

## CAN AN ARCHITECT'S DREAMS BECOME REALITY? A CASE STUDY OF PERFUMIARNIA IN POZNAŃ

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### ABSTRACT

The paper presents a case study of the Perfumiarnia residential development in Poznań, demonstrating how an architectural vision was translated into spatial and technological solutions within the historical and natural context of the Łazarz district and Wilson Park. The methods include historical and urban context analysis, design analysis, and interpretation of changes during implementation. The findings indicate that architectural quality arises from a deep reading of the site, integration with greenery, and careful material and detail decisions, while maintaining urban coherence despite market pressures. In response to COVID-19 and rising costs, design adjustments were introduced without abandoning the core concept, emphasising flexibility, negotiation, and stakeholder cooperation. Perfumiarnia in Poznań is proof that architectural “dreams” can be realised when grounded in context analysis, pragmatism, and sensitivity to social and economic conditions.

**Keywords:** residential architecture, case study, context, Wilson Park, flexibility, urban regeneration

### INTRODUCTION

Architecture operates at the boundary between imagination and real-world constraints. Every undertaking requires translating a concept into solutions that can be built, while maintaining a dialogue with urban, social and natural contexts. This paper presents the design and implementation process of Perfumiarnia (Fig. 1) in Poznań – located on the former perfume factory site, directly adjacent to Wilson Park – and addresses how an initial vision can be confronted with economic and technical realities, then preserved in its key assumptions through delivery.



**Fig. 1.** Architectural model

Source: JEMS Architekci.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS (AIM AND HYPOTHESIS)

A case study approach was adopted (Yin, 2015), comprising:

- Analysis of the historical context (the evolution of the Łazarz district).
- Urban analysis (relationships with Wilson Park and the surrounding urban fabric).
- Design analysis (creative process and adopted spatial/material solutions).
- Interpretation of changes during implementation (market conditions, COVID-19 pandemic, costs).

The author's aim in the paper was to examine how the architect's vision can be realised in practice and what factors facilitate or hinder this process.

To achieve the intended goal, the author formulated the following research hypothesis: The vision can be realised if it is supported by an in-depth contextual analysis – including a reading and reinterpretation of the *genius loci* – and paired with openness to design compromises enabling adaptation to changing delivery conditions.

### Historical and urban analysis

#### *Historical context*

Łazarz is one of Poznań's districts of particular cultural and urban significance. Its development dates to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when modern urban planning principles were strongly emphasised. Major influence is attributed to Joseph Stübben, whose concepts highlighted public greenery, view axes and representative squares (Kodym-Kozaczko, 2007). Within this paradigm, Wilson Park was also developed, and it remains a key recreational space to this day. The park's origins go back to 1834; in 1902, the area was opened to the public as the city's first botanical garden, with the official opening in 1903. Hermann Kube shaped a layout combining a French-style formal garden and an English picturesque landscape, with a palm house, a bandstand and a system of ponds and islands (Poznańskie Klimaty, 2020; Palmiarnia Poznańska, 2021; Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2.** Wilson Park, southern landscape section

Source: Jan Damięcki.

#### *Significance of the location*

The former perfume factory site – immediately adjacent to Wilson Park – required careful reconciliation of historical and natural values with the needs of contemporary housing. The new intervention had to embed itself in the site's narrative: sustaining memory while adding a new quality.

### *Urban determinants*

Development in this part of Łazarz district was linked to plans for structuring perimeter blocks (e.g. along Matejki street). The prevailing typology is compact, street-front (pavilion-free) perimeter blocks opening their interiors to green courtyards (Fig. 3). Śniadeckich street introduced, for its time, innovative front courts and gardens that improved daylighting and ventilation (Fig. 4). The district's character is further shaped by vertical façade compositions, bays, oriels, and deep window reveals (Kodym-Kozaczko, 2007).



**Fig. 3.** Site plan

Source: JEMS Architekci.



**Fig. 4.** Tenement house on Śniadeckich street

Source: Jan Damiński.

### Historical and urban analysis summary

As a result of the urban analysis, key design constraints were identified:

- Immediate proximity to Wilson Park – necessitating openness to greenery and preservation of view corridors.
- Diverse age and quality of the surrounding urban fabric – calling for a formally restrained but high-quality response in detail.
- Identity of the site – symbolically recalling the factory's history in the new intervention.

