

## ISSUES RELATED TO THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN A SMALL HISTORIC TOWN, USING THE EXAMPLE OF SOKOŁÓW MAŁOPOLSKI

Joanna BARTKIEWICZ<sup>1,\*</sup>, Anna KRUKOWIECKA-BRZĘCZEK<sup>2</sup>, Patrycja BIAŁAS<sup>3</sup>,  
Agata MIKRUT-KUSY<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rzeszow University of Technology, Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Architecture, Chair of Architecture and Cultural Heritage, Powstańców Warszawy Avenue 12, 35-959 Rzeszów, Poland

<sup>2</sup> Cracow University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture, Warszawska Street 24, 31-155, Cracow, Poland

<sup>3</sup> Voivodeship Office for Monument Protection in Cracow, Kanonicza Street 24, 31-002 Cracow, Poland

### Abstract

*This article presents the results of research on the preservation of the urban and architectural heritage of a small town. The authors discuss this issue using the example of the town of Sokółów Małopolski, located in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. The town was founded in the modern era, has a rich history, and boasts many valuable examples of urban planning and architecture. These include, above all, the Renaissance urban layout based on the model of the ideal city, "la città ideale," as well as historic buildings such as the town hall, Roman Catholic churches (parish and branch), a synagogue, the former advance payment office building, and historic houses and tenement buildings. The protection of this historic heritage is one of the most important tasks of the local government; therefore, it is essential to continuously monitor the condition of these structures and to undertake prudent investment initiatives in the historic city center.*

**Keywords:** *Historic city; Sokółów Małopolski; Historic urban layout; Ideal city "la città ideale"; Architectural monuments.*

### Introduction

Sokołów Małopolski is currently a small town located in the northern part of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, north of the regional capital, Rzeszów.

It is a noteworthy town, primarily due to its historic urban layout, which was designed based on the model of the "ideal city" ("la città ideale") rooted in the Renaissance period, as well as its valuable architectural monuments.

The town was founded in 1569 as a private town by the Pilecki family [1]. Its historic center requires in-depth urban planning and conservation analysis, followed by restoration and revitalization due to its high historical value. These values include: numerous architectural monuments and a unique urban layout, whose market square, unfortunately, has been losing its historical character [2].

It should be emphasized that the aforementioned historical values of Sokółów Małopolski are part of the national cultural heritage; therefore, the town's heritage should be subject to conservation protection and constant monitoring of its condition so that it can be passed on to future generations in an intact state [3-7].

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\* Corresponding author: jbartkiewicz@prz.edu.pl

City authorities, with the support of the Provincial Conservator of Monuments, should have a plan in place for measures aimed at protecting and restoring the city's cultural heritage. It should be noted, however, that currently, amid intense development pressure, preserving spatial order and maintaining the appropriate aesthetics of historic urban interiors poses a challenge for both conservation services and municipal authorities [3, 4].



**Fig. 1.** Sokołów Małopolski currently on an orthophotomap. Orthophotomap [in:] [www.geoportal.gov.pl](http://www.geoportal.gov.pl), 30.01.2026

