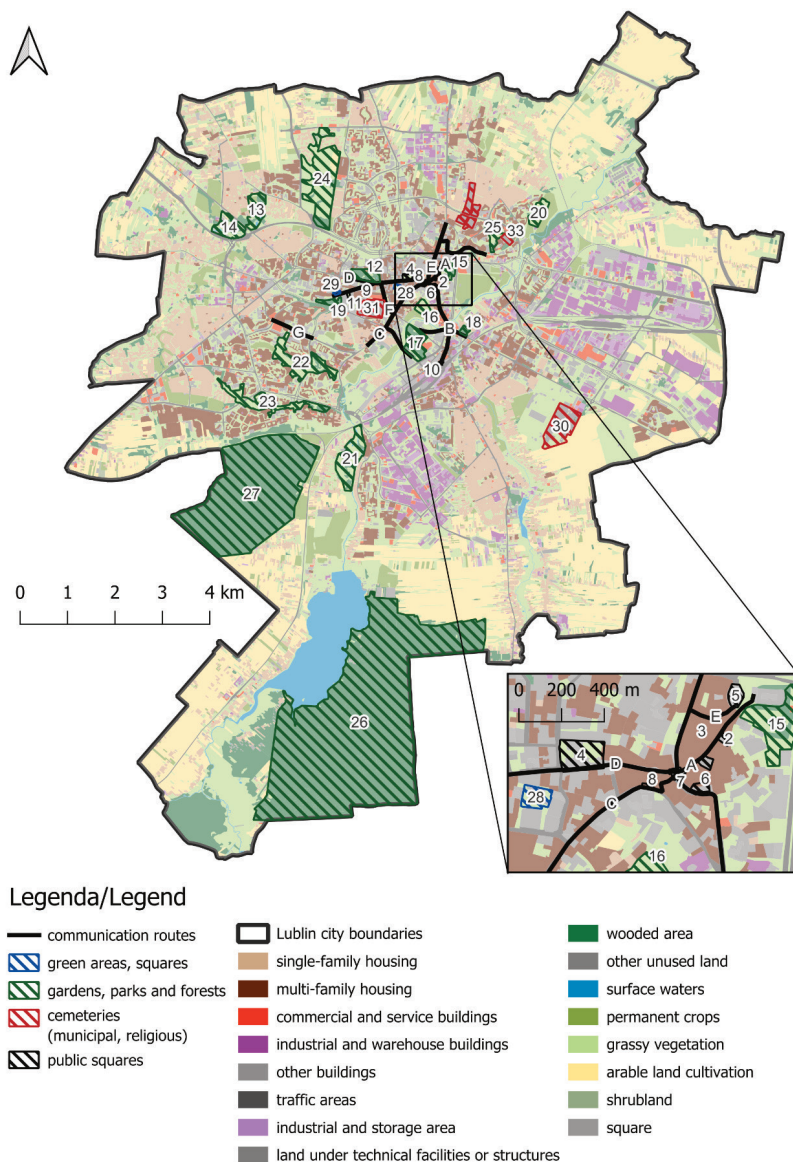


Fig. 1. Public spaces in Lublin against the background of the functional-spatial structure.
Source: own compilation based on the Study of Conditions and Directions for Spatial Development of the City of Lublin (2019).

Transport routes: A – Former Royal Route, B – Former Bychawa (Zamość) Route, C – Former Cracow (Old) Route, D – Former Cracow and Warsaw Route, E – Former Lubartow and Lviv (Ruthenian) Route, F – Lipowa Street, G – T Street. Zana; Squares: 1. Market Square, 2. Plac po Farze, 3. Plac Rybny, 4. Plac Litewski, 5. Plac Zamkowy, 6. Plac Katedralny, 7. Plac Króla Władysława Łokietka, 8. Plac Wolności, 9. Plac Teatralny, 10. Plac Dworcowy, 11. Plac im. Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej; Gardens, parks and forests: 12. Ogród Saski, 13. Ogród Botaniczny UMCS, 14. Park Etnograficzny (open-air museum), 15. Błonia pod Zamkiem (Podzamecze Park), 16. Park Rusalka, 17. Park Ludowy, 18. Park Bronowice, 19. Park Akademicki, 20. Park Zawilcowa, 21. Park Nadrzeczny/Wrotków, 22. Park Rury, 23. Park im. Jana Pawła II na Czubach, 24. Park na Górkach Czechowskich, 25. Park Kalinowszczyzna, 26. Las Dąbrowa, 27. Stary Gaj; Green areas, squares: 28. in the area of the Cultural Centre on Peowiaków Street (square named after the Children of Pahiatura), 29. square named after the Righteous Among the Nations (formerly Prof. G.L. Seidler) in the University Town; Cemeteries (municipal, religious): 30. municipal cemetery in Majdanek, 31. complex of cemeteries in Lipowa Street/Biała Street, 32. cemeteries in Walecznych Street and 33. cemetery in F. Kleeberga Street.

It should also be mentioned that a Book of Standards has been prepared for Lublin and standards for establishing and maintaining green areas (urban greenery standards). The Lublin Book of Standards contains guidelines, instructions, and good examples to visually order the space of the Old Town, the pedestrian zone of Krakowskie Przedmieście, part of Króla Władysława Łokietka Square, and Litewski Square. It describes seasonal food gardens, mobile points, or festival stand guidelines. It also describes, among other things, how to shape the compositional order of the facades of buildings, advertising elements, shop windows, and street furniture.

