

Competition Assignment / Reconstruction of Pavlov City house with surrounding area in Kharkiv (17.2.2026)

INSPIRELI FOR UKRAINE series

General Context

Ukraine is currently undergoing one of the most profound transformations in its history as a result of the unprovoked war launched by the Russian Federation in 2014 and escalated to a full-scale nationwide invasion in 2022. The scale of this war is the largest in Europe since the Second World War, while its nature differs fundamentally from any previous military conflict.

Throughout the war, there have been repeated, deliberate attacks on cultural heritage sites aimed at their destruction, including the museum of the Ukrainian philosopher Hryhorii Skovoroda in Skovorodynivka, the Shukhevych Museum in Lviv, the systematic looting of museums in southern Ukraine, and numerous other documented cases. These actions clearly demonstrate that Ukrainian culture and cultural heritage constitute a direct target of this war.

This reality elevates the issue of heritage preservation to an unprecedented level of urgency. Ukrainian culture is an integral and distinct component of European culture, and the preservation of the full spectrum of European historical memory is impossible without Ukraine.

The loss of each historic building entails not only the physical disappearance of an architectural object, but also the loss of the historical narratives, meanings, and factual authenticity associated with it.

The objective of this project is the preservation and reinterpretation of Ukraine's cultural heritage.

To address this objective, one of the most vulnerable cities and a severely damaged heritage site have been selected — the Pavlov Estate, an early 19th-century manor located in the historic centre of Kharkiv.

Historical, Economic and Social Context

Kharkiv and the wider Kharkiv region occupy a distinctive position within Ukraine. Although geographically located near the country's edge, the city has consistently generated key Ukrainian ideas and has exerted a substantial influence on the evolution of Ukrainian culture.

In the 17th century, this territory was known as the *Wild Field* — not because it was uninhabited, but because it existed in a condition of political uncertainty. It functioned as a frontier between the Crimean Tatar Khanate, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the Russian Empire. During this period, the area attracted people of an adventurous and entrepreneurial disposition, seeking opportunity and escaping constraint.

For almost two centuries, *Slobozhanshchyna* operated under a preferential fiscal regime. People settled in *slobodas* — communities exempt from serfdom and taxation — a condition that later shaped both the name and, more importantly, the ethos of the region. For an extended period, this was a borderland without rigid central governance: a territory where inhabitants enjoyed the right to private enterprise and a comparatively high degree of freedom of action.

It was here that a Ukrainian tradition of intellectual independence and free thought took root. In the 17th century, Hryhorii Skovoroda — a Baroque philosopher — lived and travelled freely across Slobozhanshchyna, among the first to articulate freedom, human happiness, and the right to self-determination as foundational values.

These territorial qualities generated a sequence of exceptional developments in subsequent periods. One of the most consequential was the establishment of the first university in Ukraine — an “entrepreneurial” civic initiative led by the scholar, entrepreneur, and public figure Vasyl Karazin, supported by local business representatives. This event reshaped the entire region by establishing a durable bridge between Kharkiv and Europe. European — particularly German — professors were invited to teach at the university, accelerating cultural and economic exchange and ultimately catalysing technological, scientific, and гуманітарний (humanities-driven) development.

A further turning point came with the introduction of the railway in the 19th century. This transformed Kharkiv into one of the empire’s major industrial centres, while simultaneously driving rapid growth in the quality and accessibility of education at all levels. The increasing concentration of educated citizens contributed not only to scientific advancement but also to broader societal change, including the emergence of the idea of an independent Ukrainian state and, later, the Ukrainian People’s Republic. This is particularly striking: despite being one of the Ukrainian cities most exposed to imperial influence, Kharkiv became a site where the movement toward independence crystallised — a continuation of the same underlying “frontier” culture of freedom present since the city’s founding.