## Methods and scope of the research

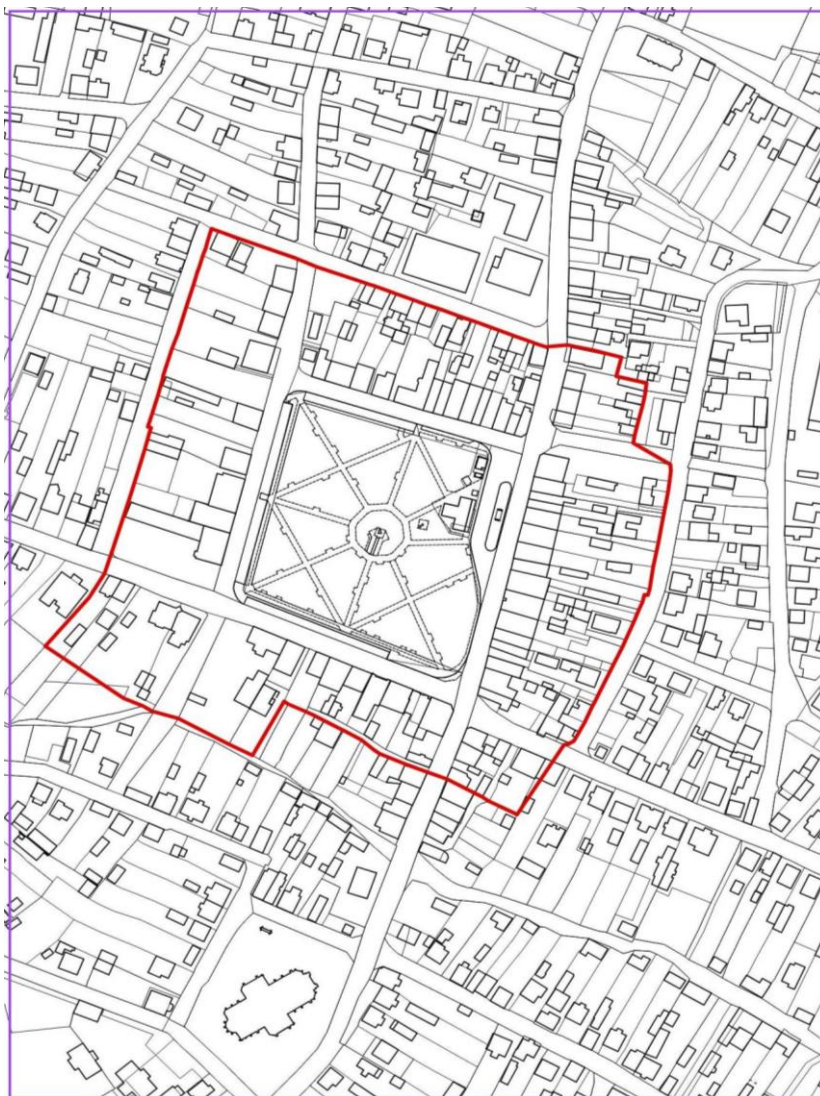
The research described in this article was conducted using the following methods: on-site field surveys, urban planning surveys, architectural surveys, photographic surveys, literature reviews, archival research, and the analysis and synthesis of the obtained results. The scope of the authors' research included the area of the historic urban layout of the town of Sokołów Małopolski, along with the area where Sokołów's most valuable historic buildings are located (Fig. 2).

## State of research

When reviewing the state of research on this subject, it is important to highlight works falling into two main categories: those concerning the history of the city's spatial development and its historical architecture, and publications devoted to its history.

The first group of works includes the following monographs: M. Książka's *Issues concerning the origins of the layout and typology of private towns in 16th- and 17th-century southern Lesser Poland (Zagadnienia genezy rozplanowania i typologii miast prywatnych XVI i XVII wieku w południowej Małopolsce)* [1] and K. Kuśnierz's *Urban economic centres of the great latifundia of southern Poland in the 16th and 17th centuries (Miejskie ośrodki gospodarcze wielkich latyfundiów południowej Polski w XVI oraz XVII wieku)* [8]; an unpublished study by J. Malczewski, A. Gliwa, R. Kwolek, A. Lubelczyk and E. Stelmach entitled *Update of conservation guidelines for the 1989 historical and urban planning study for Sokołów Małopolski (Aktualizacja wytycznych konserwatorskich do studium historyczno-urbanistycznego z 1989 roku dla Sokołowa Małopolskiego)* [9], as well as publications in the form of chapters in collective monographs and articles by: D. Kuśnierz-Krupa, M. Krupa, J. Malczewska entitled *Sokołów Małopolski – a prolegomenon to research on the history of the town's origins and its cultural heritage (Sokołów Małopolski – prolegomena do badań nad historią powstania miasta*

oraz jego dziedzictwem kulturowym) [2] and K. Kuśnierz entitled Directions of modern urban planning development in south-eastern Poland. Origins, urban planning models, examples (Kierunki rozwoju urbanistyki nowożytnej w Polsce południowo-wschodniej. Geneza, modele urbanistyczne, przykłady) [10].



**Fig. 2.** A map of Sokołów Małopolski showing the area under investigation (in red) and the area where historic buildings are located (in purple).

Within the second group, devoted to the history of the town, the following monographs are particularly noteworthy: An Outline of the History of Sokołów (Zarys dziejów Sokołowa) by A. Dańczak [11] and the two-volume work Monograph of Sokołów Małopolski (Monografia Sokołowa Małopolskiego), published in 1990–1991 by the same author [12].

