

**Original Article**

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## **Analysis of the Swiss style in relation to the formation of contemporary architecture in Nałęczów**

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**Abstract:** Investment works are an integral part of the development of spa towns. The introduction of new, contemporary developments supporting the primary function is a crucial factor influencing economic growth. The ever-increasing interest in spa tourism exerts pressure on management units, whose aim is to improve the quality of the available offer and the infrastructure supporting user services. In the case of investment activities, an essential aspect is the protection of landscape and architectural values to preserve the unique identity of spa towns. The implementation of appropriate planning regulations concerning the location of new developments helps to better shape the space while maintaining its most valuable features. The provisions of the local spatial development plan and the Spa Act require managers, local authorities, and residents to comply with a set of regulations that help control ongoing investments. The history of the Nałęczów spa exemplifies the relationship between spatial context and architectural development. Various spa and residential buildings have played a significant role in shaping the interaction between space and users. Protecting the identity of Nałęczów and its unique architecture is a key aspect in ensuring public acceptance. The exemplary design concept of a contemporary service facility incorporates elements of historic architecture, allowing it to blend harmoniously into the existing spatial context. This minimises any negative impact on the landscape and the locality's identity. The proposed solutions illustrate the introduction of a contemporary structure in the immediate vicinity of the spa park, with full respect for the characteristics of the historic Swiss-style buildings.

**Keywords:** Nałęczów architecture, spatial context, Swiss style, health resort

### **1. Introduction**

As a result of adverse environmental impacts and lifestyle factors, there is a heightened prevalence of civilisation-related diseases in society. Due to increased awareness, interest in

spa tourism – a combination of therapeutic and tourist functions – is growing [1]. Its primary aim is to promote both physical and mental well-being among the elderly and the working-age population, who are most exposed to adverse environmental and social factors [2].

Considering current design trends, investment activities in health resorts are increasingly focused on introducing additional functions, transforming previously single-function spas into multifunctional facilities. This necessitates spatial and architectural transformations, including the adaptation of existing structures or the introduction of new architecture. Such developments may negatively impact the preservation of a place's identity, as the greatest assets of spa towns are not only their therapeutic properties, linked to the natural climate, but also their architecture and local traditions. Uncontrolled spatial transformation processes may lead to the loss of distinctive features that define a locality's identity; therefore, it is crucial to implement restrictions and guidelines for investment activities [3].

According to Wrana J., an important relationship exists between the environment and the perception of a given object, with spatial context playing a key role. When designing in an environment with a well-defined character, adapting to the existing context enhances the recognition and integration of the new development [4]. A favourable perception, resulting from the creation of a coherent spatial message, leads to greater identification with the newly introduced structure and a higher likelihood of repeated use of its services. For local inhabitants, who have an additional emotional connection to the space, acceptance is particularly important, as it stems from designing with respect for the existing spatial context [5].

Currently, there is a steadily growing interest in travel to spa destinations. Patients seeking these services come from diverse social backgrounds and age groups. Continuously improving the attractiveness and variety of available services is essential for maintaining a resort's spa status – granted to towns with proven therapeutic climates and infrastructure capable of providing healthcare services, such as accommodation facilities, medicinal water pump rooms, thermal pools, mineral water pools, and brine graduation towers. These enhancements significantly influence the development and adaptation of space to meet the needs of as many users as possible. The introduction of new functions is often necessary, requiring the addition of new architecture. Failure to address visitors' needs may result in the loss of potential customers and hinder development opportunities [6].

The Swiss style, also known as the Alpine or Tyrolean style, left a significant mark on the architecture of tourist and spa towns, particularly those with sources of medicinal mineral waters. Nałęczów also experienced the development of architecture in this style, directly influenced by the growing popularity of its health resort services. This study analyses and highlights the most important buildings in Nałęczów built in this style, identifying their key architectural values. After examining the challenges posed by urban spatial development, a list of the most significant architectural elements was compiled. Isolating these elements facilitates a deeper understanding of existing architectural values, which, in turn, should aid in designing modern architecture that harmonises with the existing spatial context. As an additional outcome of the analyses, the creation of an exemplary concept for a service building illustrates the possibilities of shaping contemporary architecture while preserving the town's unique landscape. The wooden villas are an integral part of the historical background, and the study's authors have chosen to incorporate their characteristic features as identifying elements and sources of design inspiration to ensure seamless integration into the existing spatial context.

