

Socialistic Birth and Afterlife of the Largest Lviv District of Sykhiv

Abstract

In this article the formation features of the largest Lviv district of Sykhiv were reviewed. Main transformation processes of workers settlement, which was constructed near the industrial hub of Sykhiv in 70–80ies of the last century, and establishment of the large panel housing estate during the period of independent Ukraine were highlighted. In this regard, major factors that have effect on the formation of housing estate new identity and its conversion into integral part of the contemporary Lviv were traced.

Keywords: workers settlement, industrial hub, large panel housing estate, residential district, neighborhood, transformation, identity

In 2009 – three years after the 750th anniversary of the founding of historically significant city of Lviv founding – took place celebration of the 600th anniversary of suburban village of Sykhiv, after which the biggest contemporary district of the city was named. Nothing but toponym is left from the old village, which is now associated with the symbol of communist city planning in Ukraine.

In 2001 Sykhiv officially became an administrative district of Lviv. At that moment there lived 146,847 residents in 1681 houses. Till now it is the largest big panel housing estate in Lviv. This district was founded as a workers' village for 12,000 people in 1970. Today every fifth resident of Lviv lives in Sykhiv and identifies himself with this area.

The city annexation led to significant changes in the social, ideological and political perceptions of Sykhiv. To some extent it became an antipode to the historical city.

There are three main periods of the contemporary district of Sykhiv: (1) the reorganization of the suburban villages in the 1960 s, (2) the construction of Soviet industrial hub and the emergence of a new settlement for workers in the years 1970–1980 s, and (3) the transformation which is the result of the annexation of Sykhiv to Lviv when the independence of Ukraine was proclaimed in 1991.

The Soviet Era

After the annexation of Lviv to the Soviet Union in July 1944, the Soviet government planned to turn the city into an industrial center. The first post-war master plan of the city was developed in 1949, which conformed to the principles of monumental Stalin's city planning.

The speech of the Soviet Union Communist Party First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev, delivered in 1957, became an important event in the architectural development of USSR, and in particular considerably influenced the development of new Lviv housing estates. According to the speech every Soviet citizen was to become an owner of a proper home. To achieve this goal, building should have been standardized, and a number of large concrete panels, and cement and reinforced concrete production should be devised to construct them. Efficiency of construction industry can only be achieved through standardization and minimization

of a number of object types for construction.

“Masterplan – for each city!” – this motto proclaims that all cities of the Soviet Union have to be formed and fully developed in accordance with the scientific urban planning principles, valid for a period of 5 to 25 years. There is a clear distinction between urban space and industrial zones in the first general masterplan of Lviv, which was accomplished in 1956. Primarily it was planned to construct the large housing estate with an area of 192.2 hectares in the southern part of the city. Subsequently a new residential district of Sykhiv was built.

In 1958 a decision was made to construct three residential neighborhoods in three stages with a total living area of 521 200 sq. meters. With the standard of 9 sq. meters per person it was possible to settle 58 000 workers. The following percentage of residential buildings of different types was planned: 4-storeyed – 56.7% 3-storeyed – 42.5%, 1-storeyed – 0.8%. Social and cultural facilities as well as primary health care institutions and greenery areas were also envisaged. This masterplan became invalid after few years because of unexpectedly rapid population growth. It was adjusted in 1966 to reach an estimated population of 700 000 people.

It should be noted that the master plan of 1966 followed some principles of Tadeusz Ignatius Drexler, an architect who developed the concept of Big Lviv in 1930. It featured the growth of the city through annexation of suburbs and transformation of historically formed ring planning with preservation of the city historic center.

The city planning policy at that time aimed at the comprehensive development of new areas. This meant that industrial areas and housing estates for workers of the industrial enterprises had to develop simultaneously. The industrial zone be-

gan to form quicker. The industrial ring was formed around the future residential.

A shortage of manpower arose because of the rapid industrial development in the 1970th. 120 thousand workers went to the industrial hub of Sykhiv every day. This created serious traffic problems. That residential problem was solved due to the two-phase construction of 390 hectares housing estate.

Residential district was divided into four planning zones, with a T-shaped intersection of main roads in the center. Four planning zones were divided into twelve small areas - neighborhoods. In the center of this area a community center was planned to be built. Formally it had to fulfill 6 functions: trade, health care, public services, administration, education, culture and sport, hotel accommodation. Each neighborhood was planned for 7–10 thousand of inhabitants. Initial public services formed the neighborhood center. Each neighborhood had a kindergarten in its structure, and almost every had a school. It was allowed to build some important public buildings based on individual projects. Among them there is a cinema named after Oleksandr Dovzhenko, constructed in 1987, and Zubra trade center, constructed in 1994. Courtyards were established as the main place of recreation, advanced network of pedestrian alleys and boulevards was developed to create all necessary links between functions in the housing estate of Sykhiv. Schools, kindergartens, trade and public services were placed along boulevards. Shopping centers and 14-storeyed residential buildings were located on the cross-roads of pedestrian boulevards and main roads.