3.2. REVITALIZATION INVESTMENTS

In recent years, new transport infrastructure and cycle paths have been built in Lublin, the quality of public transport services has been noticeably improved, new public spaces have been created, and existing ones have been renovated. The functionality of the central representative axis of the city has been strengthened, which translates into the vitality of urban space. The axis, which can be considered the compositional core of the city concentrating on public life, stretches from Lublin Castle through Lithuanian Square to Theatre Square and is about 1.7 km long, of which 1 km of the route is closed to vehicular traffic. The city center has become a place for residents to spend time and an attraction for tourists. The flagship investment was the renovation of Litewski

Square and Krakowskie Przedmieście Street (Photo 1, Photo 2). The most important changes concerned the traffic system. Previously, Krakowskie Przedmieście Street along the length of the square was passable and served by public transport. Currently, the entire square space is excluded from vehicular traffic and forms an extension of the pedestrian zone. Collision-free pedestrian space has been significantly increased, and new urban interiors have been created between the buildings. The designers have diversified the types of space to have many differentiated zones. The central traffic axis was emphasized with a line of trees, small architecture, and linear fountains. On the opposite side, a second traffic axis has been laid out in place of the former road along the frontage of the historic buildings. In the central part is a representative area of a multimedia fountain; next to it, shaded alleys are among the trees (Photo 3). Children's playgrounds, a dance floor for various activities, and chess tables have been incorporated into the overall design. In addition, small squares with greenery and small architecture were designed at the entrance points on different sides of the square. The square's weak point is its seasonality due to the classic nature of the fountain, which means that it is excluded from use outside the summer season, leaving an empty basin of considerable size. In addition, a municipal toilet facility was introduced, which is much needed, although it differs architecturally (despite being planted with ivy) from the character and identity of the place. Litewski Square has become Lublin's new symbolic public space and has won the appreciation of Lublin's residents, attracting crowds, which makes clear the massive deficit of public space outside the city center.



Photo 1. Krakowskie Przedmieście pedestrian zone.



Photo 2. Litewski Square.



Photo 3. Multimedia fountains in Litewski Square.

In 2019, the project ‘Revitalization of part of the Downtown of the City of Lublin. Changing the development of Litewski Square and reconstruction of the existing Deptak’ was awarded second prize in the competition for the best developed public space in Poland of the Society of Polish Town Planners in the category of revitalized public space. In the justification, it was emphasized that the awarded project contributed to creating a new, multifunctional, open interior in the existing urban tissue, which is now used for the city’s daily and festive social, cultural, and economic activities. The implementation of the premise tidied up a key space in the city, strengthened the recreational and park function, and created a legible composition in the historical structure of the city. The competition jury also appreciated the transformation of

the place into a space that encouraged creative use and fostered social activity and recreation in Lublin. It should be added that Lithuanian Square is a space of multi-layered transformation. Throughout history, it has evolved from an urban space with a clearly defined function into a multifunctional public space, from a space of remembrance into a modern space of leisure and entertainment. The accumulation of memorial elements and immediately adjacent recreational spaces, according to W. Bal *et al.*, gives the impression of a lapidarity whose components devalue each other.⁴⁹

In addition to city squares, green areas in Lublin have been renovated. The flagship example is the Saski Garden, which has gained a new quality after its revalorisation/revitalization. The park gained functionality and a new expression while retaining its authentic atmosphere. In addition, Zawilcowa Park was created on a reclaimed landfill site in the Kalinowszczyzna district, and Ludowy Park was revitalized near the railway station. The latter investment was completed at the end of 2020. The park now has eleven entrances, followed by a network of new alleys for walkers, joggers, and cyclists. An earthen obstacle course has been created for the latter. Children have two large squares at their disposal. In addition, themed paths have been created: acoustic, philosophical, and aquatic plant gardens. Among the new attractions is also a fountain built on the site of the former amphitheater (Photo 4). The fountain's jets are silvery metal balls and lie on a mosaic bottom with images of fish living in the nearby Bystrzyca River. In addition to a new two-story footbridge over the Bystrzyca River, connecting the park with the riverside boulevard, a canoe landing was created. Among other things, an outdoor gym and a fenced dog run were also created. In addition to park benches, 82 pieces of stone furniture were installed. It should be added that the park was created in the 1970s on a waterlogged site, making it necessary to build a new drainage network underneath. In the vicinity of the park, the Metropolitan Railway Station (Photo 5) was put into use at the beginning of 2024, in the same year, won an award in the competition for the best developed public space in Poland from the Society of Polish Town Planners in the category of public transport space. As a result, the city will be able to deal with the development of the Podzamcze area, which includes the bus station buildings and the neighboring unsightly market buildings (Photo 6).

⁴⁹ Wojciech BAL, Magdalena CZALCZYŃSKA-PODOLSKA, and Adam SZYMSKI, "The Tradition and Symbols of a Place in Shaping Public Spaces through the Example of the Transformation of Litewski Square in Lublin, Poland," *Sustainability* 14, no. 15 (2022): 9161, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14159161>.



Photo 4. Ludowy Park.



Photo 5. Public spaces in the vicinity of the Metropolitan Railway Station.



Photo 6. View of the Podzamcze and Old Town from Czwartek Hill.