## **2. Problems of spatial transformations in spa towns**

### **2.1. Threats arising from the need to revitalise spa areas**

Identifying a city's identity involves a subjective evaluation of the elements that contribute to the unique character of a space. Architecture, shaped over the years and influenced by the activities of its inhabitants, plays a crucial role in preserving the identity of a city or region. The development of industry, tourism, and commerce significantly impacts the appearance of a space. In spa towns, the shaping of residential and service buildings is closely linked to the town's primary function, with associated structures developing in parallel with the most significant element – the spa park [7].

The areas of spa towns are highly attractive for new investments. However, a potential threat lies in the introduction of overly intensive development. This applies not only to large-scale investments, such as multi-family housing, but also to single-family housing. The same issue concerns service buildings, which, while enhancing the functional appeal of the spa, may also disrupt its traditional landscape. The introduction of contemporary architectural layouts featuring modern, large-scale structures can compromise the unique character of the environment [8]. The excessive expansion of urban infrastructure, particularly with buildings serving functions unrelated to the spa's tourist services, may alter the town's character and even lead to the loss of its spa status [9].

The globalisation of trends in health tourism is increasing the importance of spa developments in improving service quality. Rapacz A. and Januszewska M. observe that patients are placing greater emphasis on the functionality, sustainability, accessibility, and safety of service buildings [10]. However, a significant risk associated with the homogenisation of spa architecture is the loss of the distinct identity of spa destinations, as well as the regional identity unique to a particular area.

### **2.2. Analysis of planning conditions**

In spa towns, the fundamental element of the spatial structure is an extensive park layout, accompanied by representative buildings. The formation of the urban layout results from the relationship between specific landscape values and natural healing factors [11]. Bernat S. highlights that spa parks are often considered among the most important public spaces in spa towns [12]. Due to the provisions of local spatial development plans, the design of contemporary cubic structures within these areas is often prohibited or requires special derogations and permits. An example is the regulation in the local spatial development plan for Area II – Nałęczów. According to the development rules for the area covering the Nałęczów spa park, the construction of new cubic buildings is prohibited [13]. Such regulations are necessary to control and limit construction within spa parks, thereby preserving historical layouts. However, these stipulations can sometimes pose a challenge when there is a need to introduce new structures aimed at enhancing the tourist services of the entire establishment.

Spa municipalities, or those with spa status, belong to a special category of municipalities. The presence of designated spa areas within a municipality determines its status, making the spa function the leading one and enabling the commune to obtain official recognition as a health resort and develop accordingly. The activities undertaken by the self-government of spa municipalities focus on implementing specific tasks related to this status. As a result, the spatial policy of the entire municipality, not just the spa area itself, must be

aligned with its designated function. The Act of 28 July 2005 on health resort treatment, health resorts, health resort protection areas, and health resort municipalities, along with local spatial development plans, establishes numerous guidelines for municipalities with spa status. These guidelines regulate not only the development of new buildings but also the types of economic activities that residents can undertake [14]. The spa status of municipalities allows for stricter control over prospective developments and the protection of both the urban structure and the landscape.

To ensure greater and more precise control over planning and investment activities, three spa protection zones are designated in areas covered by spa status. According to the Spa Act, these zones are identified by the letters "A," "B," and "C" [15]. Zone "A" has the most restrictive guidelines and includes areas where infrastructure elements directly related to spa functions exist or are planned. Zone "B" consists of areas in the immediate vicinity of Zone "A," primarily designated for service buildings that enhance tourism services for the entire area without negatively impacting the healing properties of the spa microclimate. Zone "C" includes the areas furthest from the spa core, with its primary objective being the protection of landscape and climatic values. This is achieved through various restrictions, including prohibitions on tree felling, the extraction of natural resources, and drainage works [16].