The main elements of the new housing estate of Sykhiv were the groups of elongated large panel 8-storeyed buildings. Architects from National Institute of Urban Design DIPROMIST improved the planning and constructional characteristics of a standardized project, added through passage on ground level. They tried to create local identity and distinguish it from typical Ukrainian housing estates applying of compositional methods to both scales of structure volume and facade detail. For example, the way of enclosure of balconies and loggias was modified and now it successfully displays the rhythm of white spots on the dark wall background.

Active usage of colours is the main visual feature of the estate, which strongly distinguishes it from other Ukrainian large panel houses with white tiles on the facades. 14-storeyed buildings, constructed with silicate brick based on individual projects became vertical accents of the estate.

Considering political propaganda and technologies that were used for Soviet promotion, aesthetics and cultural heritage of architecture of new housing estate Sykhiv perhaps were even more poeticized than the ancient part of the city of Lviv: 'Harmony, severity and rational planning of new residential areas, scenic topography of hills, richly covered with greenery, plastic of facades create its unique architectural symphony'.

The Post-Soviet Era

A new master plan of Lviv after the collapse of the Soviet Union was completed in 1993. Private property restoration process started. This meant drastic changes for urban planning, while the state was no longer a monopoly owner.

Industry situation changed dramatically. During the Soviet Era large industrial enterprises were the backbone of the socialist planned economy and small enterprises were given the second

ary role. When the independence of Ukraine was proclaimed, large industrial enterprises found themselves in crisis, and smaller enterprises began to appear rapidly. Nowadays there are 21 industrial enterprises, 373 trade institutions, 8 restaurants and 109 cafés in Sykhiv.

A new master plan Lviv-2025, which was approved in September 2010, aims at the creation of three specialized sub-centers of the city. Those include – commercial and business blocks, sports sub-center on the base of stadium constructed for Football European Championship 2012 and western sub-center of wholesale and retail. Proximity to the stadium served as a catalyst for further development of Sykhiv infrastructure.

Some significant changes of Sykhiv are evident: apartments on the ground floors of residential buildings along the main roads have been converted into shops and offices, the former Soviet apartments were transformed according to the European standards. These phenomena enhanced the quality of life.

Several brick houses and a youth housing complex were also built in the existing neighborhoods. This is connected not only with the availability of free area, but also with the amended service regulations of kindergartens and schools. At the beginning of Sykhiv planning process, kindergartens had to provide 65 places for children per 1000 inhabitants. Today the number is reduced to 30 places.

When the independence of Ukraine was proclaimed, housing estate of Sykhiv began to struggle against its own cliché of dormitory district. Despite the fact that its name appears in statistics of the most disadvantaged housing estates in Ukraine and stereotypical perception of residential areas with prefabricated housing, Sykhiv increasingly consolidates and identifies itself as a valuable urban formation integrated into the architectural and social life of the whole city.

In contrast with other districts, residents of Sykhiv form a strong community and solve almost all problems together.

Self-governing NGO of Sykhiv was created even before the official establishing of Lviv Administrative District of Sykhiv. NGO was based on the initiative group of residents, community leaders and religious institutions' agents, that do their best for the district to grow rapidly in all spheres, including cultural, religious and political.

Nowadays Sykhiv is the fastest growing administrative district of Lviv. City municipality and district representatives are planning to increase the number of cultural events and leisure activities for young people and construct in new IT-hub and some other architectural accents there. Due to Soviet ideology of urban policy Sykhiv had to become a perfect Soviet settlement. Its

public institutions and partly urban structure had to provide ideological reeducation of social groups in the communist spirit. On city planning level this intention was manifested by the enlargement on the scale of open public architectural spaces. That would allow to hold big mass meeting. Appropriate location of a community center emphasizes importance of such public institutions as the administrative party apparatus and the Palace of Pioneers.

In the second half of the 1980th the Soviet Union faced a deep economic and ideological crisis. Therefore complex of general community center was not built. As a result, a large square in the center of the housing estate remained vacant until 1993.

Change of ideological emphasis became one of the most characteristic features of the district transformation from Soviet Sykhiv to Sykhiv of independent Ukraine.

After an atheistic period was over and it became possible to rebuild churches and set new religious communities, Sykhiv has started an active religious life, which continues till now.

General community center with a political coloring, which due to Soviet concept had to be located at the intersection of the main streets – Sykhivska Street and Chervona Kalyna Avenue – now become a religious center of the district. The largest church of Sykhiv was built there – church of Nativity of the Holy Virgin, which became a symbol of a new life and new identity of the district. Appearance of church with its five golden domes is a vivid symbol of hope and is a major landmark and tourist attraction. Construction of the church was carried out under the project of Radoslaw Zhuk, Canadian architect of Ukrainian origin, who won an international competition. It should be noted that the community actively participated in the construction process. Monument to Pope John Paul II and a large park named after him are also located near the church.

