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Searching for City Centre of Stalowa Wola

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Abstract. In cities that have historic urban layout, with a clearly separated main representative space – the main square, or the main street (a pedestrian area), specifying the location of the centre is not difficult neither for residents nor for people from the “outside”. Interesting is a situation in which, in the structure of the city there is no clearly designated main public space equipped with all the necessary services, and the period of location and development of urban system falls on the twentieth century. One example of such city in Poland is Stalowa Wola - founded in 1938 as part of the Central Industrial District. The city was located not far away from Rozwadów town, which, because of the development of Stalowa Wola, was absorbed by the new structure and became a district of the bigger city.

1. Introduction

Recognisability is very important in the evaluation of the city. In a city, where a noticeable drop in the number of inhabitants occurred in the last few years, all kinds of activities to stop emigration are particularly important. In Stalowa Wola, municipal authorities attempting to improve living conditions in the city, decided, as part of the revitalization of the city, to create high-quality public spaces. Regions dedicated to revitalization have been designated in the Diagnosis, which identified the main areas requiring intervention. After the performed analyses, it turned out that the most requiring intervention areas directly adhere to the terrains with the potential to become the centre of the city, which is missing in Stalowa Wola.

2. Location and historical conditions

Stalowa Wola is a city located in south-eastern Poland, in the Subcarpathian region (figure.1). The number of residents of the municipality reaches about 63 000 inhabitants [11], placing it as one of the largest cities in the country, in terms of population. The location of the city is associated with the location of the Central Industrial District (CID) – the project implemented in the 30s of the XX century.

Stalowa Wola, often called the pearl of the CID, was one of the few objectives of the project, which has been partially met. (*The project of CID construction assumed the creation of new, among others - Nowa Dęba, Poniatowa, Stalowa Wola - and the alteration of the existing towns*). Therefore, the city can be a good example of the Polish urban thought of the late 30s of the 20th century [1].

The construction of Stalowa Wola has its origins in 1938, when the so-called Southern Plants (Southern Plants, after World War II, known as the KM Huta Stalowa Wola) [7] were formed south of Rozwadów (figure.2), and the housing estates were designed for their residents. In Stalowa Wola, as in the functional city, a special division was implemented into areas with different functions and purposes for different social groups. (The estates were intended for workers – divided into downstream and upstream workers, officials, engineers and executive directors [1]). The effects of such a layout system, as well as social and functional segregation are still visible today. [6] (In the city, there is still a significant functional division, there are also mainly the mono-functional areas, during the in situ studies it has also been observed that despite large service complexes, there are no basic services.) The boundary



between the “better” and “worse” side of the city was and still is the railway line connecting Lublin with Przeworsk.



Figure. 1. Location of Stalowa Wola against the country is marked by red circle [10]