3.3. PARTICIPATION

The Forum for the Culture of Space (FKP) is an open group of people for whom the state of Lublin's space, has been operating in Lublin since 2005.⁵⁰ The FKP is a forum for exchanging views and taking initiatives for the culture of space and a partner for dialogue with officials. FKP was heavily involved in the city's activities for the European Capital of Culture 2016. These included the creation of the city's green network concept and the implementation of the 'City for People' project, which resulted, among other things, in the creation of the Lublin Pedestrian Infrastructure Standards. Currently, the FKP is, among other things, the main organizer of the competition "Treasures of the Culture of Space in Lublin," the aim of which is to affirm, using concrete examples, the values associated with public space, the promotion of these values and the mutual education of users, caretakers, and creators of public space about these values. Most important, however, is the animation of social dialogue about the culture of space. The objects of the competition, the 'Treasures of Spatial Culture' of the title, are any phenomena that someone identifies and distinguishes as examples of a common good unique in some respect related to public space. These can be places, areas, views, routes, objects, functions, spatial relationships, activities, etc. The submitted Treasure should be publicly accessible within 2 km of the city limits. The discoverer of a Treasure (i.e., the author of the application) can be anyone, regardless of age, nationality, place of residence, etc., as well as any organization, institution, or informal group that applies. The basis for submitting a Treasure is filling in the application form with a description of the submitted Treasure and a justification of the application, i.e., a recommendation including a description of the advantages and value of the Treasure. The winning Treasures are selected by a public vote and by experts (jury). So far, the winning entries have included the paths on Górki Czechowskie, the view from Bronowice to the Old Town (Photo 7), and the "Let's clean up Lublin!" campaign, emphasizing the value of aesthetic public spaces. The current Treasures edition focuses on the 2017–2023 Green Civic Budget projects.

⁵⁰ "Forum Kultury Przestrzeni," accessed May 20, 2025, <https://teatrnn.pl/kalendarium/wydarzenia/forum-kultury-przestrzeni-geneza-i-powstanie/>.



Photo 7. View of the Bystrzyca Valley and the Old Town from the Bronowice district.

The Civic Budget (BO) has operated in Lublin since 2014 (BO 2015). Based on the conclusions of the first editions of BO, Lublin was the first city in Poland to be introduced in 2016. Green Civic Budget (ZBO), in which the criteria for project selection include aesthetic qualities. The ideas of the Green Civic Budget (ZBO) concern many aspects of the urban system, including street plantings, squares, flower meadows, flowerbeds, parklets ('pocket' street gardens), urban furniture (flower pots), urban courtyards, pocket parks and the protection of existing greenery (Photo 8, Photo 9).⁵¹ One of the ZBO 2018 projects was the 'Aesthetics Point' implemented by the Landscapes Foundation and of an educational nature. The project aimed to develop and conduct a training program for the residents of Lublin on the aesthetics and quality of green spaces, change social awareness, and build an attitude of responsibility for the landscape. An additional aim was to create a place for permanent consultation for residents where it would be possible to obtain advice on changing the surrounding space. As part of the project, open meetings were held in housing estates, discussion panels, and workshops for residents on current problems and possibilities for the aestheticization of space, as well as joint walks in areas indicated by residents, the aim of which was to conduct site visits and suggest possible solutions for the space in question. The Foundation also intends to coordinate "action" activities concerning public space, where the lack of a comprehensive view and incoherent concepts and implementations lead to its degradation. This is all the more important as the city's public space is littered with numerous advertising banners, some of which are a kind of "aesthetic manifesto" (Photo 10).

⁵¹ "Zielony Budżet Obywatelski Lublina," accessed May 20, 2025, <https://teatrnn.pl/skarby/mapka-i-spis-projektow-zielonego-budzetu-2017-2023-w-lublinie/>.



Photo 8. Decorative flower pots in Kapucyńska Street.



Photo 9. One of the green corners.



Photo 10. Banner on Grodzka Street.

3.4. SOUND IN THE URBAN SPACE

Various sound-related activities in the city space are being developed in Lublin. In 2008, the “Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre” Centre hosted an open discussion on “The Sound Space of Lublin” with the participation of blind people, officials, scientists, and cultural animators. In 2010, as part of the activities of the Forum for Space Culture discussion group, the topic of “Development of the soundscape” was taken up. At that time, attention was drawn, among other things, to the lack of a strategy for shaping the sound quality of the city and the need to isolate public spaces from noise. The need to create a ‘sound showcase’ for the city was also emphasized, along with the designation of quiet areas such as river valleys, parks, and green areas. Furthermore, attention was given to the monitoring of the acoustic climate in public spaces, the development and implementation of a system for informing the public about the state of the acoustic climate and trends in its changes, as well as the building of a system for managing residents’ complaints. The need for educational activities was also recognized. The need to enliven public spaces with sound through sound installations and to reduce the nuisance associated with mass events was also recognized.

The ‘Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre Centre’ undertakes activities integrated into public space and related to the development of sound culture.⁵² In addition, numerous cultural events (including open-air music festivals) have been organized in Lublin, introducing easily digestible culture into the public space and enlivening it with sound. Periodic multimedia shows with accompanying visual projections, often of the light-and-sound type, have also been introduced. A special place among cultural events is occupied by Culture Night.⁵³ Its participants can choose several hundred attractions during one night (in open spaces and venues). The Culture Night program comprises projects submitted in an open call and special projects produced by the Culture Workshop in Lublin. Their premiere and uniqueness unite them. In all event editions, the urban space becomes unique through luminous art installations⁵⁴ and the music and bustle of crowds resounding almost everywhere. Among other events, attention should be drawn to the Open City Festival of Art in Public Space. In the festival’s first edition (2009), the public space was enlivened by, among other things, an installation entitled ‘Pythagorean Concert.’ Sixty-four small aluminum bells placed between

⁵² Marcin SKRZYPEK, “Kultura dźwięku w Ośrodku ‘Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN,’” *Prace Komisji Krajobrazu Kulturowego PTG* 11 (2008): 320–326.