The authors mentioned above have contributed to expanding knowledge regarding the spatial development of Sokołów Małopolski and the town's cultural heritage. They have also made important scholarly findings concerning the history of the town's origins, its urban layout

and its historic buildings. These findings provided the basis for the authors of this study to continue their research into the town's heritage, its state of preservation, and the need for its protection and restoration.

### Sokolów Małopolski – Historical urban layout

Sokolów was located under Chelmino law. It was a local variant of Magdeburg law. The town was founded on the lands of the existing villages of Trembowiska and Łąki by Jan of Pilcza Pilecki. There are theories that, prior to the founding of Sokolów, a settlement with an urban-style functional and spatial layout may have already existed here [8]. Historical plans show the pre-foundation spatial structure, situated to the south of the Renaissance town, at the centre of which was a square with a street layout similar in shape to that used in medieval towns of the turbine model (Figs. 3 and 4).



**Fig. 3.** The urban layout of Sokolów Małopolski marked on the Miega Map dating from 1779–1783. Copy of the map [in:] Archive of the Chair of Architecture History and Monument Preservation, Faculty of Architecture, Cracow University of Technology (Archive of CAHMP, FA, CUT)



**Fig. 4.** Sokolów Małopolski on the cadastral plan from 1853. Copy of the map [in:] Archive of CAHMP, FA, CUT

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The historical spatial layout of Sokołów Małopolski (Figs. 3 and 4) provides a good example of a reference to the concept of the 'città ideale', which was described by Italian Renaissance theorists and subsequently implemented in the process of town-planning across Europe. For this reason, when discussing the town's urban layout from the period of its foundation, reference should be made to Italian Renaissance theory. Given that Sokołów was laid out based on the models of "la città ideale", its urban layout can be described as defined and orthogonal [10]. In the town centre, a large, square market square measuring approx. 152×152 m, i.e. approx. 4×4 small strings, was laid out. Twelve individual blocks of buildings, each approximately 1.5 strings deep, were laid out around the market square; these were divided into seventy residential plots [8]. The original street layout, of which only fragments remain today, also drew on modernist models. The main streets radiated from the centre of the frontage and intersected symbolically in the middle of the market square, where the town hall was located. The remaining streets radiated from the corners of the market square. There were eight of them in total, ensuring efficient transport links from the centre to the outskirts of the town. The parish church, erected during the town's foundation period, was built on a square that formed part of the pre-foundation urban structure, situated to the south of the Renaissance town [2].

The town of Sokołów Małopolski is situated on flat terrain surrounded by primeval forests, which were partially cleared to allow for the town's expansion. Streams flowed through this area, emptying into the Trzebośnica, a tributary of the San. It is noteworthy that local trade routes (including Rzeszów–Lublin and Nadsanie–Kraków) ran through the area where Sokołów was founded [8]. This undoubtedly contributed to the town's rapid development as an economic centre.

In the 17th century, a Jewish quarter began to take shape to the north of the layout described above. It took the form of a distinct, orthogonal layout with a spacious square on which a synagogue was built.

Around the same time, in the first half of the 17th century, Sokołów Małopolski was provided with modern-style defensive fortifications. These were earthworks, consisting of ramparts and modern defensive structures, and they linked together all the existing settlement structures in Sokołów [2].

### **Architectural heritage of the city**

There are many examples of historic buildings within the town. These include both public buildings and small-town, historic buildings. The buildings that should be discussed first and foremost when analysing the town's cultural heritage are the town hall, the former credit union, the parish church of St John the Baptist, the branch church of the Holy Spirit, and the former synagogue.

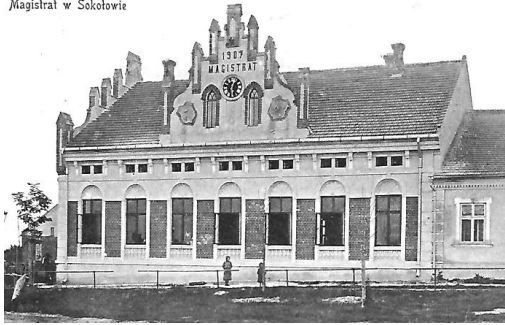
The town hall in Sokołów Małopolski was built in the centre of the market square, at the junction of the main thoroughfares leading out from the centre of the frontage. It was a brick building, probably constructed on a square plan with an internal courtyard [8]. It was destroyed in the town fire of 1904. Three years later, a new building serving the same purpose was erected, this time situated on the western side of the market square. It was designed in the eclectic style, which was fashionable at the time [13] (Figs. 5 and 6).