Proper investment activities are only possible through the implementation of well-structured legal regulations governing spatial planning. Deficiencies or poorly formulated guidelines in planning documents can lead to negative spatial transformations, directly affecting both spa areas and their surrounding protection zones. The consequences of inadequate spatial policies include the construction of buildings that, due to their external form – such as colour, scale, and materials – fail to integrate harmoniously with the existing spatial context. The presence of such structures negatively impacts the landscape values of spa towns [3].

### **3. Case study of Nałęczów**

#### **3.1. Nałęczów as a spa town**

Initially, Nałęczów was a small settlement with just over 500 permanent residents. The town acquired its name in 1772 when it became the property and residence of the Małachowski family of the Nałęcz coat of arms. The first bathing establishment, which utilised the curative ferruginous springs, was established in the early 19th century [17]. From then until the period of the November Uprising, the park complex and its accompanying buildings in Nałęczów were continuously developed. However, following the destructive actions of the Russian army, the park gradually fell into disrepair. In 1878, three doctors purchased the park and its buildings, initiating a restoration process that lasted until 1880. After its reopening, Nałęczów experienced its greatest period of prosperity, which continued until the outbreak of the First World War. In the interwar years, due to neglect, the park lost much of its former grandeur. After World War II, many new buildings were constructed in Nałęczów, introducing additional services to support tourism [18].

The town's primary function as a spa is reflected in the numerous accompanying buildings, which are either integrated into the park complex or situated in its immediate vicinity. The main facilities offering therapeutic and wellness treatments include:

- Sanatorium Księżę Józef;
- Sanatorium Fortunat;

- Pawilon Angielski;
- Werandki;
- Stare Łazienki;
- Sanatorium Rolnik;
- Water complex „Atrium”.

The extensive range of spa-related services caters to the diverse needs of visitors to the town. Nałęczów has a well-developed infrastructure, with facilities primarily aimed at individuals seeking to improve both their physical and mental well-being [19]. The current appearance of selected spa facilities in Nałęczów is presented below (Figs. 1–6).



Fig. 1. An example of spa development in Nałęczów – Sanatorium Książę Józef, 2023, *source: own study*



Fig. 2. An example of spa development in Nałęczów – Pawilon Angielski, 2023, *source: own study*



Fig. 3. An example of spa development in Nałęczów – Werandki, 2023, *source: own study*



Fig. 4. An example of spa development in Nałęczów – Stare Łazienki, 2023, *source: own study*





Fig. 5. An example of spa development in Nałęczów – Sanatorium Rolnik, 2023, *source: own study*

Fig. 6. An example of spa development in Nałęczów – Water complex “Atrium”, 2021, *source: own study*

### 3.2. Spatial context in relation to historic residential architecture

Facilities providing residential services played a crucial role in the spatial and functional infrastructure of spa towns. In her publication, Przemycka N. describes how these buildings, serving as accommodation for incoming patients, became an integral part of the urban landscape [20]. The founder and initiator of the villa district in Nałęczów was engineer Michał Górski, who had owned the estate since 1880. In matters of spatial development, he placed particular emphasis on principles guiding the construction of new villa buildings. To maintain the spa character of the town, he introduced restrictions on the location of residential buildings and the fencing of plots. Most of the buildings constructed between 1880 and 1900 were wooden villas in the Swiss style. Meanwhile, Nałęczów also saw the development of brick residential buildings in the Italianate style. Notable examples of this style include Willa Tolin (1882), Willa Ukraine (1883), and Willa Wołyń (1884). In the second half of the 19th century, several buildings representing the Lublin Neo-Gothic style were also built, with Willa Różana (constructed between 1889 and 1893) being one of the most significant examples [21]. Over time, buildings in the Zakopane style also appeared. The villa district primarily developed along Armatnia Góra Street and Lipowa Avenue [20].

