

CONSERVATION AND ADAPTATION OF HISTORIC TENEMENT HOUSES AS A TOOL FOR SHAPING URBAN IDENTITY: THE CASE OF CZĘSTOCHOWA

Nina SOŁKIEWICZ-KOS^{1*}, Malwina TUBIELEWICZ-MICHALCZUK¹,
Paweł PIETRUSIEWICZ²

¹ Czestochowa University of Technology, Faculty of Civil Engineering, Department of Civil Engineering, Akademicka Street 3, Czestochowa 42-201, Poland.

² Czestochowa University of Technology, Faculty of Production Engineering and Materials Technology, Department of Physics, Al. Armii Krajowej Street 19, Czestochowa 42-201, Poland.

Abstract

This article discusses the issues of conservation and adaptation of historic buildings as essential elements shaping the historical urban structure of the city of Czestochowa. Czestochowa is a medium-sized town. It was chosen because of its significance, both historical and cultural. It is an important pilgrimage and academic and tourist center. The architectural and urban solutions should reflect the uniqueness of the place and its cultural identity. The article presents numerous activities that aim at organizing the historical layout of downtown buildings related to the protection and preservation of historic substance. The historic tenement houses located within Daszyński Square – the oldest fragment of the historical part of the city – were chosen as a case study. The analysis emphasizes the possibilities of preserving and adapting historic tenement houses as key factors in improving the city's image, referring to contemporary functional needs with the historical heritage of the place. The research includes an archival and library query and "in situ" observation, as well as a review of the design documentation of selected historic tenement houses. The results obtained show the need to increase the aesthetic and functional values of historic buildings while respecting the cultural conditions of the heritage of the past era. The historical heritage combined with the properly implemented adaptation activities can create a new and attractive downtown space. The conservation and adaptation activities are an effective form of cultural heritage protection in the conditions of a market economy, complex ownership structures, and modernization processes.

Keywords: Cultural heritage protection; Conservation; Revitalization of downtown areas; Renovation of monuments

Introduction

The area of the study includes strict downtown areas, the main compositional canvas of which is the historical axial assumption constituting the Avenue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This axis connects two opposing parts of the town: Old Czestochowa with the monastery complex at Jasna Góra and New Czestochowa with the Church of St. Sigismund and the accompanying monastery complexes. The urban layout of the historical areas, built at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, includes squares, streets, and inner courtyards. Together with the frontages of downtown tenement houses, these structures still represent a significant investment and spatial potential of the city.

The example in question concerns Daszyński Square. It is one of the key compositional elements of the urban layout. On the other hand, private space is formed by the frontages of

¹ *Corresponding author: n.solkiewicz-kos@pcz.pl

tenement houses that are the property of the owners. An important challenge is to work out a balance between the protection of the historical values of these urban structures and an attempt to include them in new functions resulting from contemporary use. The proposed activities assume the preservation and exposure of the valuable urban structures while emphasizing their culture-forming significance [1].

The article discusses the issue of modernization and adaptation of a historic tenement house located in the northern frontage of Daszyński Square at number 9. This building is entered in the register of monuments, remains private property, and is part of the urban layout under conservation protection. The field inspections conducted during the research revealed a complex historical and typological fragment of the city. The analysis of the assessment of the historic value of the square space and the adjacent frontage of tenement houses indicates the legitimacy of using solutions of a classicist nature. Such an approach is considered to be one of the most socially accepted solutions of historical architectural forms.

This method is also justified by the need to continue the style of the neighboring buildings and respect for the historical urban fabric. The adopted design concept concerning the modernization and renovation of the tenement house in question makes it possible to maintain a balance between creative interpretation and continuity of architectural tradition.

The scope of work includes research, analyses, and valorization of the historical space of the square and transformations of the architectural form of the tenement house building and its utility function. The aim is to create a harmonious and functional space, meeting the contemporary needs of users, while preserving the cultural heritage of the place.

Methodology

The subject of the study is a historic, single-story tenement house from the eighteenth century with a residential and commercial function, situated in Częstochowa at 9 Daszyńskiego Square, in an area of special historical importance for the development of the city. The methodology of the research is based on a case study, including an analysis of the completed architectural project (author of the project: architect Lech Nowotarski) in the context of the existing buildings (northern frontage of Daszyński Square).

The research used architectural and construction documentation, archival materials, conservation guidelines, and applicable legal acts in the field of cultural heritage protection. A special role was played by the cooperation with the Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments, resulting from the fact that the building is under conservation protection and its location is in the zone of strict protection of the historical urban layout of the city of Częstochowa [2], [3].