The former building of the advance payment office, now a bank, built between 1903 and 1905, is also worthy of note. Its chairman was Karol Rampelt, a notary and distinguished community activist. Although the building has now been altered somewhat from its original form, it still retains its heritage value due to the preserved structure and composition of the façade (Figs. 7 and 8).

Another valuable building in the town is the parish church of St John the Baptist, which was built at the time the town was founded. It was erected to the south of the Renaissance town layout, on the site of the pre-settlement village square. The original church was destroyed in the

mid-17th century during the invasion of the town by the armies of George II Rákóczi. The next one, a wooden structure (Fig. 9), was destroyed in the fire that ravaged Sokołów at the beginning of the 20th century [13]. The present Church of St John the Baptist is therefore Sokołów's third parish church. It was built of brick between 1908 and 1916 to a design by Jan Sas-Zubrzycki [14] (Figs.10 and 11).

Magistrat w Sokotowie



**Fig. 5.** The new town hall in Sokołów Małopolski, built in the early 20th century, as seen on an old postcard. Copy of the postcard [in:] Archive of CAHMP, FA, CUT



**Fig. 6.** Sokołów Małopolski Town Hall today. 2026



**Fig. 7.** The building of the advance payment office (currently a bank) in Sokołów Małopolski in the first half of the 20th century, as seen on an old postcard. Copy of the postcard [in:] Archive of CAHMP, FA, CUT



**Fig. 8.** The former advance payment office (currently a bank) in Sokołów Małopolski today. 2026



**Fig. 9.** The former wooden church in Sokołów Małopolski at the beginning of the 20th century in an archive photograph. Copy of photograph [in:] Archive of CAHMP, FA, CUT



**Fig. 10.** Parish Church of St. John the Baptist in Sokołów Małopolski in the first half of the 20th century in an archive photograph. Copy of photograph [in:] Archive of CAHMP, FA, CUT



**Fig. 11.** The parish church of St. John the Baptist in Sokołów Małopolski today. 2026

The other important temple in Sokołów Małopolski is the Church of the Holy Spirit, which serves as a branch church to the parish church. The present building was erected between 1869 and 1893 on the site of a previous wooden church dating from 1688. It is a brick, plastered, single-nave building with a chancel enclosed on three sides. It has a simple facade flanked by two towers and a stepped gable in the centre [13] (Figs. 12 and 13).

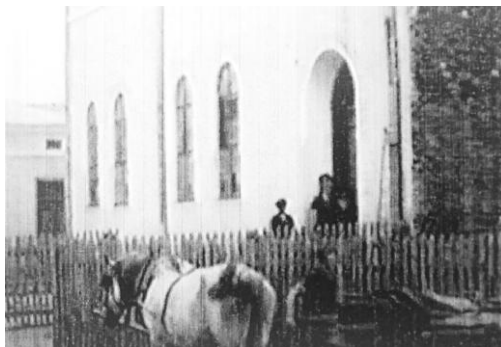


**Fig. 12.** The branch church of the Holy Spirit in Sokołów Małopolski in the first half of the 20th century. Copy of photograph [in:] Archive of CAHMP, FA, CUT



**Fig. 13.** The Holy Spirit Branch Church in Sokołów Małopolski today. 2025

When writing about Sokołów's religious heritage, one cannot ignore the former synagogue, which is linked to the Jewish community that once lived here. The synagogue was built in the 19th century on the site of an older, wooden building serving the same purpose. It is a brick building, constructed on a rectangular plan. The main prayer hall was located in the eastern section, whilst the western section housed a vestibule with a women's gallery on the upper floor. The building currently houses a community centre [13] (Figs. 14 and 15).