Catholic University and Seminary of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church were built in the administrative district of Sykhiv in 2005. A group of architects received the State Prize in the field of architecture for this complex. The Evangelical house of prayer 'Golgotha' is also located here, which is one of the largest in the world. There is also a number of sacred object of other denominations there. Thus, there are 16 religious institutions of various faiths in the district.

Because of the intensive development of the district, rapid erection of new buildings and the formation of infrastructure, what is not typical for other similar prefabricated housing estates, Sykhiv requires new planning ideas to create the modern concept of development that would meet the urgent needs of the residents.

Under such circumstances an international open competition for the best urban concept of general community center was announced. The task of competition involved the creation of concept community center development as a multifunctional space developed system formed by a group of typological functional complexes. Participants should had to offer the solution of several problems, particularly to configure the central area along Chervona Kalyna Avenue taking into account its future connection with Lviv ring road; to modernize transport and pedestrian links along the avenue; to create a multi-layer composition of community centre with an active use of underground space; to provide interconnection with the system of spaces of natural landscape areas.

Nine projects of authors from different countries (Ukraine, France, Poland, Sweden, Greece) were presented for the competition. Authors of all projects emphasized on importance of the

place of Soviet community center, where nowadays church of Nativity of the Holy Virgin is located.

At the same time, the need of green area expansion was mentioned, especially its place within the recreational areas. Public services were offered to locate a variety of buffer zones among the most active (social) and quieter (housing and recreation) zones.

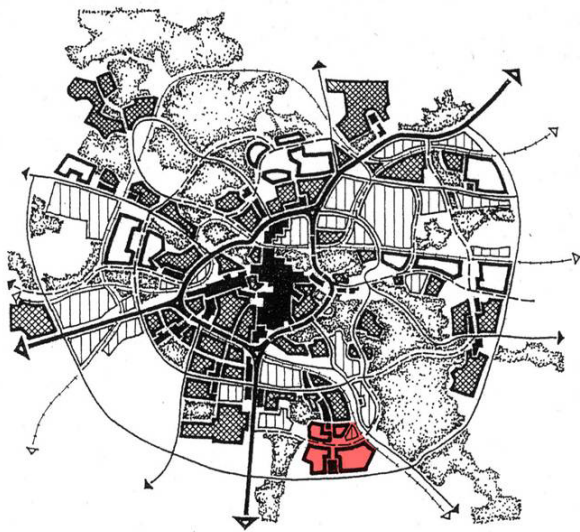
Parallel principle of functional zoning proposed in the project of architectural firm Domorinthos according to jury conclusions is the most effective in this urban setting. This Greece architectural firm won the competition.

According to the Greek project, a dividing strip of Chervona Kalyna Avenue should be broadened and filled with public buildings along the whole length, which is approximately two miles long. These constructions have a new emphasis on horizontal lines, which in combination with existing vertical accents creates a beautiful contrast. Floodplain land of river Zubra should become an active recreation area. In general community centre should provide basic services. Particular attention was paid to improving transport infrastructure and its integration into the general transportation network of Lviv.

The large Soviet panel housing estate of Sykhiv in Lviv with its nearly 50 years of design, construction and transformation has become one of the integral symbols of the city, combined in its structure and identity as a result of the activity of several generations of residents found its identity. In an interview Vasyl' Kamenshchuk, one of Sykhiv architects, optimistically said: 'Maybe someone does not like political motives of Soviet power, but economic motives of district construction were very serious. A huge amount of housing was built in very short time, and it will not be possible to repeat this project again. Today it would cost incredible money. What is the service life of this housing estate? It is eternal in its existence and its capacity for transformation'.

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il. 1. Ivan Bazarnyk, Andriy Shulyar, National Institute of Urban Design DII-PROMIST Housing estate of Sykhiv on the development scheme of Lviv, 1965. (©Roman Mykh); 1 – city centre, 2 – residential area, 3 – industrial area, 4 – green area, 5 – main streets and roads, 6 – railway, 7 – reserve area, 8 – housing estate of Sykhiv

il. 2. Photo of the Sykhiv model, 1975. (©Alina Petrova)





il. 3. Phasing scheme of housing estate Sykhiv construction, 1979–2012. (©Bogdan Cherkes, Natalia Mysak)

il. 4. View of housing estate of Sykhiv from the vegetable garden (©Bogdan Cherkes, Natalia Mysak, 2012)





il. 5. Church of Nativity of the Holy Virgin, architect – Radoslav Zhuk, 1995–2001. (©Bogdan Cherkes, Natalia Mysak, 2012)

il. 6. Competition project – Sykhiv community center, Greek architectural bureau Domorinthos, 2008