According to a publication by Kwiatkowski B. and Gazda Ł., the residential architecture of Nałęczów is among the most characteristic elements of the town, second only to the core spa developments. Wooden and brick villas located around the park complex complemented the main function of the town by offering residential services. These buildings became an inseparable part of the landscape, shaping the overall identity of Nałęczów [22]. The location of selected villas is illustrated on the map below (Fig. 7).

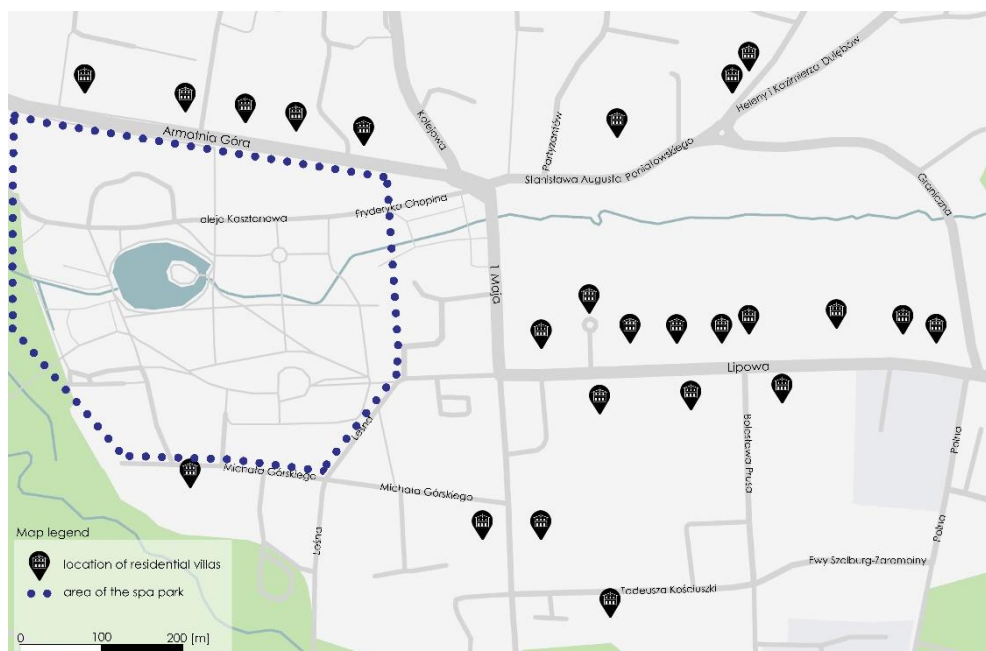


Fig. 7. Location of historic residential villas in Nałęczów, *source: own study, map source: <https://snazzymaps.com/>*

### 3.3. Swiss style as an example of local identity

The Swiss style in spa architecture was inspired by the traditional Swiss mountain house and reached Nałęczów in the 1880s. It became a widely accepted architectural canon in many spa towns [22].

The main features of the style include a wooden structure – typically log construction – and a wooden façade finish. One of the most recognisable characteristics of Swiss-style houses is their roof, which has a distinctive slope, usually around 25–30°. Additionally, the roofs feature projecting eaves that create canopies around the buildings [23]. Based on an analysis of the villas in Nałęczów, elaborate woodcarving ornamentation stands out as a defining element of the style. These carvings typically form floral or geometric motifs, appearing mainly as openwork patterns on balustrades and as decorative elements on gables and terrace canopies. Rich wooden ornaments are also often found on window frames. Regarding façade finishes, the boarding is typically arranged in vertical and horizontal patterns, depending on the placement of wooden cornices (under-window, over-window, or cordon cornices). An examination of the external appearance of the villas reveals the presence of numerous balconies, terraces, loggias, and porches. The massing of some buildings is relatively fragmented, irregular, and asymmetrical. Few buildings feature stone foundations. In all cases, the wooden window frames incorporate muntin bars that divide the panes.