The analysis of the process of agreeing on design solutions between the investor, the architect, and the monument protection authorities was crucial. As a result, it was possible to adopt such solutions that allowed the preservation of the authenticity of the building while introducing the necessary functional and technical changes.

The legal basis for the activities conducted was the Act on the Protection of Monuments and the Care of Monuments of 2003 (as amended) and the provisions of the Construction Law. The methodology used, based on the functional and spatial analysis of the city as well as the architectural analysis of the building, enabled a comprehensive assessment of the process of modernization and renovation of the historic tenement house (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. The historic urban layout of the city of Częstochowa with the boundaries of the area under conservation protection; the subject of research is marked in a circle [4]

Aim of the study

The subject of the study is a historic, one-story corner tenement house located in Częstochowa, at the intersection of Daszyński Square and Krakowska Street. The building is an integral element of the historical urban structure and space of cultural and social importance (Fig. 2). The aim of the study is to analyze and evaluate the renovation and modernization project of the building, considering both the need to protect its historical values and adapt it to modern functional and utility requirements. The actions taken concerned comprehensive works related to the renovation of the building, its renovation, modernization, and adaptation to new functions. The particular importance for the research conducted on the analyzed building resulted from its original function – it used to be an inn, where the pilgrims rested. This context affects the need to preserve the authenticity of the place and its intangible values. The conservation guidelines for this area focus on the comprehensive protection of historical values.

The scope of the study includes an analysis of architectural and construction solutions necessary to maintain the proper technical condition of all structural elements of the building while respecting its historical substance [5].



Fig. 2. A photograph taken on September 4th, 1939, showing the tragic events that took place on Daszyński Square in Częstochowa. A shot taken by an unknown German soldier, a participant in the occupation operations, documenting the massacre of the city's civilian population [6]

The system of monument protection in Poland – contemporary conditions and directions of activities

During the period of the People's Republic of Poland (1945 to 1989), the system of cultural heritage protection was highly centralized. State institutions decided on the design, financing, and implementation of conservation works, and the conservator of monuments functioned as a representative of public administration. Historic buildings were mostly state resources, and their maintenance and conservation were financed from public funds and conducted by specialized state-owned enterprises [7].

The current model of monument protection in Poland, including the principles of conservation, revitalization, and restoration, is a direct result of the political changes initiated at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. As a result of the political transformation, the role of the state in the direct management of the monument resource was gradually reduced. The privatization process led to a situation in which a significant part of architectural monuments found itself in the hands of private owners. Therefore, the nature of the function of the monument conservator also changed—from decision-making to advisory. In the conditions of financing conservation works from private funds, the role of monument protection authorities is primarily to recommend solutions and not to impose them directly on the investor [7].

The legal basis for the system of protection of cultural heritage in Poland is the Act on the Protection of Monuments and the Care of Monuments of 2003 (as amended), supplemented by the provisions of the Construction Law [2], [3]. These regulations define both the scope of competences of public administration bodies and the obligations of owners of historic buildings. In the current system, the concepts of "monument protection" and "care of monuments" are distinguished. The monument protection refers to administrative activities conducted by state authorities, in particular the Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments and the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. In certain cases, these competences are also vested in municipal conservators of monuments [5]. The owner or user of the building is responsible for the care of monuments. It includes, i.e., conducting renovation and conservation works; preparing the necessary design and pre-design documentation; and initiating research and obtaining funds for the implementation of conservation activities. All actions taken require coordination with the competent monument protection authorities [5]. Since the political transformation, which took place in 1989, there has been an ongoing debate on the shape of the system of protection and care of monuments in Poland. Despite the passage of more than three decades, a fully coherent and comprehensive model corresponding to contemporary socio-economic conditions has not been developed. As a result, the conservation community functions in conditions of limited possibilities of influence, resulting from both legal and economic conditions.

Expert institutions, such as the Polish National Committee ICOMOS and the National Heritage Institute, play a vital role in the discussion on the directions of change, but so far it has not led to the development of a unified vision of the monument protection system in Poland [8]. The analysis of the contemporary system of monument protection is the starting point for considerations on a specific case. The next part of the article discusses the process of revitalization and renovation and the studied object in relation to the historical context of the development and activities organizing the historic urban tissue.

Context of the development

The described building is in the downtown structure of Częstochowa, within the historical area of the Old Town. The key elements of this space include the Old Market Square with the surrounding nineteenth-century frontages of tenement houses; Daszyński Square with analogous

buildings; and the complex of the fifteenth-century monastery complex with the Church of St. Sigismund, which closes the square from the east (Fig. 3) [9].