⁵³ Joanna WAWIÓRKA-KAMIENIECKA, and Aleksandra KOŁTUN, ed., *Spisane po Nocach Kultury: 13 tekstów o formie wydarzenia, publiczności i przestrzeni* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Episteme, 2021).

⁵⁴ Jarosław KOZIARA, “Byty chwilowe,” *Architektura&Biznes* 10 (2024): 132–139.

trees, tuned according to the Pythagorean chord, were moved by the wind and produced sounds pleasing to the ears.

Meanwhile, as part of the fourth edition of the 'Kody' Festival of Musical Tradition and Avant-Garde in 2012, 15 bells from Catholic churches and Orthodox churches were rung in the city's public spaces. In this way, 20 musicians co-created music for the bells of Lublin 'Campanoria XV' by Spanish composer Manuel M. Hervas Lino. In addition, every year, on 15 August in Lublin, it is possible to hear the bugles of several dozen cities as part of the National Review of Municipal Bugles, held since 1994. Among the signals presented, the bugle call of Lublin dominates, played since 1686 (with interruptions in the years 1939–1994) every day at noon, currently from the balcony of the Town Hall. Unfortunately, no quiet area has been designated in the city as an instrument for implementing Directive 2002/49/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 25 June 2002.⁵⁵ However, the city has the potential resulting from, among other things, the presence of forest areas, public green areas, and surface water areas with recreational functions, which allows for the designation of such areas.⁵⁶ New opportunities for creating aesthetics in urban space in Lublin and in the sound sphere are created by the residence of the European Capital of Culture 2029, the program of which is created together with the inhabitants.

4. DISCUSSION

The surveys showed that Lublin is generally changing in the right direction. Part of these changes is the aestheticization of public spaces. This is in line with the opinion of residents. In light of the 2023 quality of life survey covering cities with district rights from Eastern Poland, respondents from Lublin most often indicated that it is a friendly city (69%).⁵⁷ In addition, most respondents considered Lublin to be, among other things, green (59%) and clean (51%). Parks/green spaces were indicated as the greatest need by respondents from Lublin in the first place. Most respondents from Lublin considered, among other things,

⁵⁵ "Dyrektywa 2002/49/WE Parlamentu Europejskiego i Rady w sprawie oceny i zarządzania poziomem hałasu w środowisku," accessed May 20, 2025, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32002L0049>.

⁵⁶ Patrycja ADAMCZYK, Martyna ANDRZEJEWSKA, and Sebastian BERNAT, "Spatial Analyses in the Planning of Quiet Areas: A Case Study of Radom and Lublin (Poland)," *Sustainability* 16, no. 14 (2024): 6072, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16146072>.

⁵⁷ Radosław GRABOWSKI *et al.*, ed., *Obserwatorium miast Polski Wschodniej: jakość życia w Białej Podlaskiej, Białymstoku, Krośnie, Lublinie, Rzeszowie i Suwałkach z perspektywy mieszkańców i użytkowników* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2024).

the aesthetics of the city and the quality of public spaces (58%) as encouraging to live in the city. This is also common in other provincial cities in Eastern Poland (Białystok, Rzeszów). The cleanliness and aesthetics of the city are also important for the inhabitants of small and medium-sized cities.⁵⁸ It has also been noted that surveyed residents rate the cleanliness of streets well (71%, including 15% very well).⁵⁹ However, when it came to the care of the city's cleanliness, a substantial improvement was noted by 19.5% of respondents, while a slight improvement was noted by 36.7%. Among the top development priorities indicated by respondents are the care of the city's cleanliness and the development and maintenance of green and recreational areas.

According to the report, 'In dialogue with the environment. Public perception of public space and architecture in Poland,' for 86% of respondents, public space is important when choosing where to live.⁶⁰ The most important are the safety of the surroundings, clean streets, plenty of greenery, and free space. For the majority, local authorities have the most important influence on the appearance of cities. 70% of respondents believe that having local authorities set rules on the presence of advertising in public spaces would improve the appearance of Polish cities. The exact number say that local authorities should set rules for the design of public spaces in historical centers, and 71% of respondents believe these spaces should be designed with their residents.

According to the Report 'Survey on Landscaping and Aesthetics of Public Spaces in Municipalities,' for 65.8% of the municipal governments surveyed, the aesthetics of public spaces are important for the development of the unit.⁶¹ It has been included in the strategic and planning documents of the municipalities (resolutions). More often, such attitudes are characteristic of urban municipalities and cities with county rights. Issues related to the aesthetics of public spaces are most often addressed in studies of the municipality's conditions and directions of spatial development (85.9%) and local spatial development plans (78.6%). At the same time, only a part of the public spaces designated in the study (other than roads) remain covered by local spatial development plans (this applies to between 30% and 48% of municipalities), which indicates insufficient awareness

⁵⁸ Izabela RUDZKA, *Obszary zdegradowane jako bariera rozwoju miast: znaczenie przestrzeni publicznej w modelu rewitalizacji strategicznej* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza SGH, 2022).

⁵⁹ SAGAN, and MALESZYK, Lublin 2030.

⁶⁰ "W dialogu z otoczeniem? Społeczne postrzeganie przestrzeni publicznej i architektury w Polsce," Narodowe Centrum Kultury, accessed May 20, 2025. <https://niaiu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/spoleczne-postrzeganie-architektury-raport.pdf>.