Table 1 presents an analysis of the villas in Nałęczów, identifying the key features of the Swiss style and their occurrence in selected buildings. In most cases, the villas exhibit the characteristic elements of the style, differing only in details influenced by topographical conditions or other factors. The photographs in Figs. 8–15 illustrate the analysed residential buildings.





Fig. 8. Willi Dwór Górskiego, 7 Górskiego Street in Nałęczów, 2023, *source: own study*



Fig. 9. Willi Oktawia, 12 Armatnia Góra Street in Nałęczów, 2021, *source: own study*



Fig. 10. Willi Podgórze, 16 Armatnia Góra Street in Nałęczów, 2021, *source: own study*



Fig. 11. Willi Widok, 22 Armatnia Góra Street in Nałęczów, 2021, *source: own study*



Fig. 12. Willi Słoneczna, 4 Tadeusza Kościuszki Street in Nałęczów, 2023, *source: own study*



Fig. 13. Willi Regina, 7 Lipowa Street in Nałęczów, 2021, *source: own study*





Fig. 14. Willi Mazowsze, 19,21 Lipowa Street in Nałęczów, 2021, *source*: own study



Fig. 15. Willi Nagórze, 27 Lipowa Street in Nałęczów, 2021, *source*: own study

Table 1. Features of the Swiss style in the analysed villas, *source*: own study

Name and address of the facility	characteristic roof pitch	protruding eaves	balconies	terraces, loggias, porches	symmetry of the main body	stone foundation	woodcarving ornamentation	number of axes of the front elevation
Willi Dwór Górskiego 7 Górskiego St. 24-140 Nałęczów	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	6
Willi Oktawia 12 Armatnia Góra St. 24-150 Nałęczów	x	x		x		x	x	6
Willi Podgórze 16 Armatnia Góra St. 24-150 Nałęczów F	x	x		x		x	x	5
Willi Widok 22 Armatnia Góra St. 24-150 Nałęczów	x	x		x	x	x	x	9
Willi Słoneczna 4 Tadeusza Kościuszki St. 24-140 Nałęczów	x	x		x	x		x	3
Willi Regina 7 Lipowa St. 24-140 Nałęczów	x	x		x	x		x	5
Willi Mazowsze 19,21 Lipowa St. 24-140 Nałęczów	x	x		x			x	9
Willi Nagórze 27 Lipowa St. 24-140 Nałęczów	x	x		x		x	x	8

#### 4. Summary – Swiss style in contemporary Nałęczów development

Based on the analyses conducted, a design concept for a contemporary service building incorporating Swiss-style features was developed. The primary objective was to integrate characteristic elements related to the overall massing of historic residential buildings and the architectural details present in the area.

The proposed building is to be located at the intersection of Armatnia Góra, 1 Maja, and Stanisława Augusta Poniatowskiego Streets, a key junction in the city. The study area directly borders the north-eastern entrance to the spa park, making it a strategic location for new service-oriented development. The placement of the proposed facility aligns with the principle of situating spa-supporting infrastructure around the park complex. The exact location of the study area is illustrated on the map (Fig. 16).