**Fig. 14.** The synagogue in Sokołów Małopolski at the beginning of the 20th century. Copy of photograph [in:] Archive of CAHMP, FA, CUT



**Fig. 15.** The synagogue in Sokołów Małopolski today. 2026.

### Protecting the cultural heritage of the town

The key document governing the protection of historic monuments in Poland is the Act of 23 July 2003 on the Protection and Care of Historic Monuments [15]. This document lists, amongst other things, the forms of conservation protection available for immovable historic monuments, including historic buildings, complexes and spaces, include: entry in the register of monuments, designation as a historical monument, the creation of a cultural park, and the establishment of protection in a local spatial development plan or in a decision determining the location of a public-purpose investment, a decision on building conditions, etc. [15].

Cultural heritage sites that are not covered by any of the above-mentioned forms of legal protection are entered in the municipal register of monuments, i.e. the list of monuments located within the boundaries of a given municipality.

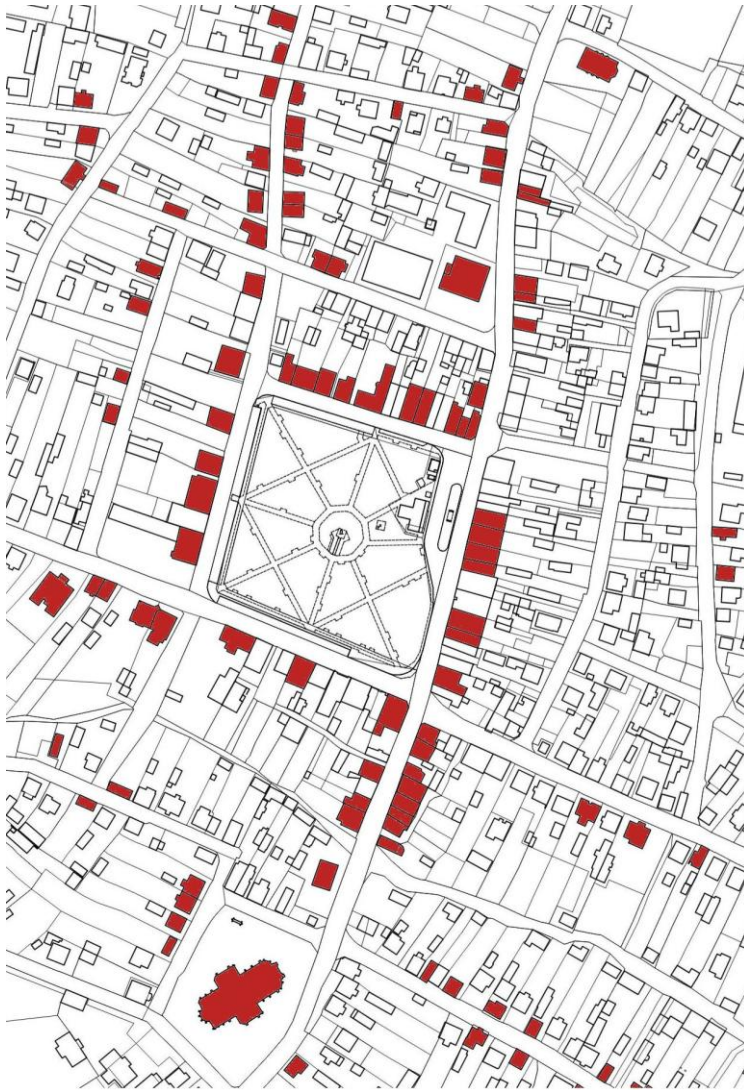
In the town, conservation protection through entry in the provincial register of monuments primarily covers the town's Renaissance urban layout together with the surrounding buildings.

Across the town of Sokołów Małopolski, there are 259 properties listed in the register of monuments of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. It should be noted, however, that some of these are included in so-called 'area-based' listings. There are 101 of these in the area under analysis. These are mainly residential buildings, as well as two churches: St John the Baptist and the Holy Spirit, a synagogue, the former town hall, the former court, the former advance payment office, the former post office and the former inn [17] (Fig. 16).

The municipality of Sokołów Małopolski does not currently have a 'Municipal Heritage Conservation Programme'. The last programme of this kind was drawn up for the period 2011–2015 [18]. An annex to this document is the municipal register of monuments. According to the municipal register of monuments, there are a total of 199 monuments within the town [19] (Fig. 17).

It should also be noted that, in addition to religious and administrative buildings, the town centre also features residential houses (some of which are townhouses) of significant historical value, dating primarily from the first half of the 20th century.