⁶¹ "Badanie na temat kształtowania krajobrazu i estetyki przestrzeni publicznych w gminach," Narodowe Centrum Kultury, accessed May 20, 2025, <https://nck.pl/badania/raporty/badanie-na-temat-ksztaltowania-krajobrazu-i-estetyki-przestrzeni-publicznych-w-gminach>.

and ability to use local plans. Lack of legal regulations (especially about view protection), difficulties in enforcing the law (e.g., removal of disfiguring advertisements), and the inadequacy of existing regulations about specific issues were identified as the main barriers to protecting the aesthetics of public spaces and landscapes. The willingness to treat the aesthetics of public spaces as important elements of development and to take them into account in planning and strategic documents increases, among other things, with the increase in population and the degree of urbanization of the municipality. In addition, it was emphasized that the issues of spatial aesthetics, greenery, and architecture are of most interest to local communities. It is on these topics that the most numerous civic demands are made. Residents of medium-sized municipalities are also more likely to attach importance to the protection of views.

One of Lublin's weaknesses is the lack of an advertising resolution or a cultural park. It is good that more local plans are being drawn up, including for public spaces. As a result, the protection of public spaces from degradation is growing. The Green Citizens' Budget is also being implemented. This positively impacts the quality of the landscape (including aesthetic qualities). However, some valuable areas of nature and landscape (the Czechowskie Hills) are not protected from investor pressure. Many planned and implemented revitalization investments (Litewski Square, Ludowy Park) and the inhabitants' activity in the space's culture should be appreciated. However, an effective dialogue between inhabitants, local authorities, and investors is needed for a high-quality urban space.

S. Gzell emphasizes that although we have come to terms with the loss of the poor aesthetics of socialist cities, we do not yet know how to build new aesthetics.⁶² The quality of urban spaces depends on the ability to create an image of the city (spatial order), i.e., urban composition. In doing so, he emphasizes that urban design is directly related to architectural design. The plan, on the other hand, is a tool for creating space. S. Gzell also notes that spatial planning is in crisis in Poland. Planning procedures, which favor the execution of plans for very small areas, have been identified as its cause.

Until recently, studies of spatial development conditions and directions were obligatory and local spatial development plans optional. Both should take into account public spaces. With the Act's entry into force of 7 July 2023 amending the Act on planning and spatial development, the obligation to carry out studies was abolished.⁶³ General plans were introduced in their place, which should be carried out within two years. General plans are a new tool for municipalities

⁶² Sławomir GZELL, *Urbanistyka XXI wieku* (Warszawa: PWN, 2024).

⁶³ "Ustawa z dnia 27 marca 2003 r. o planowaniu i zagospodarowaniu przestrzennym" (Dz.U. 2003 nr 80 poz. 717).

to make spatial planning faster and more sustainable. In addition, each municipality will be obliged to create a development strategy, which, from 1 January 2026, will be of key importance in conducting spatial policy. However, the master plan does not have the tools to directly influence the aesthetics of the city. It can, however, ensure the legibility of the urban landscape.⁶⁴ This is because it treats the city as a multidimensional whole. The general plan should also protect so-called “magic places,” i.e., places of particular value for different groups of inhabitants, and is obliged to consider quiet areas designated by resolution. It should be noted that the amendment to the Act on Planning and Spatial Development repealed the definition of public space. However, the provision on the necessity to take into account the requirements arising from the needs of their formation remained. It should be added that urban policy pays increasing attention to the need to increase green areas in cities and urbanized areas. These areas are important for public spaces, impact the health of residents, and play a role in mitigating the negative effects of climate change. Through this, it is hoped that urban landscapes’ visual and aural aesthetics will be improved. The important role of a sustainable outdoor lighting policy should also be emphasized. The nighttime illuminations of objects used must be created for a specific place, considering its topography, climate, urban composition, inhabitants, characteristic smells, and sounds, which form the context of visual perception.⁶⁵

By an amendment to the Act on Departments of Government Administration by the Act of 26 January 2018, the Minister of Culture and National Heritage is responsible for shaping the aesthetics of public space in terms of architecture, urban planning, and spatial planning. Within the framework of the ‘Aesthetics of Public Space’ ministerial program, the ‘Guidelines for the Shaping of Public Space around Objects Used by the Units of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage,’⁶⁶ among others, have been developed. In addition, numerous training courses/workshops and two conferences were organized: “Protection and Shaping of public spaces” (2019) and “Space for Greenery” (2024). From the discussion and the survey conducted at the first one, it emerged that the landscape resolution should remain in the legal order in an improved form. Barriers to developing landscape resolutions included the following: lack of nationwide prohibitions,

⁶⁴ Anna SZMYTT, et al., ed., *Plan ogólny miasta, gminy: poradnik, Stan prawny na 1 marca 2024 r.* (Warszawa: Wolters Kluwer, 2024).

⁶⁵ Magdalena ZIENOWICZ, Ewa PODHAJSKA, and Justyna RUBASZEK, “Oddziaływanie światła i cienia na topografię i fizjonomię krajobrazu,” *Architektura Krajobrazu* 2 (2016): 4–19.

