

THE ROLE OF GREEN AREAS IN THE PROCESS OF A SMALL TOWN URBAN SPACE DEVELOPMENT ON THE BASIS OF THE TOWN SQUARE IN WIĘCIBORK

1. INTRODUCTION

A small town undergoes constant spatial transformations, connected with the development of civilization. In most cases, however, this is the town square which still remains its center. It is frequently the only identifiable urban element, a public space with town square features, defining the whole town development plan. Its arrangement has been shaped by the history of the place, location rules and its function¹.

Squares of small towns are characterized by specific features. In terms of buildings, they are usually surrounded by closely situated, apartment buildings with shops and other institutions and public facilities including town halls or churches. These objects are the most dominant elements in the town structure. In terms of the functions they perform, squares make up spaces to be used for variable purposes. Most frequently they accommodate administration and service centers, they perform the function of public space to be used for representative, sacral or recreation purposes.

The shape of small town squares in Poland was formed in the Middle Ages. They usually determine the plan and the spatial structure of towns in Poland. According to Kazimierz Wejchert, these are spaces characterized by simple geometric shapes. In many cases they represent coherent forms which combine economic and social functions². It needs to be emphasized that green areas are very important elements of town squares.

Green areas should identify the place they represent (often connected with cultural functions), and also highlight specificity and characteristics of a given town. Nowadays, green areas are considered to be town image creating factors and one of the most important determiners of urban space quality. An attempt

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¹ This issue is included among others, in the following studies: K. Wejchert, 1982. *Urban Composition Elements*. Ed. Arkady; J. Żórawski, 1973. *Construction of Architectural Form*. Ed. Arkady; B. Czarnecki, 2003. *Contemporary Small Town Square in Poland on the example of Białostocki Region*, Ed. University of Finance and Management in Białystok.

² B. Czarnecki, 2003. *Contemporary Small Town Squares in Poland, on the example of Białostocki Region*. Ed. University of Finance and Management, Białystok, p. 45 [as cited in] K. Wejchert, 1977. *Shaping Elements and Their Role in the Structure of Polish Towns*. PWN Warszawa.

has been undertaken to analyze forms of green areas and their large contribution to the symbolic and esthetic quality of town squares, subsequently, the entire town and the living conditions of the inhabitants.

The research was carried out on the basis of Więcbork whose square urban space positively stands out from other town squares in Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship. The main goal of the study is to identify the role of green areas in the process of a small town spatial planning.

Spatial and natural characteristics of Więcbork, due to its location, historical values, local tradition and slower development rate, define its undeniable potential. These factors have contributed to its coherent urban structure. A small area of Więcbork, its intimate atmosphere, recognizable plan scheme, relations between the landscape and architectural landmarks determine the spatial harmony, and along with the green areas included in the town space, form places that have their own identity.

2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWN ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING

Więcbork is situated in the west-north part of Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship, in Krajeńskie Lake District, on Więcbork Lake and the Orla river. The town lies on the territory of Krajeński Landscape Park. Its location and spatial arrangement are conditioned by the natural environment. In the western part, there is a vast swamp area, which limits the town development and directs it eastward, to the lake with a diversified shore line. The town is surrounded by moraine hills, which contribute to diversification of the landscape³.

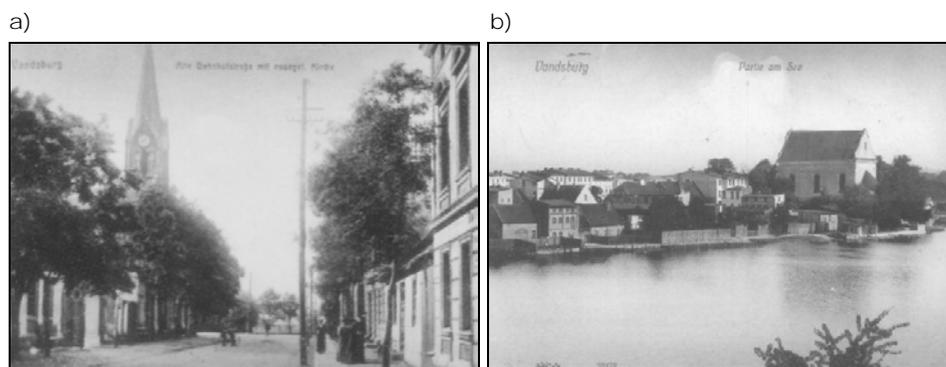


Fig. 1 a, b. Buildings of Więcbork at the turn of XIX and XX century, with plants along traffic routes (source: Town and Commune of Więcbork, A. Marach, E. Kiestrzyn, L. Skaza, Więcbork 2006, p. 5)