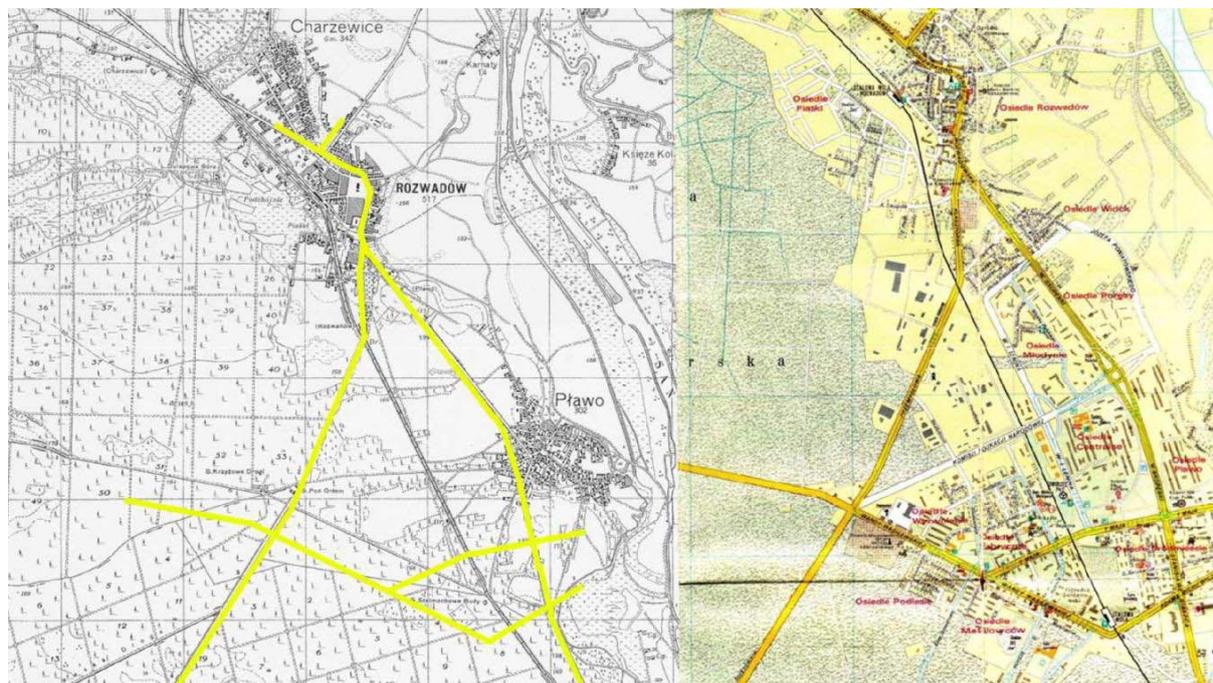


Figure.2. Rozwadów and the Pławo village with the main streets of Stalowa Wola marked in yellow [8].

Initially, on the south-west side, called “Zatorze” by the residents, the industrial plants and the workers’ housing estate was located, and on the north-east side – the official estates (figure. 3). In the post-war period, the virtually non-destroyed city started to gradually develop and grow. The old Rozwadów, which in the 1690 – 1973 was an independent town, has been absorbed by a larger structure and has become one of the districts of Stalowa Wola (figure.2). The bloom and the fastest development of the city was in the 50s and 70s of the 20th century. The current demographic trends are downward, which enhances the emigration of residents observed for several years. Fearing the outflow of residents, the

municipal authorities undertake a series of actions aimed at the improvement of the quality of life in the city.