In conclusion, the historical-urban background served as the starting point for a contemporary residential ensemble deeply rooted in the site's material and immaterial context.

## RESULTS – DESIGN SOLUTIONS

### Implications of location and context

The adjacency of Wilson Park and the high-quality inner-city urban fabric determined: a six-volume composition, a two-zone layout (entrance zone to the east / garden zone to the west), maximum opening of dwellings to greenery, and a pedestrian-first sequence of passages.

### Form and massing

The ensemble was conceived as a modern, restrained composition articulated by vertical rhythms. Six visually distinct volumes were organised into three pairs (Fig. 5).



**Fig. 5.** Master plan

Source: JEMS Architekci.

Building height and scale harmonise with the surroundings – avoiding dominance over the park and historic tenements. “Urban canyons” in the entrance zone structure movement towards the garden; vertical façade setbacks enhance daylight and recall the tectonics of early 20th-century tenements.



### Relationship with greenery

A key leitmotif is immersing architecture in greenery (Fig. 6): large windows, terraces, and balconies open towards the park; climbers and a planting gradient create a seamless transition from formal to garden spaces. Greenery permeates lobbies, the fissures between volumes and the roofs (layered green-roof build-ups).

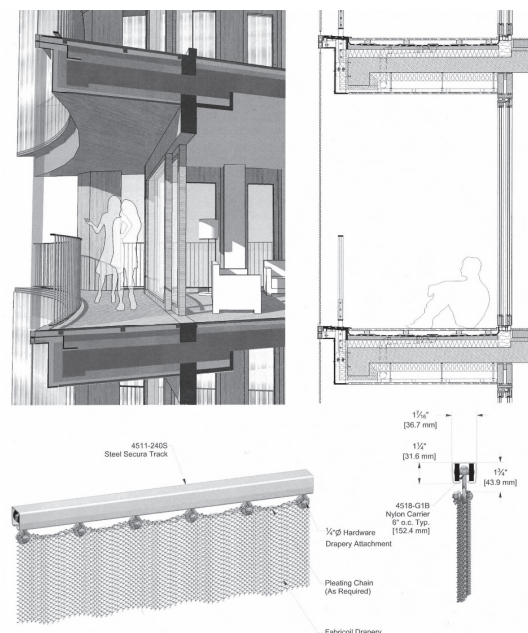


**Fig. 6.** Aerial 3D view (from the south-west)

Source: JEMS Architekci.

### Materials and details

Façades are finished with refined plasters, giving the ensemble a timeless character. Concave elevations are complemented by perforated stainless-steel fabric screens (Fig. 7), which run on steel brackets with concealed trolleys. The solution marries aesthetics and function, forming an “elastic boundary” for privacy and solar control – in the sense discussed in the paper by Alexander, Ishikawa and Silverstein (2008).



**Fig. 7.** Curved terrace details

Source: JEMS Architekci.

### Functionality and internal layout

The ground floor plan (Fig. 8) provides recessed entrances with bicycle/buggy rooms, service uses to the east, and private terraces to the west.



**Fig. 8.** Ground floor plan

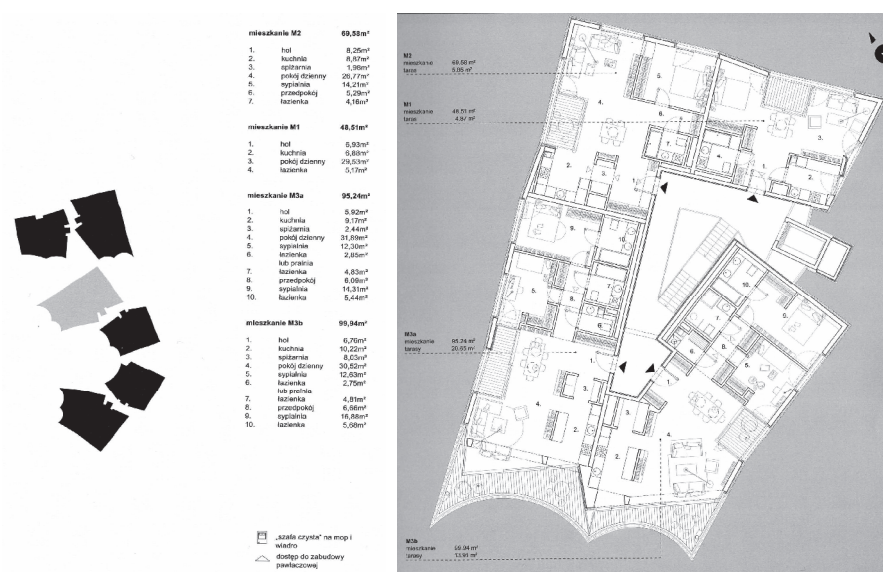
Source: JEMS Architekci.