An important element of the research was also the analysis of the buildings surrounding the market square, comprising the aforementioned tenement houses and residential buildings.



**Fig. 16.** The map of the centre of Sokołów Małopolski, i.e. the area under analysis, showing the buildings listed in the provincial register of monuments (in red).

This development has been analysed taking into account two aspects that are significant in the process of urban regeneration and revitalisation. The first aspect is the height of the buildings, and the second is their state of preservation, both in terms of their heritage value and their technical condition.

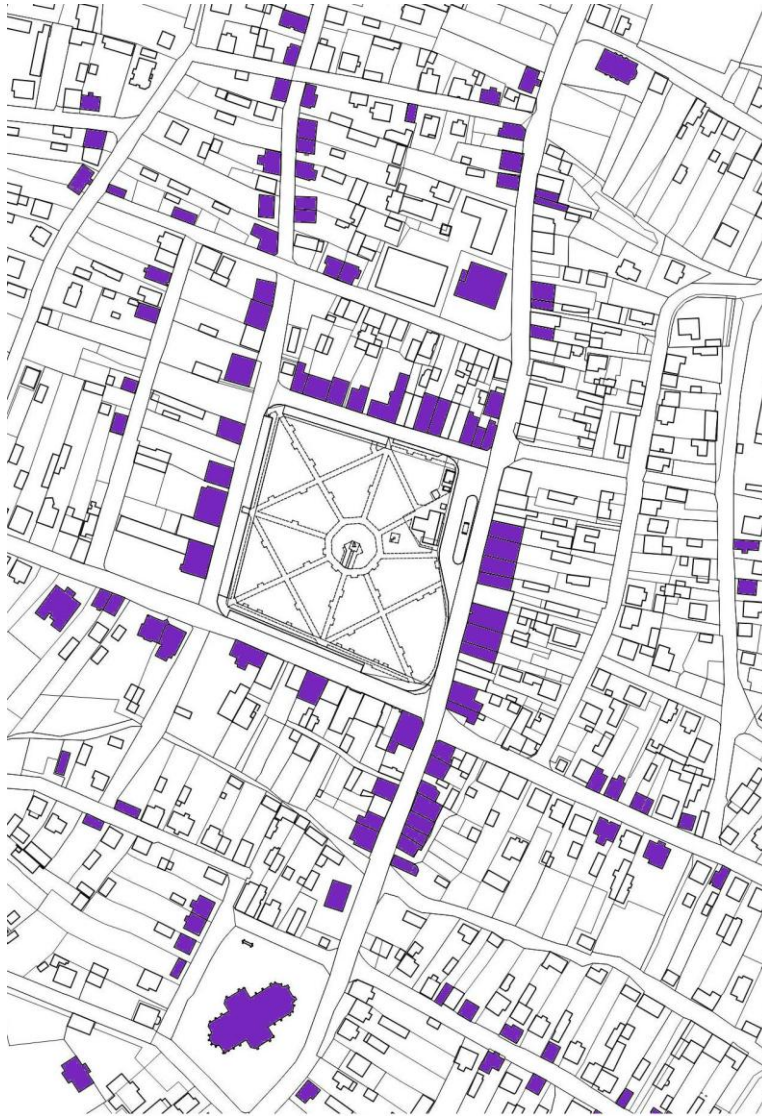
The area under analysis contains single-storey, two-storey and two-storey buildings with a usable attic.

In the area south of the market square, there are seven two-storey buildings and two two-storey buildings with a usable attic. The remainder are single-storey buildings.

There are six two-storey buildings in the area to the west of the market square, whilst the rest are single-storey buildings.