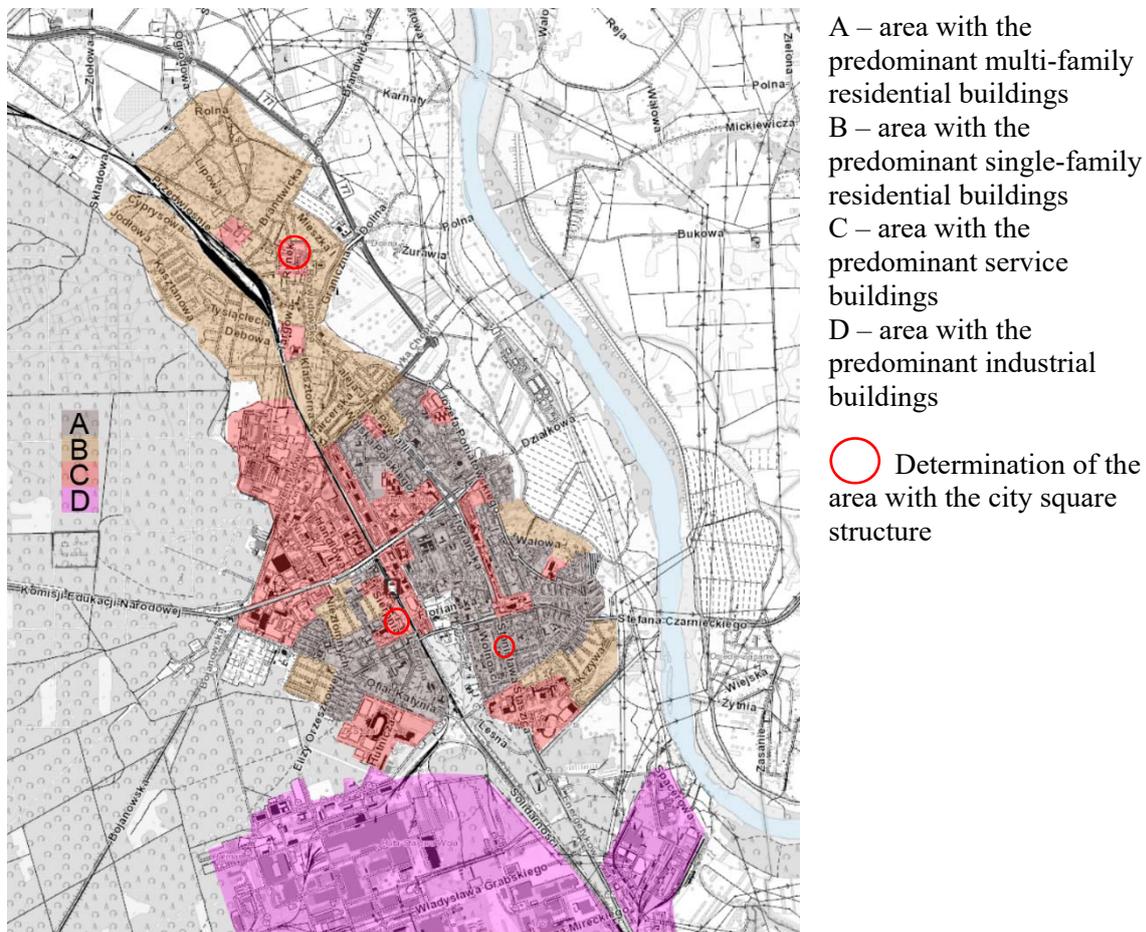


Figure.3. The functional and spatial structure of Stalowa Wola [9]

3. Determinants of the representative public spaces

In order to determine the sites potentially meeting the conditions, which should be met by the main urban space, the spatial conditions of Stalowa Wola were analysed. The structure of the city's buildings is diverse. In addition to the objects from the late 30s, there are blocks of flats and clusters of the single-family residential buildings. The architecture, created after the period of the city location, is consistently deployed maintaining the character of the buildings. There is no mixing of buildings of high and low intensity. Rozwadów is a characteristic complex of single-family housing in the city's structure, with the rectangular main square, which serves as a square now (figure.2,3). The remaining part of Stalowa Wola is the block building from various periods, from which the city took its origins in the 30s of the 20th century.

During the analysis of the areas with the centre-creative potential, the spatial, functional, social and historical conditions were considered, as well as the attempts to improve the quality of spaces undertaken by the municipal authorities. The structure of the buildings in Stalowa Wola was analysed and three areas were selected with the character of the city square (figure.3) – the main square in Rozwadów, Józef Pilsudski square and the square near the “Ballada” cinema – mainly due to historical reasons [3]. (*An unsuccessful attempt to create a city square near the “Ballada” cinema was mentioned in the literature*). Assessing individual areas, the points in the scale from 1 to 4 were awarded, where 1 meant very weak/none, and 4 meant very well (table.1). The spatial arrangement was analysed based on the rules of urban composition, [4] giving the highest score to the main square in Rozwadów, which space has the right proportions and form in order to become a representative city square, next was the Pilsudski square. By studying the functional conditions, a complex of service areas was additionally selected at

Okulickiego street. The density of centre-creative functions was assessed, based on the determinants provided by M. Nowakowski: the uniqueness of functions, the degree of spatial concentration of functions and the degree of saturation with the disposing and service functions, the size of function concentration, the level of spatial solutions, the value of bio-urban human environment and the level of spatial solutions [2]. With regard to the centre-creative functions, the best marks were obtained by the lands at Okulickiego street, then J. Pilsudski square and the main square in Rozwadów. Then, the communication accessibility was analysed, it was rated very well for the Pilsudski square and service areas at Okulickiego street. The main square in Rozwadów was assessed slightly lower. The highest rating for the undertaken design activities was awarded to the Pilsudski square, for which the concept of restructuring has already been made, the student workshops were also held, which aimed at the inclusion of citizens into the design process, and the competition will be held regarding the urban concept of the square. The competition was held for the main square in Rozwadów, within which a concept was selected, which did not receive approval of the residents.

Table. 1. Summary of results of the conditioning analysis.

Place	Spatial system	Saturation with centre-forming functions	Communication availability	Project activities	Social acceptance
Main square in Rozwadów	4	2	3	3	1
Józef Piłsudski square	3	3	4	4	4
Square near the „Ballada” cinema	2	1	1	2	1
Service areas near Okulickiego street	1	4	4	1	3

During the assessment, points from 1 to 4 were awarded, where 4 means very good, and 1 – very weak/none.