The sections are served by central circulation cores (staircase and lift), enabling efficient dual-aspect daylighting (Figs 9–10).



**Fig. 9.** Typical floor plan

Source: JEMS Architekci.



**Fig. 10.** Typical floor plan – Segment C

Source: JEMS Architekci.

The site's natural fall (approx. 1 m) enriches the composition. In larger dwellings, two opposite terraces increase façade transparency: subtly curved balconies and loggias frame views of the park (Fig. 11).



**Fig. 11.** Interior view towards Wilson Park

Source: Jan Damięcki.





**Fig. 12.** Master plan

Source: JEMS Architekci.

### Implementation process and challenges

Supply-chain disruptions and cost increases during the COVID-19 period necessitated modifications: pairing segments and introducing single-storey connector pavilions, along with simplifying selected technologies (Figs 12–17). Core aesthetic, spatial and functional assumptions were retained; compositional coherence was maintained through a consistent order of volumes and details. The market context for these decisions is reflected in construction-cost and housing-market indicators (Główny Urząd Statystyczny [GUS], 2022; Narodowy Bank Polski [NBP], 2023).



**Fig. 13.** Ground floor plan

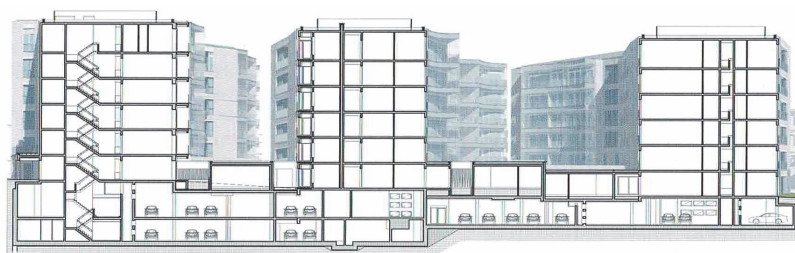
Source: JEMS Architekci.



**Fig. 14.** Typical floor plan

Source: JEMS Architekci.





**Fig. 15.** Section A–A

Source: JEMS Architekci.



**Fig. 16.** View from Wilson Park

Source: Maria Kot.



**Fig. 17.** Close-up view from Wilson Park

Source: Maria Kot.

### Design analysis summary

As a result of the analysis of the adopted spatial and material solutions, key characteristics of the design were determined:

- Modernity in dialogue with tradition and landscape.
- Multi-layered integration of greenery.
- Detail and materials as instruments of long-term quality.
- Process flexibility as a condition for maintaining the core idea in changing realities.

### DISCUSSION (WITH COMPARATIVE EXAMPLES)

Perfumiarnia reveals design as a continuous negotiation between vision and realities. The architect's mediating role is central: dialogue with the developer, authorities, community and the site's context – consistent with spaces that prioritise pedestrians and interaction (Gehl, 2014).

Appropriate criteria were selected to compare the spatial and technological solutions used in Perfumiarnia's design. The comparative analysis focused on the following factors:

- Degree of integration with greenery and the landscape.
- Dialogue between modern materials and tradition.
- Solutions that support users and the community.

Three planned-from-scratch facilities were selected for comparative analysis: the residential complex Nowy Strzeszyn and the apartment complex AURA, both located in Poznań (Poland), and Liuzhou Forest City – the so-called green city in Liuzhou (China).