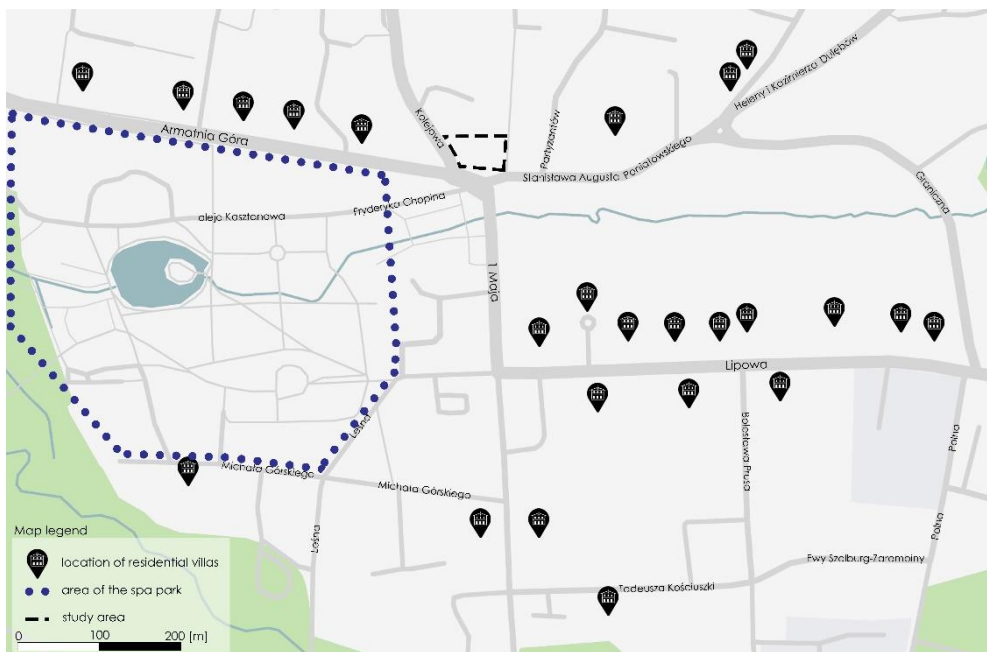


Fig. 16. Location of the study area in relation to the location of the historic villas and the spa park, source: own study, map source: <https://snazzymaps.com/>

In the local spatial development plan, the selected area is designated with the symbol U-5 [13]. The provisions outlined in the resolution define its primary function as non-intrusive services. Based on an analysis of the planning guidelines, a café with a coffee roasting facility has been proposed as the main service function. According to the development plan, impassable building lines have been set back at appropriate distances from the plot boundaries, depending on the road classification. Regarding volumetric design regulations, the proposed development complies with the specified guidelines for maximum storeys (a maximum of three above-ground storeys is permitted, while the designed structure has two above-ground storeys) and maximum building height (the permitted height is 12 metres, whereas the designed structure reaches 9.85 metres). The local development plan also defines the acceptable range for the roof slope inclination (between 25° and 40°) as well as the permissible colour schemes and types of

external finishing materials. The proposed building concept fully aligns with these regulations concerning the formation of new structures. The area falls within Zone B of the spa protection area, and the intended service function of the proposed building complies with the Spa Act and does not violate any of its provisions.

The conceptual design includes two independent buildings, with their spatial arrangement illustrated in the three-dimensional model (Fig. 17). The positioning of these structures allows them to be perceived as a unified whole, particularly when viewed from 1 Maja Street. This arrangement is a deliberate design choice, drawing inspiration from historic villas, which frequently consist of multiple interconnected volumes linked by terraces and verandas.

