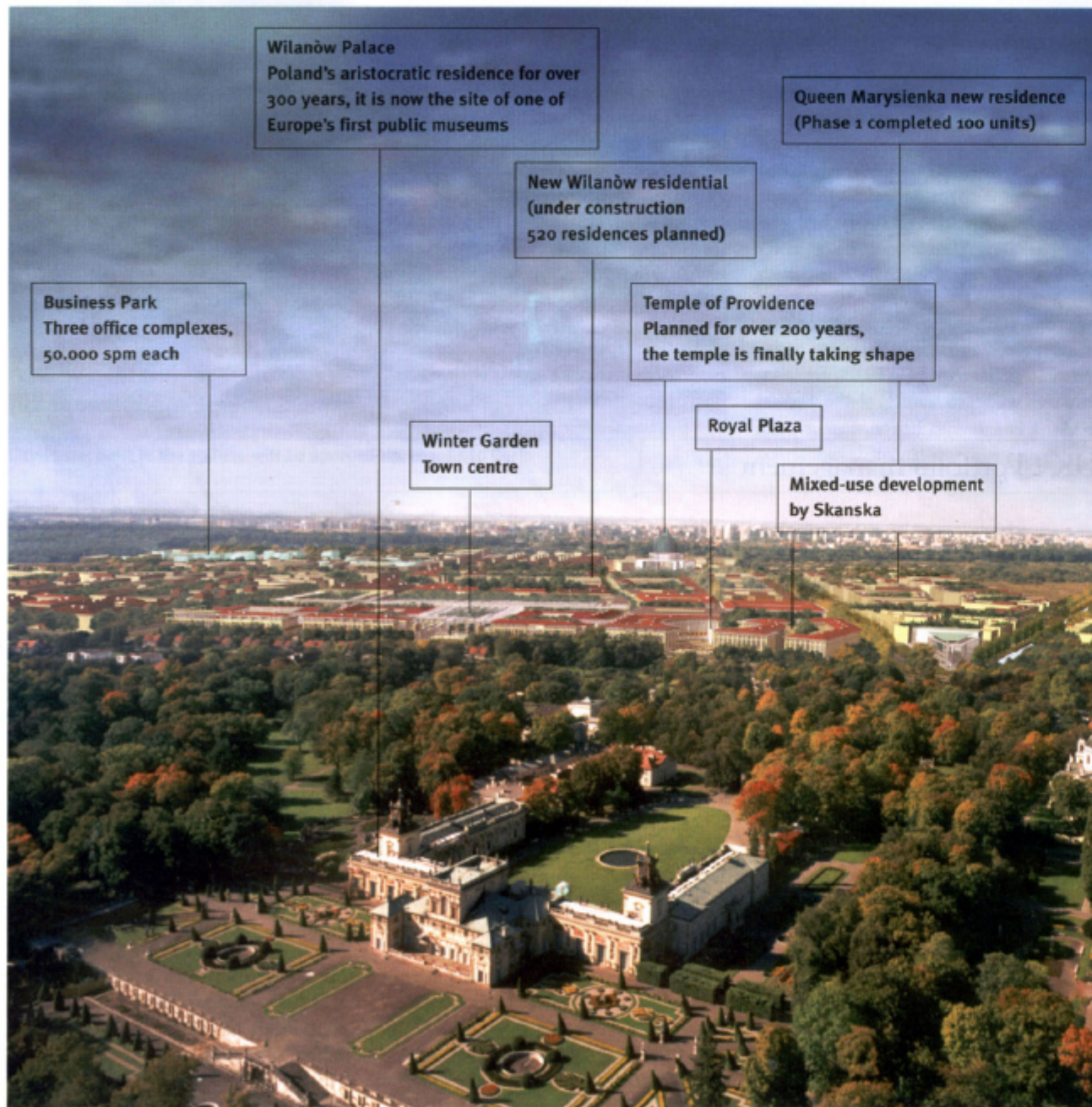


Poland / Residential developments

Warsaw's residential horizon



Source: www.in-vi.com

in europe

With only 15% of the city's territory covered by a valid master plan, developing new districts in the city hasn't been easy. Nobody knows this better than Investment Environments (INVI), the international design and development services company behind Miasteczko Wilanów, one of the city's up and coming mixed-use neighbourhoods. Estimated to accommodate over 25,000 residents, Miasteczko Wilanów is set to be the big bang of Warsaw's predicted residential boom.