Nowy Strzeszyn by Insomnia is a residential ensemble of detached and terraced houses (since 2019) that redefines the model of low-rise housing. Private gardens, pedestrian paths, and shared spaces shape “micro-communities”. It is a simple contemporary architecture that merges with greenery (Rumieź, 2021).

AURA by KWK Promes and Robert Konieczny is a minimalist apartment complex integrated with a riverside landscape. Terraces and large glazing maximise contact with nature, while green roofs, water retention, and energy-efficient solutions reinforce sustainability (Architektura Murator, 2024; KWK Promes, 2023).

Liuzhou Forest City, designed by Stefano Boeri Architetti, is a green city model featuring vegetated façades and roofs, as well as renewable energy sources, which demonstrates the scalability of architecture and nature integration (ArchDaily, 2017; Stefano Boeri Architetti, 2017).

As a result of the comparison, a few key points can be drawn:

- Integration with nature (Perfumiarnia – Wilson Park; AURA – riverside landscape; Nowy Strzeszyn – private and shared gardens; Liuzhou Forest City – soft green infrastructure).
- Aesthetics and functionality (Perfumiarnia and AURA – contemporary minimalism; Nowy Strzeszyn – coherence amid typological variety; Forest City – hybrids of built form and vegetation).
- Social dimension (openness and the absence of fences at Perfumiarnia, supporting pedestrian flows and everyday activity).

### Reflection on Perfumiarnia as a construction project

After in-depth contextual analysis, an essential conclusion about the quality of the implementation of the architectural vision into the Perfumiarnia project can be drawn:

- Context as a starting point. Perfumiarnia continues the story of the Łazarz district; integration with Wilson Park shows that the landscape can co-create quality of life.

- Architecture and nature relationship. The absence of fences and the openness of shared spaces encourage activity and interaction – consistent with the “cities for people” idea (Gehl, 2014).
- Elastic boundary. Movable stainless-steel fabric screens implement the “elastic boundary” pattern, allowing residents to modulate privacy and solar gain (Alexander et al., 2008).
- Process flexibility. Modifications prompted by COVID-19 and cost pressures did not reduce quality – on the contrary, coherence was reinforced through consistent compositional decisions (GUS, 2022; NBP, 2023).
- The architect as a mediator. Negotiation between creative vision and investment, legal and social realities – and the ability to translate ideas into buildable solutions – is decisive.
- Inspiration for future projects. The case confirms the possibility of uniting modernity with history and nature to create spaces of high aesthetic and functional value.

In conclusion, success is determined not by absolute fidelity to the first vision but by the ability to preserve its essence amid changing conditions.

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## **CZY MARZENIA ARCHITEKTA MOGĄ STAĆ SIĘ RZECZYWISTOŚCIĄ? STUDIUM PRZYPADKU PERFUMIARNI W POZNANIU**

### **STRESZCZENIE**

W artykule zaprezentowano studium przypadku budynku mieszkalnego Perfumiarnia w Poznaniu w celu ukazania, jak wizję architektoniczną przełożono na rozwiązania przestrzenne i technologiczne w kontekście dzielnicy Łazarz oraz sąsiedztwa parku Wilsona. Zastosowano analizę kontekstu historycznego i urbanistycznego, analizę projektową oraz interpretację zmian w toku realizacji. Wyniki umożliwiły zaobserwowanie, że jakość architektury wynika z pogłębionej analizy miejsca, integracji z zielenią i świadomych decyzji materiałowo-detalicznych przy zachowaniu spójności urbanistycznej mimo presji rynkowej. W obliczu pandemii COVID-19 i wzrostu kosztów wprowadzono modyfikacje bez rezygnacji z idei, co podkreśla znaczenie elastyczności, negocjacji i współpracy interesariuszy. Perfumiarnia w Poznaniu jest dowodem na to, że „marzenia” projektowe mogą stać się rzeczywistością, jeśli są wsparte analizą kontekstu, pragmatyzmem oraz wrażliwością na uwarunkowania społeczne i ekonomiczne.

**Słowa kluczowe:** architektura mieszkaniowa, studium przypadku, kontekst, park Wilsona, elastyczność, rewitalizacja