The social acceptance of the studied locations was considered as the last element, by asking respondents the question: *where is the centre of Stalowa Wola?* Despite the imperfect structure of the square and the insufficient, currently, amount of disposing and service functions, the Józef Piłsudski square has been identified most often by the residents as the city centre. Among 30 respondents, aged 14 to 75, the question: where is the centre of Stalowa Wola – 8 people indicated the service areas at Okulickiego street, 10 people stated that Stalowa Wola has no centre, and 12 indicated the Pilsudski square (table.2) Moreover, within the project entitled “Modelling the comprehensive revitalization of Stalowa Wola using the tools of social participation”, the municipal authorities see the ability to create a space with the representative nature in the vicinity of the Municipal Community Centre, among others, in the Józef Piłsudski square, which further confirms the belief of the social acceptance for this place.

Table.2. Summary of responses to the question about the centre of Stalowa Wola.

Answers	Respondents' age		
	14 - 30	31-60	61<
Stalowa Wola has no centre	-	9	1
Service areas at Okulickiego street	2	4	2
Józef Piłsudski square	4	4	4

It is worth noting that the respondents were not provided with the ready answers to choose from, they gave their own answers. The square near the “Ballada” cinema nor the main square in Rozwadów were not taken into account at all by the respondents.

After the assessment of the conditions of the above-mentioned areas, Józef Piłsudski square was selected for a more detailed analysis. (table.1).

4. Pilsudski square

The outline of the square from the north-west side is closed by the façade of the “Arkadia” building (former restaurant, now a music club) and a residential building, in which the social housing accounts for a high percentage. From the north-east, the square is restricted by the railway line (The railway line no. 68, connecting Lublin with Przeworsk, to be modernised) [5], and from the south by the greenery and the residential buildings. The square divides the 1 Sierpnia street and the parking area into half.



Figure.4 View of the Józef Pilsudski square from the north-west side (from the “Metalowiec” office building) [13].

In the design studies for the square, the connection of the representative part was proposed, located by the Municipal Community Centre, with a part located on the north-east side, currently separated by the street and parking (figure.4). The designers have also included the greenery into the scope of the study, which is located to the south from the Municipal Community Centre of Stalowa Wola.

One of the analysed projects was made by the Cracow architectural office SSC Architekci. The concept assumes the creation of a promenade by the Municipal Community Centre, the representative space at the Pilsudski square and the administrative centre in the part of the square currently occupied by the parking (figure.5). This solution would undoubtedly increase the importance of the place and, as it has been observed by the residents, it would have a positive influence on the revival of the space, at the same time becoming a place, which could be identified as the city centre. Municipal authorities have not stopped at one project.

Searching for new solutions and seeking to include the resident into the design process workshops have been organised, under which six design concepts were developed for the area in question. (Student workshops within the project „Modelling the complex revitalization of Stalowa Wola using the tools of social participation” (original:“Modelowanie kompleksowej rewitalizacji Stalowej Woli z wykorzystaniem narzędzi partycypacji społecznej”) took place in December 2016.)



Figure.5 Visualisation of the SSC Architekci project [12].

Maintaining traffic in the current range with altering or elevate the road surface, or with adequate marking, was in the majority of the projects, like in the design of the Cracow office (figure.6). In one project, there was a proposal to move the road from the 1 Sierpnia street to the area of the railway line (figure.7). Although after the presentation of the concept to the residents, it was this proposal that attracted most of the attention, it seems that it closes the possibility to connect two sides of the city, introducing an additional spatial barrier in the form of a road, which strengthens the existing division. Some projects assumed the connection of the Pilsudski Square with the service areas at Okulickiego street by creating the object connecting both zones. (figure.8) The place seems to be perfect for the location of the main railway station – the object, which thanks to its location could connect two parts of the city. Location of the main train station in the city centre, connecting the representative area with the service-trade area would give the opportunity to create a space with a completely new quality for the city. These projects are worth attention because a new commercial facility is to be created in the service area (at Okulickiego street), and the planned electrification of the railway line will reinforce the importance of the rail as a means of transport.