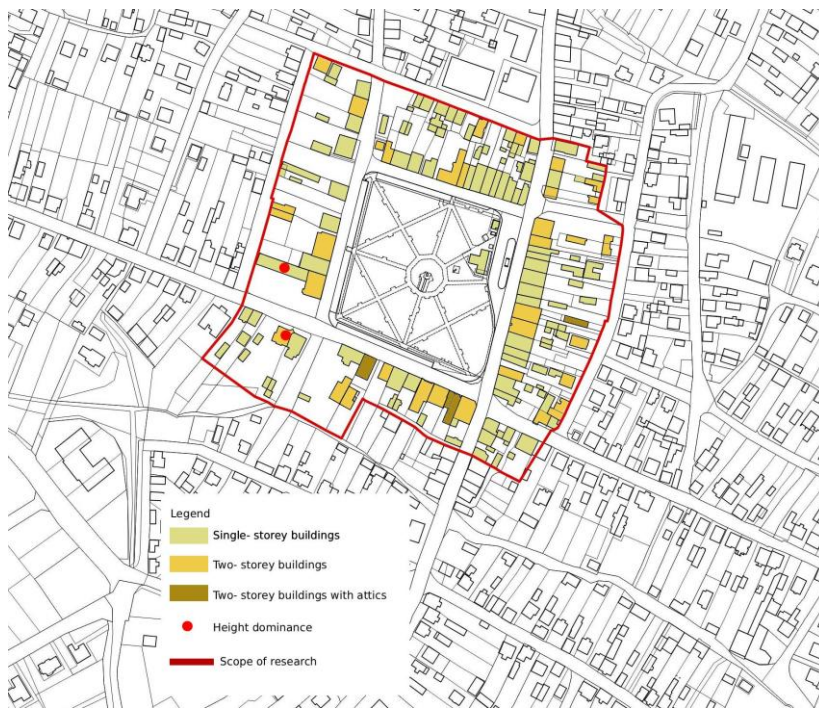
In the area to the north of the market square, there are also six two-storey buildings, with the rest being single-storey buildings.

In the area to the east of the market square, there are sixteen two-storey buildings, with the rest being single-storey buildings.



**Fig. 17.** The map of the centre of Sokółów Małopolski, i.e. the area under analysis, showing the buildings listed in the municipal register of monuments (in purple).  
Prep. by the authors, 2026

To summarise the above, it should be noted that the buildings situated in the area surrounding the market square are mostly single-storey (one-storey) and two-storey (two-storey) structures. In the immediate vicinity of the market square, there are only two prominent high-rise structures (parts of the buildings at Rynek 1 and ul. Pułkownika Podstawskiego 1), situated close to one another in the south-western corner (Fig. 18).

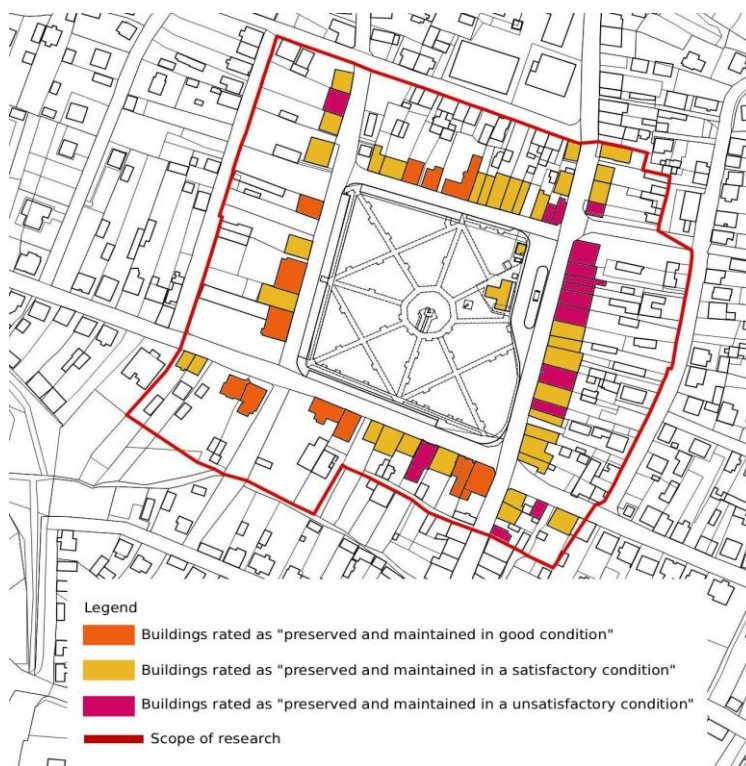


**Fig. 18.** The map of the centre of Sokołów Małopolski, i.e. the area under analysis, showing the heights of the buildings analysed. Prep. by the authors, 2026

Proceeding to the discussion of the research findings concerning the degree of preservation of the built heritage—that is, the buildings forming the market square’s frontage—it should be emphasized that three criteria were adopted for the purpose of conducting the relevant analyses. These were: state of preservation (taking into account any degradation), color scheme (in terms of integration with the cultural landscape of the town center) and façade aesthetics (divisions, ornamentation, etc.). The condition of the buildings was determined on a three-point scale: preserved and maintained in good condition, preserved and maintained in satisfactory condition, and preserved in unsatisfactory condition (Fig. 19).