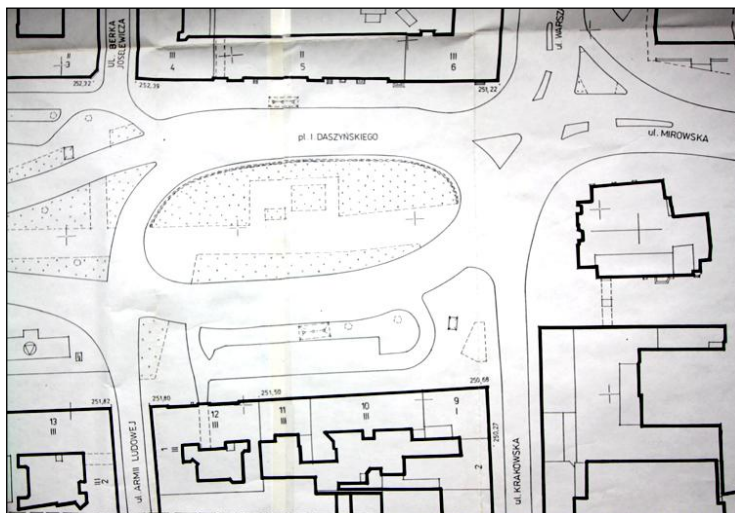


Fig. 3. The site plan. Ignacy Daszyński Square and the location of tenement houses in the northern frontage of Daszyński Square. From the eastern side, the Square closes the monastery complex with the Church of St. Sigismund [10]

This area is covered by the "Urban Revitalization Program for Częstochowa," the main goal of which is to increase the attractiveness of the urban space by transforming the degraded urban and cultural fabric. Architectural competitions organized since the beginning of the 21st century concerning the development of the Old Town area were an attempt to tidy up the oldest public space of the city. The urban structure of this area, shaped since the 14th century, is the result of a constant search for a balance between the architectural dimension and the historical significance of the place. The solutions proposed in the competition works, referring to both the Old Market Square, the sacral complex from the 15th century, and Daszyński Square, are a continuation of the historical urban layout, considering contemporary social needs. The modernization and renovation of the corner, one-story tenement house closing the northeastern frontage of the square are part of this trend.

Daszyński Square

Daszyński Square in Częstochowa is an example of an urban space with a structure shaped in the nineteenth century, which is the result of urban processes related to the connection of Old and New Częstochowa in the years 1823–1826 [6]. This area, bounded from the east by the Church of St. Sigismund, originally served as a parish cemetery, which was liquidated in 1826. In its place, a market square was laid out, referred to as the New Market Square, with a paved surface on which the trade in groceries was concentrated.

Nowadays, Daszyński Square plays a significant role in the urban structure of the city; its high historical and compositional values cannot be underestimated [11]. Its southern and northern frontages are built up with tenement houses erected at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, most of which were the former property of the Jewish community. The architecture of these buildings shows features of classicist styles, which affects the aesthetic coherence of the entire complex.

The buildings surrounding the square are subject to systematic renovation and modernization processes, the overriding goal of which is both to preserve the historical continuity

of the space and to increase the quality of its functioning as a public space. Of particular importance in the composition of the square is its eastern frontage, dominated by the fifteenth-century monastery complex with the Church of St. Sigismund, which serves as a distinct spatial and symbolic accent.

This square is also of significant importance in the context of pilgrimage traffic; this is the place where the trails leading to Jasna Góra cross and, at the same time, the last, key stage of the pilgrimage route [12]. Therefore, conservation activities carried out in this area focused on the comprehensive restoration of the space, including both the modernization of nineteenth-century residential buildings and the restoration of the historic sacral complex.

The aim of these interventions was to shape a multi-layered public space, integrating the historical, compositional, and functional values, which fit into the broader trends of contemporary protection of the cultural heritage and revitalization of downtown areas [13].

The urban and architectural context of the northern frontage of Daszyński Square

The northern frontage of Daszyński Square in Częstochowa consists of a compact series of four tenement houses (tenement houses nos. 9–12), which constitute an essential element of the historical urban layout of this part of the city [14]. These buildings are characterized by a variety of heights, architectural forms, and degrees of detail, while maintaining the continuity of the building line and the service and residential function on the ground floors [15]. The frontage shows a clear chronological and typological differentiation. The tenement houses Nos. 10–12 represent developed, urban buildings of the nineteenth century—multi-story, with orderly front facades and a clearly marked axial composition. Their bodies are compact, with basements covered with gable roofs, and the functional layout is based on a two-bay scheme with passage halls and outbuildings in the depth of the plots. The front facades of these buildings show a varying degree of decorativeness—from simple, plastered facades with rhythmically arranged window openings (tenement house no. 11) to more developed compositions with the use of avant-corps, cornices, and stucco detail (tenement houses nos. 10 and 12) (Figs. 4–11) [16], [17]. A characteristic element is the clear differentiation of the ground floor, which serves as a service and opens to the square space through shop windows and entrances to the premises.

