
PASAŻ WIECHA REVILATISATION CONCEPT

Passage's History

Today's Pasaż Wiecha (Wiech Passage) – former Pasaż Śródmiejski (Central City Passage) – is a part of architectural complex Ściana Wschodnia (Eastern Wall), erected from 1960 to 1969 as designed by Zbigniew Karpiński and Jan Klewin with team, winners of 1958 competition. Its outlook clearly represents late Modernism while its spatial and functional solutions, combining residential, shopping and entertainment functions, were based on Lijnbaan passage in Rotterdam of 1953 (designed by J.B. Bakm and J.H. van den Broeck; see: Marta Leśniakowska, *Architecture in Warsaw*, Warsaw 1998)

One of the main authors of the design, Zbigniew Karpiński, describes the passage assumptions:

"[...] I was fascinated by this subject as an entirely new concept; the idea was not to create a screen-wall and not to break the existing layout of streets but to create two combined schemes. The most difficult task was this small pedestrian passage behind the Wall. I was determined to achieve diversity and great scale of the foreground with cosiness of the back." (see: *Talks About Warsaw, Architecture* 1969 no. 12, p. 447).

For many years the Central City Passage was the main element of central Warsaw, hosting its top shops and entertaining spots, like cinemas and restaurants. At the break of 80s and 90s it gradually slowly lost its importance. Without proper maintenance and infrastructural investments, it became unattractive, neglected and even dangerous.

From 1999 to 2000 the new owner of buildings started general overhaul of the facades, interiors and surroundings of the Eastern Wall. It repaired facades and shop-windows of Wars&Sawa and Junior at the side of Marszałkowska and repaired the pavement all-along their shop-windows.

An important element of that process is the revitalisation of Pasaż Wiecha.

Passage's future

In the end of 2004 the owner of buildings (DTC Real Estate) requested the Warsaw Section of the Polish Association of Architects to organise a competition, in cooperation with the Town Head Architect, for the assumptions to the design of overhaul and reconstruction of the Passage. The competition was won by two teams of architects: "maas" s.c. and "Bulanda&Mucha Architekci".

On the basis of their design, the winners created a post-competition concept following recommendations of the Competition Jury and the investor.

The following key elements of the winning design have been retained:

- clearing the pavement by removal of bowls and low roofing;
- changing composition of western facade of Wars & Sawa and Junior from horizontal into vertical, the scale and shaping of which would resemble the facades at Chmielna street;
- introducing a new structure to cover the passage, based on the roof concept from the competition design.

Besides the above, the post-competition concept has introduced new ideas:

- **Warsaw originalities avenue**

This new idea stems from one of conditions of the competition requiring the renewed passage to contain special Warsaw elements. Following that postulate, the new pavement within the passage will become *Warsaw originalities avenue*: stone plates commemorating historic persons and events connected with Warsaw and creating its original character will be laid along the passage's axis. The first plate will be devoted to Stefan Wiechecki "Wiech".

- **Green wall**

According to the investor's postulate, the overhaul and reconstruction of the facade and shop-windows of the passage's western wall will include introduction of plants on steel nets, providing much more green elements than assumed in the competition-winning design. These elements will adjoin all emergency staircases, stretching to the top of the facade. Many plants will remain green in winter so as to vitalise the passage also in that season.

- **Passage of lights**

The analyses of methods to lighten the passage resulted in the system based on the competition-winning idea of a roof. Seventeen pillars 19 m high – ten inside the passage and seven all along its immediate neighbourhood – will lighten the pavement at night and provide additional lightening at daytime. In the evening and at night, lightened "wings" fixed on their top will render decorative illumination. At some places near to squares and streets the pillars will be dense while in narrow areas rather scattered. Each pillar will be divided into three parts. The lowest one, about 4 meters above ground, will contain an element to lighten the pavement and "the wings" at night. It will also provide decorative light to some adverts that can be hanged on pillars. The lightening elements are so designed to ensure optimum and diversified light for the passage not blinding the nearby blocks of flats and preventing any nuisance for their tenants.