The first report of town Więcbork, comes from 1383 r. The beginnings of the settlement date back to the early Middle Ages, which is reflected by a strongly reinforced defensive castle which was discovered during archeological works in the south of the town, on the shore of Więcbork lake, in the area of the current

³ Town and Commune Więcbork, A. Marach, E. Kiestrzyn, L. Skaza, Więcbork 2006, p. 3.

public beach⁴. Until 1821 the town had been owned by noble families of: Pęperzyńscy, Więcborscy, Zebrzydowscy, Garczyńscy, and from XVII century by Potuliccy. The settlement did not have defensive walls, but there was a castle which, since XVI century, was the center of a larger area, including also Sępólno and the surroundings. In 1955, the castle was transformed into a Renaissance residence by Cracow bishop Andrzej Zebrzydowski⁵. In 1778, on the initiative of Count Aleksander H. Potulicki, a Baroque parish church was built. It marks the northern border of the town square. At the turn of XVIII and XIX century the buildings were on fire several times, which had an influence on the town architectural-planning structure. Most of the present old town buildings – including buildings situated in the square, were constructed at the turn of XIX and XX century which is connected with economic growth of the town (Fig. 1). In the second half of XIX century the town became an important center of Evangelical movement. There is a building, which used serve as Evangelistic Church, in the central part, built in the Neogothic style. At the beginning of XX century a monastery complex of Diakoniski, including a hospital, printing houses, guest houses, orphanages, nursery houses, social support centers was founded⁶. Other sacral objects included the buildings of Jewish community, existing in the town from XV century. Więcbork synagogogue was built in 1811 and was situated in the street which now is Gen. J. Hallera street 11⁷.

In the post war period the town developed less rapidly than the neighboring Sępólno. However, its beautiful location, made it a tourist resort in the 60s of XX century. A number of summer centers were built at that time which, after transformations in 1989-1990, were taken over by private owners and today they still serve their purpose, being a base of tourist traffic. The town has preserved a Medieval urban layout. The main axis of composition runs from the area of Góra Zamkowa (Castle Hill) in the north of the town, along Potulicka, Wodna, Mickiewicza streets, toward the town square, along Gen. Hallera street and southward along Rybacka street.

In the historical center of the town, green areas are elements which complete the town structure. Along the main streets of the town: Pocztowa, Mickiewicza to ul. Rybacka, there are wooded alleys. They connect a green plaza in front of the Evangelistic Church across the town square with the Town Hall. Plants including low plantings, colorful flowerbeds and high plantings highlight the major public facilities. Road traffic routes with pedestrian paths are highlighted by low, trimmed trees characteristic of small towns, mainly fine leafed lime trees, maples and fine acacias (Fig. 2).

⁴ In the northern part of the town there is Saint Catherine Hill, a shelter for settlers, from XII century. An Evangelistic Church and an Evangelistic parish cemetery, a hospital and a wooden church have been situated there since XVIII century.

⁵ The castle had residents until XVIII century, later it was transformed into a district court building, it was pulled down in the 20s of XIX century, while Więcbork was being incorporated into Prussian Partition.

⁶ Currently is used for educational purposes.

⁷ The town and commune of Więcbork, A. Marach, E. Kiestrzyn, L. Skaza, Więcbork 2006, p. 15.