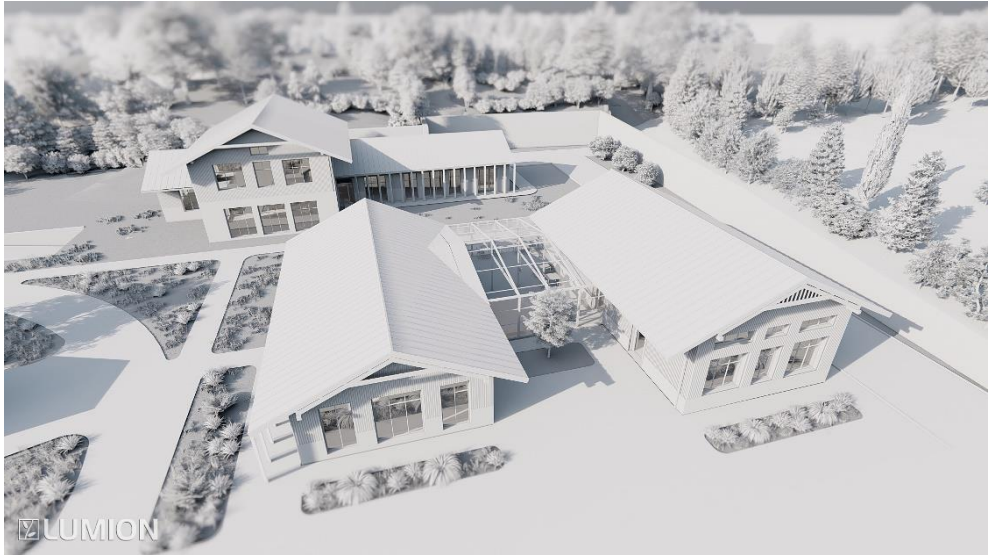


Fig. 17. Aerial view showing building arrangement, *Source:* own study

The buildings were designed with gable roofs at a 25° pitch, featuring visible roof truss elements and elongated eaves extending outward. A shared characteristic of Building A and Building B is the triaxial composition of their main structures, defined by window openings. However, neither building has a central axis of symmetry.

For the external walls, wave-shaped and plain-plate architectural concrete has been selected as the finishing material. The façade divisions, determined by the type of concrete used, reference the vertical and horizontal formwork found on the historic villa facades. The contemporary window frames incorporate muntin bars, maintaining a visual link to traditional architectural elements. In historic villas, terraces and elongated eaves were often supported by wooden posts. As a symbolic reference to this feature, vertical planks have been introduced along the right-hand side of Building B's façade, attached to the edge of the eaves. Below are the front elevation drawings of the proposed buildings (Figs. 18–19).

The main design principles of the presented concept respond to the spatial context of Nałęczów in a contemporary manner. The external features of the designed buildings symbolically reflect elements of Swiss-style architecture. This interpretation, as expressed in the proposed concept, ensures that the buildings possess local development characteristics and integrate harmoniously into Nałęczów's existing spatial context. Crucially, the external form of the buildings does not replicate or imitate the existing Swiss-style villas but instead offers a modern adaptation of their defining elements.



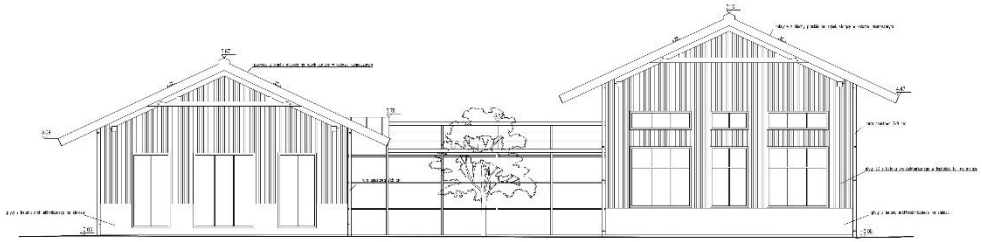


Fig. 1. Front elevation of Building A, *Source: own study*

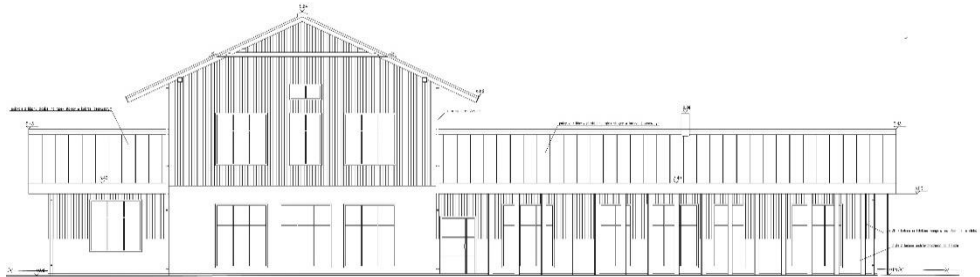


Fig. 2. Front elevation of Building B, *Source: own study*

The Swiss style did not undergo significant development in Nałęczów, as it was soon replaced by newer architectural styles, including Art Nouveau and the Zakopane style. The town's representative character encouraged dynamic shifts in architectural trends, making it essential to initiate a discussion on establishing standardised design solutions for the Swiss style. Such solutions could be incorporated into contemporary architecture as a means of honouring and preserving historical patterns while ensuring their relevance in modern urban development.

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