by Auria Bohn

Based on an aesthetic found in many European and North American neighbourhoods a new district is emerging just outside the heart of Warsaw. Soon, young and old alike will be taking late evening strolls along the canals, playing fetch in the park on Sundays with the dog, and shopping at the local farmers market. At least these are the hopes of Investment Environments, the master planning team behind one of Warsaw's largest mixed-use communities. Presently, the 169-hectare site owned by Prokom Investments S.A., is being developed eight km outside the city centre. The new urban district includes a residential area, town centre, office and institutional areas as well as public spaces, parks and gardens. Speaking with REurope, Guy Perry, Managing Director of Investment Environments, explained the ins and outs of planning Warsaw's residential neighbourhoods and why Wilanów will soon be a place many Warsawians will be hanging their hats.

WHERE DID YOU START YOUR CAREER?

It began in Barcelona. I worked on a project involved with preparing the city for the 1992 Olympic games. There I think I developed a false hope that we could transform every city the way we transformed Barcelona back in the 80's.

WHY CENTRAL EUROPE?

What I am finding is that the markets in Central Europe have a lot of similarities to the markets of Spain back in the 1980's. Back then we were able to make some positive adjustments to Spanish cities, creating a better value and new neighbourhoods in many of them. We are trying to do the same now in Central Europe.

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS ESSENTIAL IN THE MASTER PLANNING PROCESS?

When planning we try to involve the local designers as much as possible. We don't recruit a bunch of foreign architects to try and create an expo site. We really try to utilize the local skills. One of my strongest beliefs is that even in a global economy, the towns and cities need to have a local character, and that is not just having people like me making references to what is local. It means working with the local architects, encouraging them to develop their own architectural vernacular, incorporating their knowledge of their society and local traditions.

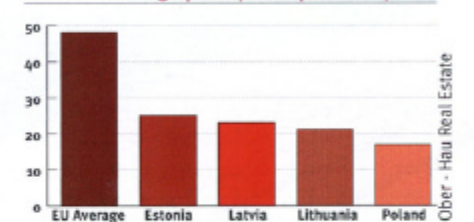
WHAT IS ONE OF YOUR MAJOR STRENGTHS IN MASTER PLANNING?

One thing I can do is read a city very quickly. I can understand how our project or projects will be able to complement that city.

WHAT DO YOU READ ABOUT WARSAW?

In Warsaw, I read a city that was rebuilt after the war. Parts of it were nicely done, espe-

Chart - Living space per capita in sqm



cially during the 50's there were some nice areas that were rebuilt. But following that, in the 60's 70's 80's and 90's the majority of the developments were not places that the citizens were proud of. They didn't build places that people wanted to hang their hats and call home for the rest of their lives.

DO YOU LIKE MODERN ARCHITECTURE?

Yes, I do. But there is a scale problem when you do it too big. In Poland you find buildings over 1.5 km long. However good the architecture may have been you can't do successfully at that scale.

HOW DOES YOUR APPROACH DIFFER?

We try to maintain a more human scale with our projects something that hasn't really been done since the 50's. We also try and use a variety of local architects to break up the scale of the projects. For example, there may be one major architect overseeing a plot and he will engage with two other architects who are along the same wavelength to give texture to that same plot, which is then apart of many other plots. In this way you create neighbourhoods more comfortable for people to walk around in. This is one of the main things that differentiate our developments from others.

AND WHAT IN YOUR OPINION DOES WARSAW NEED MOST?



Guy Perry, Managing Director, Investment Environments