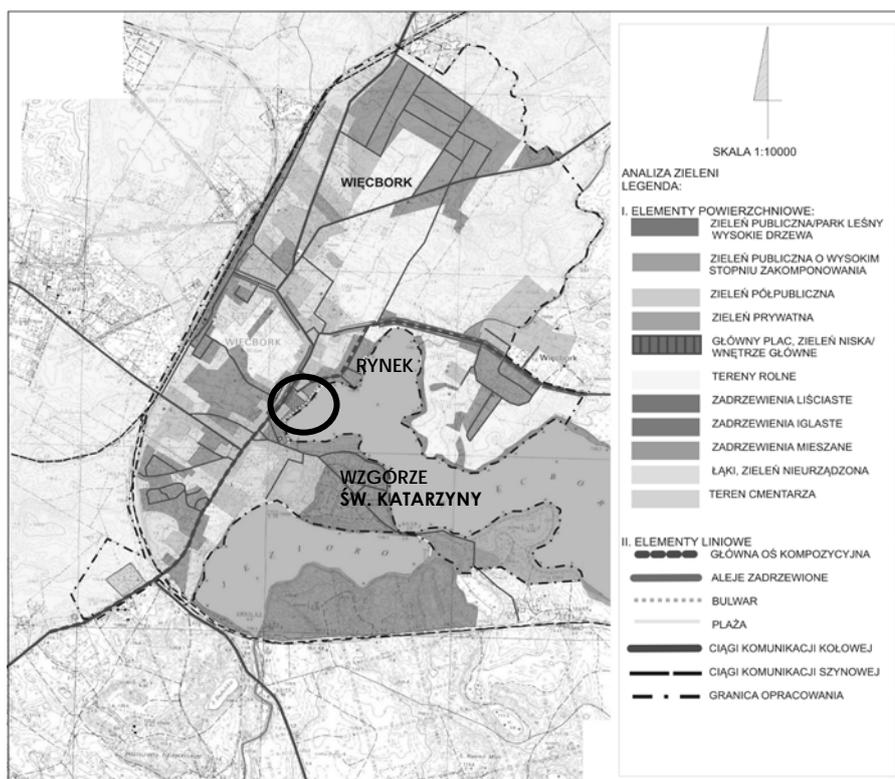


Fig. 2. Analysis of urban green areas in Więcbork (source: own research)

Green alleys are also located along the shores of Więcbork lake, in the place of frontage development which was destroyed during the II World War, where during the town space revitalization, a promenade was constructed⁸ (Fig. 3).

This place makes use of the natural environment values including elements of park which enhance the landscape views. Więcbork boulevard is divided into different functional zones and separate urban interiors providing the possibility of different forms of relaxing⁹. Its central part is connected with the town square.

⁸ Project "Restructuring and improving the quality of the town square and the pedestrian path (promenade) in Więcbork and development and rearrangement of green resources of Jana Pawła II square providing small architecture objects". Local Program of Town Revitalization 2010-2015.

⁹ In the south the boulevard is equipped with small architecture objects. It starts with a square in Strzelecka street. This space is separated from the Evangelistic Church with plantings of high spruces, and trimmed lime trees that grow along the pedestrian path. The square is connected with the boulevard by low hedges of different color shades, whose semi-circular shapes make it possible for benches to be placed inside them. Although there are high trees, mainly lime trees and weeping willows on both sides of the promenade, they do not cover the view of the lake and the town panorama. At the beginning of Mickiewicza street the boulevard changes into a separate recreation area with a flower bed forming an intimate place designed for resting, equipped with comfortable seats to provide good conditions for contemplation of the plants and the

The main point of this place is a plaza from where one can admire the view of the lake on one side and of the square terrain rising in a cascade manner, highlighted by plant compositions.

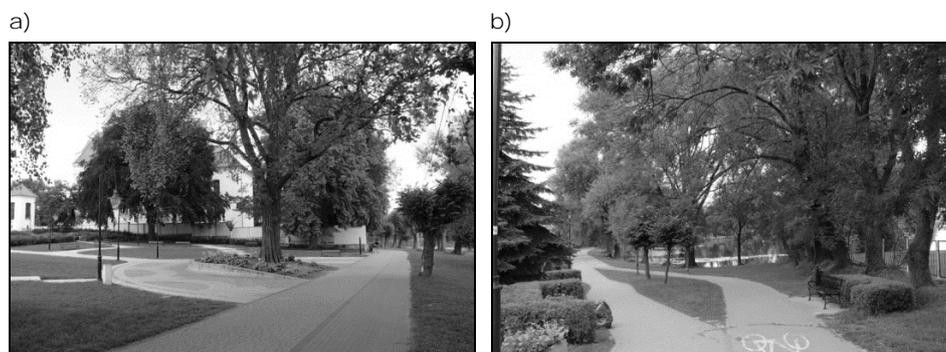


Fig. 3 a, b. Pedestrian promenade along the shore of Więcbork Lake, representative and recreational space with high values of landscape (source: phot. author, 2017)

In the south to the promenade, along Strzelecka street, there are the most important recreation and sports facilities including the town stadium. A moraine Saint Catherine Hill, which performs the function of a forest park, dominates over these facilities. Pedestrian routes located along water shores cross the hill, providing the town residents with the possibility to practice different sports and active tourism. This area is covered with a high mixed forest, in the middle of which there is a vast clearing with remains of an old parish cemetery, as well as contemporary objects of a local sports club.