5. Discussion and Results

Studies devoted to Stalowa Wola primarily focus on the historical perspective of the spatial structure of the city and its architecture, only mentioning the existence of the public spaces, with no analyse of their quality, or the way they operate. The exception is the square near the “Ballada” cinema [3]. The subject literature analysed previously states that the ability to clearly determine the city centre is important for the recognisability of the urban centre and the assessment of its socio-economic position. Creation of the “living” public space of high quality is not possible without the social acceptance.

Józef Pilsudski square, selected by the municipal authorities, as the area with the greatest potential to become the city centre, actually has the most characteristic features for the main public representative space. Among the analysed sites, in its present form, without introducing project activities, the Pilsudski square meets also the highest number of requirements posed to the city centres. However, in order to create an attractive public space in Stalowa Wola, significantly affecting the assessment of the socio-economic position of the city, the comprehensive social and spatial revitalisation is needed.

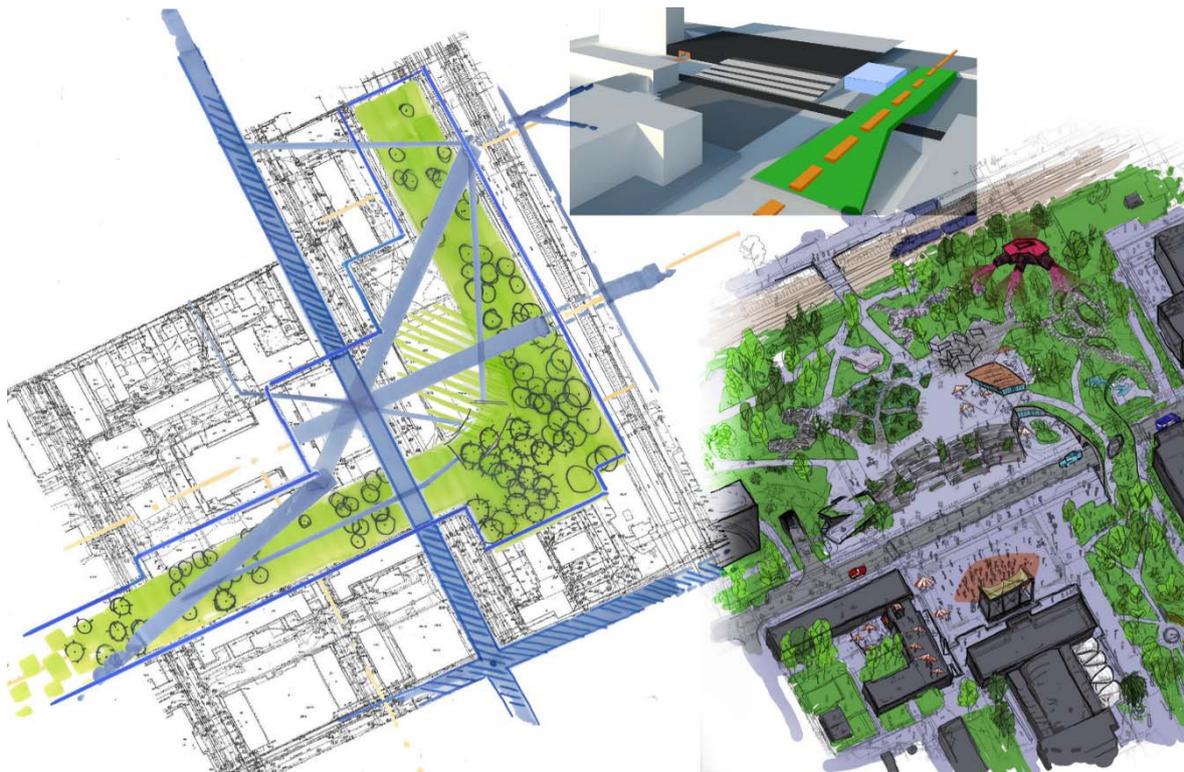


Figure.6 The project made within the workshops by the design team: Chmielowiec Kacper, Jakubczak Magdalena, Stypułkowska Ewelina, Wiczak Jarosław, under the direction of moderators [14].



Figure.7 The project made within the workshops by the design team: Błasiak Kinga, Kania Marek, Podścińska Paulina, Sito Magdalena, under the direction of moderators [14].