In the following decades, the Bolsheviks — fully aware of these risks — invested significant effort in controlling the territory, designating Kharkiv as the capital of the Ukrainian Soviet republic. Contrary to the intended political outcome, this status triggered a new wave of development and an intellectual and cultural

surge. Writers and artists gravitated to the city; Ukrainian culture flourished in Kharkiv at a scale that became incompatible with the Soviet regime. After a brief period of creative latitude, the 1930s brought an unprecedented campaign of repression against the intelligentsia — later termed the *Executed Renaissance* — which physically eliminated a generation of cultural leaders. This was followed by the Holodomor genocide, which affected much of Left-Bank Ukraine and inflicted some of its gravest losses in this region.

The capital later moved to Kyiv, yet Kharkiv's advantageous logistics and significant intellectual capital compelled continued state investment. In the 20th century, the city evolved into one of the Soviet Union's largest scientific and industrial centres. World War II inflicted severe destruction, yet postwar reconstruction restored much of the city, preserving key development resources and intellectual capacity. Even during late Soviet stagnation, Kharkiv retained a space for experimentation and ambition — reflected, among other things, in the establishment of the Kharkiv Metro system, which was in principle reserved for republican capitals.

With independence, social processes “thawed” and both culture and economy regained momentum. Kharkiv re-emerged as a major cultural, commercial, entrepreneurial, and educational centre, and in the early 21st century as Ukraine's leading IT hub. The Russian war once again interrupted these trajectories, dismantling existing development drivers: logistics and trade were severed, turning the city into a cul-de-sac; security conditions undermined education and industrial activity. Today, with its potential temporarily held in suspension, the city is searching for a renewed identity and a viable future — a fact underscored by the return of approximately 1.2 million residents to a city situated close to the Russian border despite ongoing fire risk.

Any new construction or renovation must respond to these historical, economic, and social layers. Kharkiv requires deep transformation capable of reactivating development while safeguarding its unique cultural identity — shaped by its long-standing condition as a historical frontier within European cultural geography.

Urban Context and Planning Situation

The Pavlov family estate is located within the historic urban fabric of Kharkiv, at 13 Poltavskyi Shliakh Street. The area historically known as *Zalopanska Sloboda* derives its name from its position beyond the Lopan River in relation to the former Kharkiv fortress.

The settlement originated in the 17th century and, following large-scale reconstruction in the 18th century, acquired a regular urban layout. The district

developed linearly along the historic road connecting Kharkiv with Poltava and Kyiv — Poltavskyi Shliakh — which continues to function as one of the city's key transport corridors. The area is situated between the historic city centre and the railway station, established in the second half of the 19th century.

In the 18th century, Zalopanska Sloboda was predominantly developed with urban estates and manor houses belonging to local elites and officials. With the arrival of the railway and the emergence of the Blahovishchensky Market, the area gradually incorporated manufactories and small-scale enterprises. Later, income-generating residential buildings were added. Despite isolated discordant contemporary insertions, the district has largely retained its historic character, building scale, height profile, and parcel structure.

Within Zalopanska Sloboda, several vertical historical landmarks define the urban silhouette, including the Annunciation (Blahovishchensky) Cathedral, the fire station tower, and St. Dmytrii Cathedral, currently undergoing restoration. In addition, local urban accents include the Moskva Hotel (Poltavskyi Shliakh 14) and the Burkevych income house (Poltavskyi Shliakh 1). As the district lies in a topographic lowland, the preservation of its traditional building scale is critical to maintaining the legibility and expressiveness of the city skyline.

The Pavlov Estate, together with a limited number of other buildings, represents the Classical architectural style, which is of particular value for preserving the stylistic diversity of Kharkiv's historic urban fabric. The majority of surrounding development dates from the 19th to early 20th century and is executed in eclectic, Romantic, or Art Nouveau styles.

Today, Poltavskyi Shliakh functions as the district's primary transport artery, serving both vehicular traffic and tram lines. At the location of the estate, the street expands into a generous hexagonal square, formed on the site of an 18th-century lake that was subsequently drained.

Overall, the state of preservation of the historic building stock is unsatisfactory. Ongoing missile attacks have subjected historic structures in the area to repeated shock waves and vibrations, resulting in structural deformation, cracking, and cumulative damage.