So composed areas of the forest park are extensions of transport routes eastward and open a broad area of the town beach. Green spaces, left as they are, hide elements of architecture attracting people to get involved in active and passive tourism.

Pedestrian alleys and the town square are decorated with plants. Green spaces converge in forest parks, creating a net and system connecting the town along the north south axis. They emphasize the town composition, its traffic routes and dominating architectural and landmark structures. Plants form view openings which, depending on the location, highlight the architectural panorama of Więcbork or elements of its natural landscape.

Northward the alley is highlighted with trimmed osiers growing on the lake shores; and right near the pedestrian path there are big silver birches. The choice of tree species provides interesting color effects throughout the year. The alley ends with a playground for children and a separate zone used for practicing water sports with a pier. In the northern part where there is parking lot plants are used for separation.

view of the other side of the lake, with dominant Saint Catherine Hill. The boulevard changes into a pedestrian alley to be limited by apartment buildings on the side of the town.

3. TOWN SQUARE

This is the area of Jan Paweł II square and it is considered to be a public space of the highest architectural values of Więcbork, where green areas are an integral part of the composition. The study is supposed to define the significance of green areas in the square space which, due to their composition, function, and specificity, shape its architectural-urban structure, hence the identity of the town. In order to verify the above thesis, the author has analyzed documents and studies referring to spatial planning of Więcbork, forms of self-governmental, cultural and economic activities taking place on the town square, the town square urban composition and its role in the town structure.

In a study of area development conditionings and directions for the Commune of Więcbork the town square is referred to as a space where all things need to be done in compliance with urban and architectural planning assumptions so as to reach the highest quality. This space is supposed to be used by local inhabitants and visitors, as it represents the entire town. The Local Revitalization Program highlights that the biggest potentials of the town center, including the main square is: high density housing development concentrating residents (which provides good conditions for further development and has a positive influence on social activities), location along the shore line of Więcbork Lake, good access to important institutions¹⁰.

The cultural, economic and self-governmental forms of activities that have been taking place on the town square in 2016-2017, have been found to be mostly of cultural character: cultural- concerts, performances, exhibitions, sports tournaments (including bike races, marathons, agility games) and events of social and religious character. The town square combines the functions of business and services as it accommodates banks, drugstores, beauty parlours, insurance agent, accountancy offices and newsagents.

The site designed to be a town square was chosen in XVIII century, however its area and shape have been changing depending on what apartment houses and public facilities were built. At first, the square was used as a market place around which one or two storey-apartment houses were built with the accompanying service providing facilities. In 1772-1778, a Baroque parish church was built in the northern part of the square. At the beginning of XX century the church was extended and a presbytery, a vestibule and a sacristy were added separating it from the square with a wall. Today, the church building still dominates over the square and the entire town. After the II World War this area gradually changed into a degraded space, deprived of its primary functions and its distinctive character. Nowadays, the square makes up a space whose shape resembles a square. Its three sides are bordered with high density housing development. The east part is open to expose the view of Więcbork Lake. Mickiewicz street runs at the western frontage of the square.

¹⁰ Study of conditionings and spatial development directions of Więcbork Commune. Town Council Resolution no. XXiXX/218/17 in Więcbork, 14 March 2017 , part I, p. 9, part II, p. 18. Local Program of Więcbork Commune Revitalization for years 2017-2023, p. 30-33. Documents assume continuation of revitalization through implementation of the program "Social Activation of Inhabitants at Risk of Social Exclusion".

In 2011-2014 the square was revitalized¹¹ (Fig. 4). The main assumption of the revitalization was to maintain its historical shape, provide spatial harmony, and improve the level of esthetics¹². The main composition element of the architectural-urban planning solution are green areas. The project takes into consideration functional and social requirements connected with specificity of a public space situated in the center of a town. Green areas play a very important role in the town urban arrangement (Figs. 5-7).