⁶⁶ “Wytoczne kształtowania przestrzeni publicznej wokół obiektów użytkowanych przez jednostki MKiDN,” Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego, accessed May 20, 2025, <https://www.gov.pl/web/kultura/estetyka-przestrzeni-publicznej>.

low awareness of landscape value among communities and officials, lack of respect for public spaces, and the resolution's optionality. Over half of the survey participants pointed out that the current landscape protection and landscaping regulations are insufficient and should be expanded in scope and restrictiveness. The introduction of standards for shaping and protecting the landscape and aesthetics of public space should be mandatory at the municipal level. However, the most important thing is to increase public awareness and develop education about public space. In addition, the need to discuss the protection of view links, panoramas, and greenery in public spaces was emphasized. The answer to the last problem is found in the 'Space for Greenery' project, in which a conference was organized to debate, among other things, the importance of blue-green infrastructure for public spaces. In addition, a publication 'Space for Greenery. The key to better public investment' (2024), in the form of a handbook addressed, among others, to local authorities, public land managers, and designers.⁶⁷

In the program "Aesthetics of Public Space," a landscape resolution, a cultural park, a local revitalization plan, and a landscape audit are indicated as tools for shaping the quality of space, in addition to the study of the conditions and directions of the municipality's spatial management and the local spatial development plan.⁶⁸ Landscape resolutions are in force in 75 municipalities, including six voivodeship cities: Łódź, Kraków, Opole, Gdańsk, Kielce, and Poznań (as of 30 June 2024); about 40 cultural parks have been established, landscape audits are being adopted for individual voivodeships (the first one was adopted for the Wielkopolskie Voivodeship in March 2023). Local revitalization plans have received the least attention so far, as only two such documents have been adopted (Kalisz, Świnoujście). According to the Act on Planning and Spatial Development, it is a unique form of local spatial development plan that can be adopted for the revitalization area. The local revitalization plan is an underestimated planning tool in the context of the aestheticization of public spaces.⁶⁹ This is because it allows determining, among others, detailed

⁶⁷ "Przestrzeń dla zieleni. Klucz do lepszych inwestycji publicznych," Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego, accessed May 20, 2025, <https://www.gov.pl/web/kultura/publikacja-przestrzen-dla-zieleni-klucz-do-lepszych-inwestycji-publicznych>.

⁶⁸ "Estetyka przestrzeni publicznej," Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego, accessed May 20, 2025, <https://www.gov.pl/web/kultura/narzedzia-kszaltowania-jakosci-przestrzeni>.

⁶⁹ Adrianna CIEŚLAK-ARKUSZEWSKA, and Rafał PURZYŃSKI, "Miejscowy plan rewitalizacji jako narzędzie kształtowania polityki przestrzennej historycznego centrum małego miasta." *Space – Society – Economy* 32 (2021): 153–181, <https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-3180.32.07>; Cezary Piotr MALISZEWSKI, "Miejscowy plan rewitalizacji – niedoceniane narzędzie planistyczne: Studium planu 'Jabłkowskiego-Podgórze' w Kaliszu," *Studia Miejskie* 44 (29 December 2022): 31–56, <https://doi.org/10.25167/sm.4829>.

arrangements concerning the development and equipment of areas of public spaces, including the arrangement and location of greenery and the concept of traffic organization on public roads. It also involves the principles of spatial composition of new developments, the harmonization of the planned development with the existing one, or arrangements concerning the characteristic features of building elevations.

In addition to the activities of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, attention should be paid to the public campaign “Landscape of my city,” conducted since 2016 by the National Heritage Institute, which popularises knowledge about the protection of cultural landscapes (including cultural parks) and the value of public space aesthetics.⁷⁰ The NIK Report ‘Shaping the Landscape and Public Space in Cities’ states that in order to improve the appearance of cities, their authorities should act simultaneously in several directions. These include creating and ensuring the functioning of cultural parks and establishing local spatial development plans. They should also properly manage road lanes, ensure conservation supervision of permits for placing advertisements on monuments entered in the register, and introduce a landscape resolution.⁷¹ Cultural parks are suitable for tidying up public spaces, provided that their protection plans are implemented consistently.

Revitalization plays an important role in the aestheticization of public spaces. As noted by D. Dymek and J. Jóźwik, one of the biggest problems of the contemporary shaping of city squares in the Lubelskie Voivodeship is the tendency to unification and a kind of ‘concrete’ of these spaces.⁷² Equally worrying is that, in favor of the mindless repetition of the established pattern of development of public squares, the reference to local history, culture, and tradition is almost completely abandoned. Therefore, revitalization fulfills the hopes placed in it, especially when its implementation concerns the public space of a given city because this space is the pole of the city’s growth, the axis of the development processes taking place, and above all, the generator of urbanity.⁷³

As part of the activities of the Urban Policy Observatory, two reports were issued relating to the shaping of public spaces and responding to the problem

⁷⁰ “Krajobraz mojego miasta,” Narodowy Instytut Dziedzictwa, accessed May 20, 2025, <https://krajobrazmojegomiasta.pl/>.

⁷¹ “Kształtowanie krajobrazu i przestrzeni publicznej w miastach” (Kraków: Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, 2017), <https://www.nik.gov.pl/plik/id,15652,vp,18136.pdf>.

⁷² Dorota DYMEK, and Jolanta JÓŻWIK, “Shaping Town Squares on the Example of the Towns of Lubelskie Voivodeship,” *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, sectio B – Geographia, Geologia, Mineralogia et Petrographia* 76 (2021): 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.17951/b.2021.76.0.1-28>.