The initial segment of Poltavskyi Shliakh Street, where the site is located, currently functions as an extension of the city centre with moderate social activity. At the same time, the square surrounding the Pavlov Estate is framed by a concentration of civic, cultural, and residential functions, including:

- Novobavarskyi District Administration and Administrative Service Centre (Poltavskyi Shliakh 11);

- Theatre for Young Audiences (Poltavskyi Shliakh 16);
- Police Department (Poltavskyi Shliakh 18);
- Multi-storey residential buildings (Poltavskyi Shliakh 17, 20, 22, 24);
- Administrative and office buildings (Poltavskyi Shliakh 9, 15).

In early 2025, Kharkiv's first pedestrian street was opened near the beginning of Poltavskyi Shliakh, significantly increasing the area's development potential. Parallel discussions are underway regarding the comprehensive reconstruction of Poltavskyi Shliakh Street, aimed at improving living conditions for residents, safeguarding cultural heritage, enhancing road safety, and expanding urban greenery.

Due to its proximity to the historic city centre, central river embankments, and the "Strilka" park — a key urban recreational area — as well as its preserved historic environment, Poltavskyi Shliakh holds strong potential for pedestrian-oriented tourism and the activation of public life.

Object/Об'єкт



The manor building was constructed in 1832 according to a design by architect Andrii Ton, commissioned by Yehor Pavlov, the grandson of the merchant Isaia Pavlov. The Pavlov family belonged to the respected local merchant class, a status clearly reflected in both the prominent location of the estate and its architectural scale.

The family operated commercial trading rows at the former Market Square, today known as Pavlivskyi Square, which was later named after the Pavlov family, underscoring their economic and social significance within the city.

The estate originally functioned as a comprehensive urban manor complex. In addition to the main residential building, the property included a landscaped garden, wooden and masonry service wings, a carriage house, stables, a kitchen building, a cellar, and an icehouse. This ensemble typology reflects the spatial and functional structure typical of early 19th-century merchant estates and contributes to the historical and architectural value of the site.



By the beginning of the 21st century, the estate comprised a two-storey building of complex plan geometry. The structure consisted of an original U-shaped core volume, dating from the early 19th century, supplemented by later two-storey extensions added to the north-eastern and western sides of the building.

These subsequent additions altered the original spatial configuration while remaining subordinate to the historic core, reflecting successive phases of functional adaptation typical of urban estates evolving over time. The resulting composition forms a layered architectural structure, in which the original Classical volume remains legible despite later accretions.



Architectural Description: Façades and Interior Elements

The historic core of the building was executed in the Classical style and is characterized by a strictly symmetrical composition. The principal façade is oriented toward the square along Poltavskiy Shliakh Street and is crowned by a projecting portico composed of four Corinthian columns. The portico dominates the overall composition in height and projects beyond the primary façade plane, forming the building's key architectural accent.

The ground floor is articulated with rustication, while the window openings are framed with decorative reveals and sculpted keystones. Within the portico zone, the façade between the windows is articulated by pilasters, which continue on the second storey and are terminated with Corinthian capitals. A balcony with wrought-iron railings was originally located on the second floor within the portico.

Second-storey windows are enriched with stucco surrounds and pediments. Above these windows, aligned with their vertical axes, are decorative stucco compositions featuring central medallions flanked by bas-relief serpentine motifs extending symmetrically to either side. The first and second storeys are visually separated by a projecting frieze, reinforcing the horizontal articulation of the façade.

On the left side of the northern façade, a single-storey annex is attached, currently housing the main entrance, together with an arched carriage passage leading into the courtyard. This section, like the primary building volume, is finished with rustication. The carriage arch is accentuated by decorative stone finials positioned on its flanks.

The western façade follows a compositional logic analogous to that of the principal façade, with similar articulation and window placement; a later extension adjoins it on the southern side. The eastern extension projects beyond the line of the original eastern façade, partially obscuring it. The finishes of this extension, as well as those of the south-western section, are devoid of decorative detailing and, on the eastern and southern elevations, lack plaster finishing.