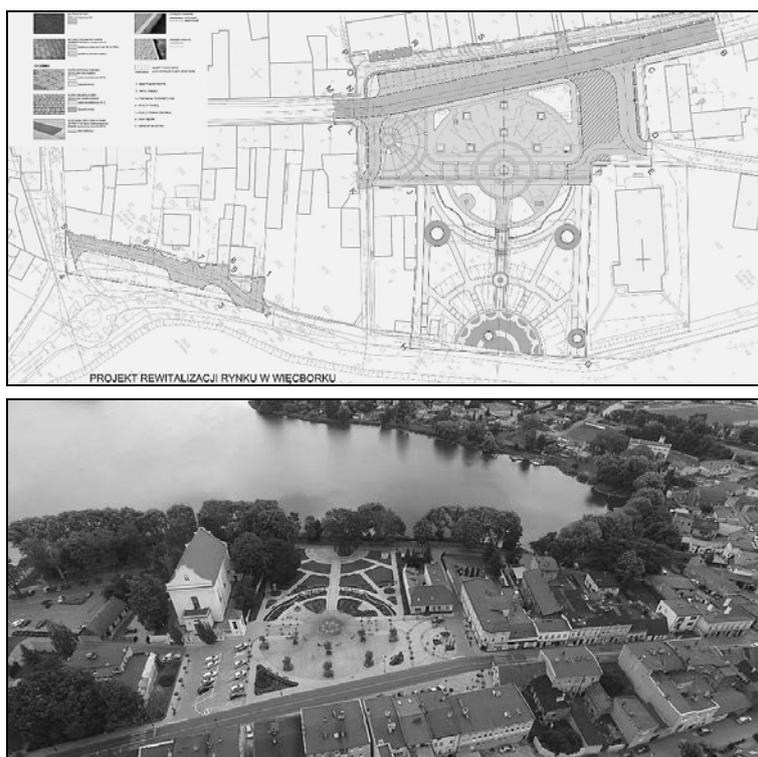


Fig. 4. Project of revitalization of the town square in Więcbork, located in the central part of the town, at Mickiewicz st. Project: Skanska S.A., implementation in 2012-2013 (source: own research, on the basis of <http://krajna.com.pl>, access 19.11.2017)

¹¹ Project "Rebuilding and improving the town square space standards and the pedestrian path (promenade) in Więcbork as well as development rearrangement of green areas at Jana Pawła II square by adding elements of small architecture". Town Revitalization Local Program for years 2010-2015.

¹² As part of the investment the square was resurface and a fountain was built. Its diameter is 8 meters long and its surface consists of paving stones and granite slabs. A new spatial system of alleys, lighting, and small architectural elements was developed. Plants were rehabilitated. Space to be used for organization of public events was designed. Revitalization of the town center also included construction of an access road near the promenade, a site for a stage on the lake shore, pavements of access and walking roads were resurfaced and elevation of the church was illuminated as well as the church belfry and the statue of White Eagle.



Fig. 5 a, b. The main composition axis divides the assumption into two symmetric parts (source: phot. author, 2017)



Fig. 6 a, b. The area of the square on the side of Mickiewicza street, a place for organization of social-cultural events, multi-functional, symbolic and representative space dominated by Saint Simon and Juda church . Project of the market: Skanska S.A., implementation 2012-2013 (source: phot. author, 2017)



Fig. 7 a, b. Flower compositions consist of seasonal plants various species and colors, which increase the quality of the flower bed designs. Some of them were elevated above the ground (source: phot. author, 2017)

The Revitalization Project shows clearly the main composition axis as well as different functional zones. On the side of Mickiewicza street there is a paved, open, rectangular shaped site with a central fountain equipped with a device

for multi-color illumination. Its composition is completed with symmetric, regular tree plantings of locus trees with lower colorful flowerbeds. In the north part of the square the piazza makes up a zone of entrance to the baroque church whose dome is well exposed against large trees of fine leafed limes and red leafed beech trees church zone. It also includes a monument commemorating important, symbolic events of the region. In the southern part of the square there is a historic drinking water intake, separated by low plantings and small architecture objects.

In the east to the fountain the space of the square changes its character. The terrain goes down in a cascade manner towards the lake shores. Wide pedestrian alleys run to a small semi circular area near the water, on the lake shore. The main axis connects the place with a situated higher area. In its central point there is a fine leafed lime tree which is also one of the onshore promenade composition elements.