⁷³ RUDZKA, *Obszary zdegradowane*.

of concretosis.⁷⁴ The first of these, entitled “Markets, squares and pedestrian areas – the quality of investment in public space after 2015,” shows, among other things, that public space in the revitalization programs of the cities surveyed is defined primarily by aesthetics, greenery and safety and accessibility.⁷⁵ Most surveyed cities (96%) did not have standards or guidelines for shaping public spaces. The standards for shaping public spaces in the surveyed cities mainly recommend moving car traffic out of the centers and calming it down. The guidelines or standards for creating public spaces in the surveyed cities generally consider the role of greenery. It was emphasized that creating high-quality public spaces requires the participation of all stakeholders throughout the design and implementation process. However, the most important thing in designing investments in public space is to identify the stakeholders’ needs and be aware of the function of the space in the broader context. There should also be a review of best practices in the design of the city’s central public spaces. In the second report entitled “Greenery in the centers of Polish Cities. State, functions, and challenges” highlighted the ‘green turn’ regarding conservationists’ approach to greenery.⁷⁶ This is evidenced by the conservation standards for the revitalization of historic markets prepared in 2021 and taking into account the important role of greenery.⁷⁷ The report shows that, except in the most significant cities (mainly provincial capitals), a small range of tools are used to support the development of blue-green infrastructure. The cheapest measures, such as reducing invasive maintenance of trees, shrubs, and lawns or establishing flower meadows, are the most common.

As noted by M. Antolak and P. Pawelec, one of the main problems related to beautification activities is the low aesthetic demands of society.⁷⁸ Therefore, aesthetic education activities are necessary, mainly aimed at young people willing to change. M. Porębska believes similarly. In response to the question of what can be done to make those around us beautiful, she attaches importance to the aesthetic awareness of space users and proper legislation and urban composition.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Jan MENCWEL, *Betonoza: jak się niszczy polskie miasta* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2020).

⁷⁵ Aleksandra MRÓZ, Paweł PISTELOK, and Piotr SALATA-KOCHANOWSKI, *Rynki, place i deptaki – jakość inwestycji w przestrzeni publicznej po 2015 roku* (Kraków: Instytut Rozwoju Miast i Regionów, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.51733/opm.2023.10>.

⁷⁶ Agata WARCHAŁSKA-TROLL, et al., *Zieleń w centrach polskich miast. Stan, funkcje i wyzwania* (Warszawa – Kraków: Instytut Rozwoju Miast i Regionów, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.51733/opm.2023.11>.

⁷⁷ “Standardy konserwatorskie dotyczące rewitalizacji zabytkowych rynków,” accessed May 20, 2025, <https://nid.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Rewitalizacja-zabytkowych-rynkow.pdf>.

⁷⁸ ANTOLAK, and PAWELEC, “Dylematy estetyki i estetyzacji.”

⁷⁹ PORĘBSKA, „O potrzebie piękna.”

W. Kosiński, quoted at the beginning of the article, counts education, good practice, and law among the methods of shaping beauty in the city.⁸⁰ The most important thing in shaping city space is a holistic vision of its development and shared responsibility for urban beauty. High-quality public space, like a harmoniously shaped landscape, manifests a high culture of management considering the principles of urban composition.⁸¹

In the early years of the 21st century, the term “culture of space” began to function in the circles of architects, urban planners, and cultural animators in Lublin and Warsaw. It is intended to define the part of culture that relates to space and influences its shape and vice versa. According to the aforementioned Spatial Culture Forum,⁸² spatial culture is

a hierarchy of values according to which man transforms the space around him or which he perceives in the natural environment. The culture of space strives for the development of higher needs in man and their harmonious coexistence. The culture of space refers to the signs that man imprints in space and the relationships he establishes through its various elements – relationships such as the sacred, admiration for beauty, respect for heritage, or concern for others. The culture of space improves the mood and unites the inhabitants⁸³ (p. 292).

At the heart of the culture of space are values to which three spheres are subordinated: reflection, spatial activities, and spatial creations and realizations. One of the central values is dialogue. The culture of space is based on the assumption that citizens can impact their surroundings through everyday choices and participation in local government decision-making. In practice, however, the culture of space is an appeal to the best in us and to better solutions aimed at increasing the quality of space and improving its functioning. It seeks to make space more friendly, increase the quantity and quality of greenery, reduce the dominance of car traffic in favor of sustainable forms of transport, and enhance residents’ participation in decisions about space. It should be emphasized that more than 60 years ago, J. Jacobs pointed out the key role of the local community and

⁸⁰ KOSIŃSKI, *Miasto i piękno miasta*.

⁸¹ Janusz BOGDANOWSKI, *Kompozycja i planowanie w architekturze krajobrazu* (Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków – Gdańsk: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich; Wydawnictwo PAN, 1976).

⁸² Within the activities of the Culture of Space Forum, soundscapes (<https://teatrnn.pl/kalendarium/wydarzenia/dzwiek-w-krajobrazie-stan-i-perspektywy-badan/>) or smellscapes were also a topic of discussion (<https://ulublin.eu/inne/13-rozmowy-o-miescie-stephanie-weismann-pachnie-lublin/>).

⁸³ Jan KAMIŃSKI, “Kultura przestrzeni,” in *Animacja kultury. NieAntologia* (Lublin: Centrum Kultury, 2023), 292.

its subjectivity in shaping urban space. She wrote, among other things, that c.⁸⁴ Despite its enormous potential for, among other things, improving the quality of public spaces, the culture of space has yet to be fully explored.