The analyzed frontage of tenement houses has its internal structure in the form of outbuildings. It is a system of internal courtyards forming a layout of quaternary buildings, which is typical for the nineteenth-century urban structure. The structural structure of the buildings is made with traditional technology. The external walls are made of limestone and brick. Later the steel-reinforced concrete ceilings were built, and the roof coverings were modernized [18]. The multi-story development, tenement house No. 9, clearly stands out against the background. Its lower, single-story form, simple body, and lack of developed architectural detail indicate an earlier origin and a different functional character of the building. These differences emphasize the process of transformation of the space of Daszyński Square—from earlier, more intimate buildings of a service and residential nature to a compact, intensive urban structure of the second half of the nineteenth century. In this context, the tenement house No. 9 is a valuable monument of an earlier stage of urban development. In the seventies of the twentieth century, it was planned to demolish a single-story tenement house because of its poor technical condition and erect a two-story corner tenement house in its place, like the neighboring buildings. Due to the historic character of the building, the conservator of monuments postponed the decision to demolish it and recommended its modernization.

In the further part of the study, a detailed description and history of the tenement house at 9 Daszyńskiego Square are presented, with particular emphasis on its architectural form and structure.



Fig. 4. Tenement at 9 Daszyński Square
(Northern façade)
(author's photos: A. Broda, 1983)



Fig. 5. Tenement at 9 Daszyński Square
(Northern façade) (author's photos:
N. Solkiewicz-Kos, M. Tubielewicz-Michalczuk, 2026)



Fig. 6. Tenement at 10 Daszyński Square
(Northern façade)
(author's photos: A. Broda, 1983)



Fig. 7. Tenement at 10 Daszyński Square
(Northern façade) (author's photos:
N. Solkiewicz-Kos, M. Tubielewicz-Michalczuk, 2026)



Fig. 8. Tenement at 11 Daszyński Square
(Northern façade)
(author's photos: A. Broda, 1983)



Fig. 9. Tenement at 11 Daszyński Square
(Northern façade) (author's photos:
N. Solkiewicz-Kos, M. Tubielewicz-Michalczuk, 2026)



Fig. 10. Tenement at 12 Daszyński Square
(Northern façade)
(author's photos: A. Broda, 1983)



Fig. 11. Tenement at 12 Daszyński Square
(Northern façade) (author's photos:
N. Solkiewicz-Kos, M. Tubielewicz-Michalczuk, 2026)

History of the tenement house – Daszyński Square

The tenement house in Częstochowa, at 9 Daszyńskiego Square, is an interesting contrast to the compact, taller buildings of the northern frontage of the square. Its single-story character with a massive gable roof distinguished it from the neighboring, two-story tenement houses for a long time. This difference—initially perceived as a dissonance—over time began to be perceived as a testimony to an earlier stage of urban development of this part of the city [19]. The building, located on the corner, at the intersection of Krakowska Street and the square, was built in the first half of the nineteenth century, originally serving as an inn. Its seven-axis, stretched form, transformed several times over the following decades, has retained its basic layout with a passage and a gate leading toward Krakowska Street, an element characteristic of buildings with service and communication functions. Unlike the more decorative neighboring tenement houses, this building remained almost devoid of architectural detail for a long time, which, in the post-war period, became the cause of criticism and postulates for its demolition.

Even in the 1960s, the building was incompatible with the representative character of the city center. However, despite these opinions, it survived, and its functional functions—including craft activities, such as a shoemaker's workshop in the 1970s—allowed it to maintain the continuity of its existence [20-24]. The breakthrough came in the 1990s, when a decision was made to renovate and modernize the building, thus saving it from degradation.

The technical condition of the modernized tenement house

Before the start of the modernization works, the technical condition of the tenement house was significantly degraded. The most severe problem was the technical condition of the roof truss, as well as damaged ceilings and cracked load-bearing walls. A comprehensive intervention turned out to be necessary. The wooden structural elements turned out to be particularly problematic, which—especially on the north side—underwent biological degradation because of moisture and fungus [21].