The square provides a view of the landscape and is used as a summer stage for cultural events which are held here. The most interesting element of this section are plant compositions situated along semi circular pedestrian alleys. The species and modern design solutions are selected in such a way that they stress the space esthetic values. The atmosphere of this place prompts relax and quiet contemplation of the plants.

Assessment of the role and function of green areas in the main square public space of Więcbork has been provided on the basis of analyses of: planning documents, its functions and urban arrangement; they are presented in Tables 1.

Table 1. Importance of green areas in the public space of the town square of Więcbork (source: own study, on the basis of Pluta¹³)

Criteria for classification of the importance of green areas in the public space of the town square in Więcbork	
The role of green areas in the public space of the town square in Więcbork	
spatial-composition	
relationship with the town structure	+++
exposure of green areas	+++
quality of functional solutions	+++
quality and clarity of compositions	+++
construction of urban arrangements	+++
masking spatial defects	+++
creation of community areas	+++
creation of contemplation areas	+++
relationship with the town structure	
harmonious relationship	+++
disharmonious relationship	-
elements forming view closures	-
elements forming view openings	+++

¹³ K. Pluta, 2012. Public spaces of European towns, urban planned. Editorial Office of Warsaw University of Technology, Warszawa, p. 263-266.

Table 1 cont.

Function of green areas in the public space of the town square in Więcbork	
representative	+++
cultural	+++
esthetic	+++
composition related	+++
relaxing	+++
recreational	++
educational	++
ecological	++
social	+++
life quality improving	+++
Adjustment of plants colors, shapes, features to the function they perform in different lighting and in different seasons	+++
Integration degree of elements of art technology within the public space of the town square in Więcbork	+++
Preservation of green areas function:	
has the original function been preserved ?	+++
is a new function required ?	-
Type of public space with green areas in a small town:	
element of town green spaces system	+++
public spaces with green resources	+++
green public spaces	-

The presentation is an attempt to evaluate the public space of the town square in Więcbork according to the accepted classification criteria. First of all, such factors as clarity and quality of the urban composition, link with the town structure, functional program and the integration degree of elements of art and technology in the town square public space were evaluated. Studies and analyses allowed to accept parameters meaning good level (++) and very good level (+++). It confirms the pre assumed thesis that the function of plants in the town public space (through composition, function and relations), is to shape the architectural- urban structure , and subsequently identity of the town

Nowadays the town square in Więcbork has become an attractive area used for many purposes. It is now a characteristic spot in the town tissue and determines its identity. The new town square revitalization project has provided functional-spatial continuity of this part of the town, taking advantage of plant elements and the location for shaping a space for integration of the local inhabitants with visitors.

4. SUMMARY AND FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The Revitalization Project of the Town Square in Więcbork allowed to restore its appropriate function and importance. Introduction of green areas into the urban composition, use of the natural environment, changes in the traffic routes, exposure of the town architecture elements have created a space that shapes, links and identifies the structure of the entire town. The area makes up the town major public space whose structure is shaped, among others, by appropriately arranged plant resources. The town square is an identifiable urban structure and

with its green areas it makes up a space of highest quality, defining the identity of Więcbork.

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- [6] <http://krajna.com.pl>, access 19.11.2017.

THE ROLE OF GREEN AREAS IN THE PROCESS OF A SMALL TOWN URBAN SPACE DEVELOPMENT ON THE BASIS OF THE TOWN SQUARE IN WIĘCBORK

SUMMARY. The small city is subject to constant civilizational and spatial transformations, but its main urban interior in many cases remains the market. The market, in other words, the city square has many functions, it is a place of meetings, trade, a cultural center, a representative space that gives identity to the whole city. This area is the main public space of a small town, the structure of which is shaped, among others, by properly composed urban greenery. The article presents the results of the research undertaken in the field of analyzing such forms of greenery, which significantly affect the symbolic and aesthetic values of the market, and thus the quality of life in the city. The main goal is to determine the role of greenery in the process of shaping the spatial structure of the small settlement unit square. The spatial scope of the analysis concerns Więcbork, a small town located in the western part of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship. Thanks to the revitalization measures undertaken, it is characterized by an identifiable urban structure with a clearly visible division into public, semi-public and private spaces. An important role in defining individual zones is played by consciously conceived urban greenery, as well as the location of the individual in the landscape with diverse conditions of the natural environment. The main city square in Więcbork along with greenery is a space of the highest values, defining the identity of the entire city.

Key words: small cities, public space, urban greenery, identity, urban market