The research carried out was a case study of Lublin. However, as emphasized at the beginning of the article, although the specificity of each city is unique, there are many similar elements, processes, and problems for other cities in Poland. Using Lublin's previous experience in the aesthetics of public space, it is possible to carry out more effective actions that will result in improving the quality of public space in other cities as well, to the satisfaction of its users. Nevertheless, it is also advisable to conduct similar studies for other cities.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The research aimed to identify and evaluate the aestheticization activities of contemporary urban space. The city of Lublin was selected as the research case. As part of the research, the provisions of planning and strategic documents regarding public space and its aestheticization were identified. Subsequently, revitalized public spaces were assessed, and social initiatives in urban space aesthetics were characterized. The aestheticization of urban space in Lublin is an important element of urban planning processes, influencing both the improvement of the quality of life of the inhabitants and the creation of the city's image as an attractive public space. The research confirms that the revitalization of key areas, such as Lithuanian Square and Ludowy Park, has significantly contributed to raising urban space's aesthetic, functional, and social values. These actions have become examples of good practices that can inspire other cities in Poland.

The analysis of planning and strategic documents indicates progress in shaping public spaces but, at the same time, highlights the need to strengthen legal regulations, such as an advertising resolution or the creation of a cultural park, which could further protect the city's cultural landscape. Without such solutions, public space is still vulnerable to investment pressures and undesirable structural changes, including excessive fragmentation and loss of visual coherence. Nevertheless, revitalization measures improve the quality of public spaces and the urban landscape. The sense of responsibility for public space and the improvement of its quality is significantly influenced by the level of aesthetic sensitivity of the public. Aesthetic education is therefore important, the aim of which is first and foremost to shape aesthetic sensitivity, i.e., the ability to perceive and experience all beauty: nature, landscape, products of human labor, and creative

⁸⁴ Jane JACOBS, *The death and life of great American cities* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

activity. As part of education, aesthetic education should lead to an increased responsibility for the landscape and public space. Greater aesthetic sensitivity should translate into more significant involvement of local communities in the shaping of space, which should lead to the harmonious landscape of tomorrow and, thus, to an improved quality of life for residents. A significant role in aesthetization of public space is played by the participation of residents, especially within the framework of the Green Civic Budget. Public involvement fosters a sense of responsibility for the shared space and enables projects that respond to the real needs of local communities. The Green Civic Budget and other community initiatives make it possible to combine aesthetics with functionality and sustainability, which, in the long term, improves the quality of life in the city. In conclusion, the activities for aestheticizing urban space in Lublin reveal the importance of an integrated approach that combines revitalization, strategic planning, public participation, and cultural landscape protection. The introduction of additional regulations and comprehensive solutions for the protection of public spaces would further improve the quality of urban space and strengthen its aesthetic, social, and environmental functions.

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AESTHETICIZATION OF CONTEMPORARY URBAN PUBLIC SPACE. LUBLIN CASE STUDY

S u m m a r y

This study aims to identify activities related to the aestheticization of contemporary urban space, such as Lublin, a city with a rich history and regional significance located in a peripheral area not far from the eastern border of the European Union. The research analyzed planning and strategic documents as well as revitalization investments. In addition, residents' participatory initiatives were examined, including activities within the Green Citizens' Budget framework. Finally, reference was made, among other things, to the reform of the spatial planning system in Poland. The importance of the aesthetic education of the public and the development of a space culture was emphasized. The research was mainly qualitative. The results indicate that there has been significant progress in the revitalization of public spaces, which has translated into improvements in the aesthetics and functionality of the city. However, the lack of an advertising resolution, and investment pressure on valuable landscape areas remain problematic. The involvement of residents in participatory processes, which strengthened co-responsibility for the shaping of urban space, was also appreciated. The aestheticization of public spaces in Lublin has contributed to improving residents' quality of life and the city's image while emphasizing the need for effective dialogue between authorities, residents, and investors.

Keywords: aesthetic values; public space; landscape perception; soundscape; local planning; revitalization; participation; planning documentation; Lublin

ESTETYZACJA WSPÓŁCZESNEJ MIEJSKIEJ PRZESTRZENI PUBLICZNEJ.
PRZYPADEK LUBLINA

Streszczenie

Celem pracy jest identyfikacja działań związanych z estetyzacją współczesnej przestrzeni miejskiej na przykładzie Lublina, miasta o bogatej historii i znaczeniu regionalnym, położonego w obszarze peryferyjnym, niedaleko wschodniej granicy Unii Europejskiej. W ramach badań dokonano analizy dokumentów planistyczno-strategicznych oraz inwestycji rewitalizacyjnych. Ponadto zbadano inicjatywy partycypacyjne mieszkańców, w tym działania w ramach Zielonego Budżetu Obywatelskiego. Na koniec odniesiono się m.in. do reformy systemu planowania przestrzennego w Polsce. Podkreślono wagę edukacji estetycznej społeczeństwa oraz rozwoju kultury przestrzeni. Badania miały głównie charakter jakościowy. Wyniki wskazują na znaczące postępy w rewitalizacji przestrzeni publicznych, co przełożyło się na poprawę estetyki i funkcjonalności miasta, chociaż problemem pozostaje brak uchwały reklamowej oraz presja inwestycyjna na cenne obszary krajobrazowe. Doceniono także zaangażowanie mieszkańców w procesy partycypacyjne, które wzmocniły współodpowiedzialność za kształtowanie przestrzeni miejskiej. Działania na rzecz estetyzacji przestrzeni publicznych w Lublinie przyczyniły się do poprawy jakości życia mieszkańców i wizerunku miasta, jednocześnie podkreślając potrzebę efektywnego dialogu między władzami, mieszkańcami i inwestorami.

Słowa kluczowe: wartości estetyczne; przestrzeń publiczna; percepcja krajobrazu; krajobraz dźwiękowy; planowanie miejscowe; rewitalizacja; partycypacja; dokumentacja planistyczna; Lublin