The original interior finishes have largely not survived. Fragmentary elements remain in isolated areas, including portions of stucco cornices and coved ceiling transitions. Notably, the historic stair structure with wrought-iron balustrades has been preserved, representing one of the few surviving authentic interior features.



The building functioned as a private manor until the beginning of the 20th century, after which it was adapted for use as the “KhAST” Hotel. This change in function reflects a broader urban transformation of Kharkiv at the turn of the century, when former merchant estates were increasingly converted to hospitality and commercial uses in response to the city’s rapid economic and social growth.

The building served as a private manor residence until the early 20th century, after which it was adapted for use as the “KhAST” Hotel. This functional transformation corresponds to broader urban processes in Kharkiv at the turn of the century, when former merchant estates were increasingly repurposed to accommodate hospitality and commercial functions within the expanding city centre.



In 1914, the building was further adapted and began operating as the “Epstein” Hotel, continuing its role within Kharkiv’s early 20th-century hospitality infrastructure and reflecting the city’s ongoing urban and commercial development.

Damage Assessment

The building sustained a direct missile strike by a Russian Iskander missile on 6 July 2022. The impact resulted in the partial collapse of the central portion of the

structure. The main part of the central façade — including the portico — was destroyed. The strike caused the failure of the portico columns, the external walls of the northern elevation, the floor structures at both the first and second storeys, and the roof structure in the central and northern zones, as well as extensive loss of internal partitions.

Brick buildings of this period were typically reinforced by metal tie belts / restraint rings at the level of the first and second floor structures, including connections tying the portico columns back to the main volume. As a result of the missile impact, these steel elements were torn apart, leading to a critical reduction in the overall structural stiffness and stability of the building. The portico columns were destroyed together with their forged reinforcing rods, and the timber structure forming the portico ceiling/floor assembly was completely lost.

Structural cracking developed in both external and internal load-bearing masonry walls. The roofing of the surviving portion has been deformed, resulting in active water ingress and progressive saturation of interior spaces.

The missile strike and associated blast wave caused systemic damage to all architectural finishes. The collapse of the portico columns led to the destruction of stucco capitals, the cornice, and façade ornamentation around window openings. Window and door infills were lost, and finishing layers on all façades were damaged. Internally, widespread collapse of finishes occurred throughout the building: stucco cornices and decorative elements were destroyed, and wall plaster was lost. The collapse of the balcony structure resulted in damage and deformation of the wrought-iron balcony railings.

Overall, the building is in an emergency (unsafe) condition. Approximately 30% of structural elements have collapsed, and over 70% of the structure is assessed as damaged.

Following the attack, a controlled removal of debris was undertaken. Recovered fragments of stucco ornamentation were collected and retained, enabling accurate future reproduction of the original profiles and detailing.

Competition Tasks

A comprehensive restoration and recovery programme must be proposed for the damaged building, in compliance with European heritage protection principles and legislation. The building has official protected status as a cultural heritage monument. This means that, notwithstanding the extent of damage, all surviving authentic elements are protected and may not be demolished without appropriate scientific justification and conservation rationale.

At the same time, the lost parts of the building may be reinterpreted, and the question of how to address the missing volume remains open for debate. Within

the scope of the project, it is essential to preserve the historical memory of the place, the urban scale, and the key spatial parameters of the development in order to maintain the historic character of Poltavskyi Shliakh Street and the identity of the surrounding public space.

A parallel and equally important task is the identification of a viable contemporary programme for the building. The project should reintegrate the site into the city's current cultural, social, and economic life, transforming it into a centre of social gravity and generating an impulse for district revitalisation. Given the area's potential and its proximity to pedestrian and recreational zones, the building is envisioned to be adapted to an effective public function, with active use of the surrounding urban space. The proposal should create conditions for the reactivation of social life and enable comfortable and safe street-level presence, responding realistically to the current social context and fully leveraging the site's potential.

A distinct task is the revalorisation of the territory surrounding the building, including the square, the background historic fabric, and internal courtyard spaces.