Therefore, the reinforcement of the existing structural elements was abandoned in favor of their complete replacement. The adopted structural solutions were subordinated to both safety requirements and the planned change in the function of a part of the building. The ceiling above the ground floor was replaced with a steel and reinforced concrete structure of the WPS type, which enabled the attic to be adapted for residential purposes [18]. At the same time, the roof truss was replaced, and a purlin-pincer system and dormers were built, which—despite their modern character—were designed in a restrained manner, which did not interfere with the original silhouette of the building. The functional changes were also associated with interference with the communication system of the building—a reinforced concrete staircase was added from the courtyard side, providing access to the newly built residential premises in the attic. As a result, the building, while retaining its commercial and service function on the ground floor, was supplemented with a residential function, fitting in with contemporary trends in the development of downtown spaces.

The most visible transformations included the façade, which—despite its modest shape—was developed in a way referring to the neighboring buildings. Wide shop windows were introduced, and their lintels and door frames were accentuated with segmental arches with

decorative keystones, which was a subtle nod to the historicizing detail present in the tenement houses on the square. However, the final implementation did not fully correspond to the original design assumptions—the window and door joinery was simplified; these changes slightly weakened the intended stylistic effect (Figs. 12 and 13).



Fig. 12. The condition of the tenement house before the modernization (see above) and the condition of the tenement house after modernization. The visibly designed stairs to the basement have not been implemented.

Author of the study: Arch. Lech Nowotarski

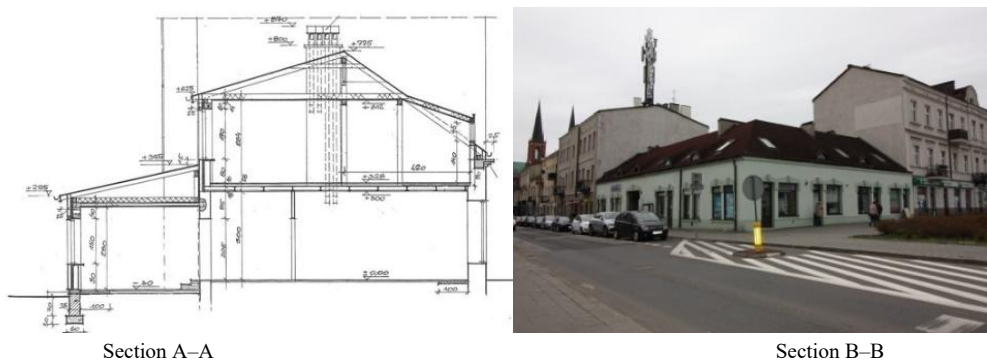


Fig. 13. The cross-sections of the building. The visible reinforced concrete stairs to the residential part on the first floor (cross-section A-A). The cross-section through tenement houses. The visible outbuilding added from the south side (cross-section B-B). Author of the study: Arch. Lech Nowotarski

Today, the tenement house at 9 Daszyńskiego Square functions as a service and commercial facility with a complementary residential function, being an example of successful—albeit compromised—revitalization. Its presence in the frontage of the square reminds us of the historical stratification of the city, in which, in addition to representative forms of later development, more modest, earlier projects have also been preserved.

Conclusions

The analysis of the process of renovation and modernization of downtown buildings on the example of the tenement house at number 9 in Częstochowa indicates that the activities undertaken within historical urban structures require an integrated approach, combining conservation and architectural and functional aspects. The key challenge remains to maintain a balance between the protection of the value of cultural heritage and the need to adapt buildings to contemporary utility standards.

The analysis of the northern frontage of Daszyński Square showed that the diversity of architectural forms and stages of development is an important spatial value, reflecting the process of evolution of the urban fabric over the course of about two hundred years.

The results of the research indicate that effective modernization of historic buildings should be based on respect for the original substance and spatial layout, maintaining relations with the urban environment and introducing modern functional solutions in a way that does not violate historic values. It is also important to use technologies and materials consistent with the historical structure of the building.

The basic task remains the role of adapting the function of the building. The introduction of new functional functions on the ground floors of historic buildings and the preservation of residential functions on the upper floors allows for further use and active inclusion of buildings in the structure of the city. At the urban level, revitalization activities should include not only individual buildings but also entire building complexes.

Synthesizing the results of the conducted research, a properly conducted process of renovation and modernization of historical buildings, based on the principles of cultural heritage protection and contemporary utility needs, is a crucial element of the city's sustainable development. It contributes both to the improvement of the technical condition of the buildings and to strengthening the identity of the place and improving the quality of downtown spaces.

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