The analysis revealed that in the area south of the market square there are six buildings described as preserved and maintained in good condition, one as preserved but in a poor state of repair, whilst the remaining buildings are preserved and maintained in a satisfactory condition. In the area to the west of the market square, there are three buildings preserved and maintained in good condition, one building preserved in an unsatisfactory condition, and the remaining buildings are preserved and maintained in a satisfactory condition. In the area of the blocks of flats north of the market square, there are three buildings preserved and maintained in good condition, two in an unsatisfactory condition, and ten in a satisfactory condition. In the area to the east of the market square, there are only buildings preserved in an unsatisfactory condition (11) and in a satisfactory condition (14).

In summary, it should be noted that the best-preserved façade is the southern one. The western and northern façades are in a slightly poorer but still satisfactory condition, whilst the eastern façade is in the worst condition (Fig. 19).



**Fig. 19.** The map of the centre of Sokółów Małopolski, i.e. the area under analysis, showing the state of preservation of the townhouses surrounding the market square.  
Prep. by the authors, 2026

The analyses undertaken to determine the height and condition of the buildings have enabled conclusions to be drawn which will form the basis for establishing the detailed guidelines required to draw up a plan for the regeneration and restoration of the town centre.

### **Recommendations for the restoration, revitalisation and protection of historic buildings in Sokółów Małopolski**

The state of preservation of the historic heritage in Sokółów Małopolski is satisfactory, but the historic spaces and buildings within the town require even better protection and conservation work, carried out professionally under the strict supervision of the Provincial Conservator of Monuments.

The results of the research carried out have highlighted the need to improve the market square area, both in terms of the revitalisation of the market square itself and the buildings surrounding it. This area is characterised by chaos in terms of advertising and signage, street furniture, and an inconsistent and often poorly chosen colour scheme. The authors suggest that the historic centre of Sokółów Małopolski be granted an additional form of protection in the form of a cultural park.

According to the National Heritage Institute, a cultural park, as a form of heritage protection, is dedicated to the protection of the cultural landscape and the preservation of areas of outstanding landscape value featuring immovable monuments characteristic of local building and settlement traditions. It should also be noted that establishing a cultural park in a given area requires that area to be covered by a local plan and a conservation plan to be drawn up, which, in

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the long term, also strengthens the conservation process and regulates all investment activities within the area that should be subject to protection [19].

In view of the above, the establishment of a cultural park in Sokołów Małopolski would certainly improve the town's cultural landscape, which, as a result, apart from the benefits arising from better conservation protection, would also be a more attractive space for both residents and potential visitors to the town.

Further guidelines relating to the conservation of Sokołów Małopolski's historic buildings include the development of an architectural style guide, in which both owners of historic buildings and designers would find guidance on the local architectural archetype and detailing, including the colour scheme and materials that should be used in the restoration of historic buildings, but also for the renovation of properties situated in their vicinity and within the conservation zone.

## Conclusions

To conclude, it should be noted that Sokołów Małopolski is one of those historic Polish towns that should be subject to special conservation protection. This is primarily due to its urban layout, which is still perfectly preserved and based on the concept of 'la città ideale' – one of the few such examples in Poland.

The analyses carried out by the authors will help to improve the monitoring of the condition of historic buildings and ensure their proper protection, as well as, more generally, contribute to the city's current conservation policy. They will also provide guidance for provisions relating to the protection of historic buildings in the local spatial development plan, which, given the cultural heritage of a city of this stature, should definitely be drawn up; yet, to date, the local authority has not adopted such a plan for the historic centre. In the case of this town, it is the local authorities who have a particular duty to plan heritage conservation measures and ensure their consistent implementation. The Provincial Conservator of Monuments must, of course, be a partner in these efforts, as the body responsible for carrying out tasks relating to the protection of cultural assets under the provisions of the Act on the Protection and Care of Monuments.

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