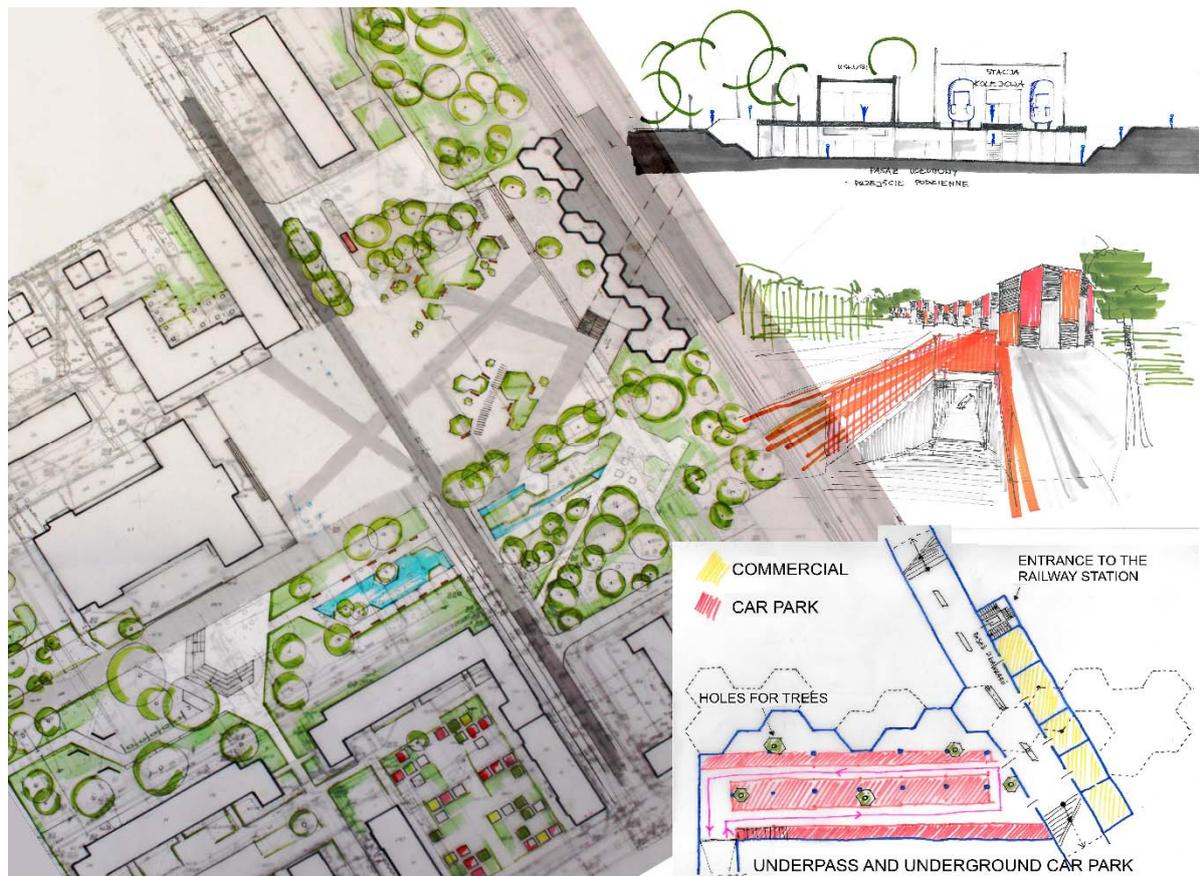


Figure.8 The project made within the workshops by the design team: Najgebauer Krystian, Przytuła Mateusz, Wędzicha Wojciech, Zabielska Katarzyna, under the direction of moderators [14]

6. Conclusions

In the context of design attempts for the above-mentioned square, it can be assumed that in the near future it will be a place with the representative nature. Service functions, which are currently lacking, should be completed after meeting the assumptions proposed in the projects. Any shortcomings in the service functions in the area of the square can be supplemented by the service areas located in the close proximity, at Okulickiego street. The presence of the railway line, currently operating as a spatial barrier, is also an element with the unused potential in terms of availability. After the electrification of the railway line, there is an opportunity to strengthen the position of the square by the proximity of the railway station, which could also serve as a connector of two parts of the city. The place, which currently divides the inhabitants, after the revitalization, could become an element connecting the city into a whole. Stalowa Wola has the great potential to create a very attractive center of the city.

Acknowledgment(s)

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