Event Stations: A New Narrative for Declining Gas Stations

by

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Contents

Abstract

This thesis examines the abandonment and potential of gas stations in Windsor, Ontario. As ubiquitous structures of the urban roadside, gas stations became an important piece of infrastructure for the city and the automobile. The emergence of new technology, alternative fuels, and a shift in attitudes reduces our future dependence on gas stations. As a result, existing gas stations will be at risk of abandonment. As urban infrastructure, this is an opportunity to create new narratives with city events and reintegrate gas stations that engage the neighborhood. Introducing new architectural elements, this thesis seeks to transform the gas station into the Event Station, a public space that is both ordinary (for the everyday) and special (for city events), a place for inhabitation.

Acknowledgements

To the Event Station team, Steve Parcell and Diogo Burnay, thank you for your guidance, encouragement, and humor throughout this journey as we navigated from station to station.

To my extended family of architecture friends that I have made here in Halifax, thank you for your support and friendship. You have all made this a wonderful experience. Special thanks go to Kristina Bookall for your help during the final moments.

To mum and dad, thank you for your love, support, and prayers during these past four years, I couldn't have done it without you both.

Chapter 1: Introduction

> The closer things get to nonexistent the more exquisite and evocative they become. (Koren 2008, 50)

A gas station in Portland, Oregon during gas shortage in 1973; photograph by David Falconer (Falconer 1973)

Whether abandoned or existing, gas stations are scattered along the urban roadside, found in residential neighborhoods, at street intersections, along highways, and on county roads. The ubiquitous gas station is a common denominator that cities have and have depended on. Observing the built environment, the quality of *terrain vague* and gas stations come to mind and are closely linked. In *Anyplace*, Sola-Morales defines the term *terrain vague* as “empty, unoccupied,” yet also “free, available, unengaged” (Sola-Morales 1995, 118). Despite this paradoxical meaning, he argues that these spaces are not negative (Sola-Morales 1995, 120). They are spaces with potential that the imagination has yet to fill.

During the mid-twentieth century, the number of gas stations was at its peak. Canada had approximately 20,000 gas stations and the United States had 150,000 (CSP 2008). Since then, these numbers have declined considerably, with 11,929 in Canada (Kent Group Ltd. 2019) and 116,000 in the US. As a result, the accumulation of these potential *terrain vagues* will need to be addressed. More often than not, these brownfield spaces are ignored in favor of greenfield development. Kevin Lynch hints to these emerging phenomena: “If these phenomena are simply regarded with distaste, if our only hope is to hide them or push them farther away from wherever we happen to be, then in time we shall live surrounded by our own excrement” (Lynch 2009, 190). Here Lynch paints a future environment in which vacant and abandoned gas stations will become part of the city image.

The need to change our perspective of these urban spaces, not as “empty” but as sites to be inhabited, will be explored.

Chapter 2 examines the topic of gas stations to reveal their past, present, and future conditions. Prospective designers who plan to reuse gas station sites face challenges due to environmental remediation and liability. An understanding and approach will be investigated to work with this diminishing urban network.

Chapter 3 uncovers opportunities in which new life and architectural programs can inhabit the gas station. This will highlight themes of community, inhabitation, and transportation for potential test sites in the city of Windsor, Ontario.

Chapter 4 explores opportunities for existing and new elements of the gas station which can be integrated with an Event Station. Three approaches will be investigated: (1) introducing permanent elements, (2) reusing existing gas station elements, and (3) inventing temporary event elements.

Chapter 5 presents the Event Station as a part of the city narrative, using the framework from previous chapters and presenting four different scenarios. Each scenario explores the Event Station’s portrayal of ordinary neighborhood events and special city events.

Thesis Question

How can the adaptive re-use of a diminishing network of gas stations be reintegrated into a city by amplifying city events?

Chapter 2: Gas Stations

This chapter analyzes the history of gas stations to help understand their present trends and future possibilities. It will highlight challenges to inform the methodology of the thesis. Gas stations are a part of the built environment in every city but are also an infrastructure that is diminishing. Seen as future waste spaces of the city, the idea of *terrain vague* presents an alternate perspective in regarding the gas station as fertile ground for urban interventions to take root.

Everyday Infrastructure

They go unnoticed until the need to refuel your vehicle arises. This layer of urban infrastructure has become a part of our everyday routine. The gas station typically includes a canopy, a soaring sign, and a convenience store selling consumer goods. In some cases, it offers other auxiliary services such as a set of restrooms, air pumps, telephone booths, and car wash facilities.

As icons of the roadside, they stand out by displaying their company identity, acting as beacons for drivers (Jakle and Sculle 1994, 42). David Freund, an American photographer, set out to capture the mundane activities that surround the everyday ritual of refueling your vehicle. In his photobook, *Gas Stop*, he documented gas stations located throughout America, photographing both urban and rural gas stations. He comments:

> The painter Miles Forst once described gas stations as a place to go to fill up your tank and shut off your brain. That morning, however, I became aware of gas stations as a locus for many elements that characterize America. And whether stopping in or hanging out, people in motion are often around to enliven and propel the narrative. (Freund 2020)

Here Freund reinforces our daily and weekly encounters that make the gas station a local meeting place in the neighborhood.

Sign - Wayfinding

Roof - Shelter

Box - Market

Telephone - Communica-tions

Air Pumps - Supply

Elements of a typical gas station

The Evolution of the Gas Station

In 1888, along a tourist route in the city of Wiesloch, Germany, the first filling station was introduced alongside the city pharmacy, as a small side business. It was placed on the curbside in front of the storefront, using a manual lever to pump fuel into your vehicle. Since then, the typology of the gas station has undergone a series of iterations and approaches. In the following decades, the design of the gas station would be re-shaped and re-invented, as a reflection of the changing needs of society. The 1920s design of the gas station was carefully introduced to blend into the neighborhood, borrowing architectural styles, materials and proportions (Jakle and Sculle 1994, 161). As a new market, this was done to avoid standing out on the American roadside. However, during the depression years of the 1930s, the stagnant market resulted in the oblong box type, which “would stand apart from the surrounding features” (Jakle and Sculle 1994, 161). New materials such as porcelain enamel and bright colors were employed to attract the attention of customers.

Later on, gas stations became standardized in their assembly. This would later be developed into a marketing strategy of place-product-packaging. This strategy allowed for companies to design their brand identity into all aspects of the gas station. This included “building forms, textures, colors and spatial arrangements” (Jakle and Sculle 1994, 19), as a result giving the gas station a recognizable identity within the built environment.

Decline in Gas Stations and Emerging Trends

A study by the Boston Consultant Group projects that fuel retail markets will become unprofitable in fifteen years (Rubeis et al. 2019). This decrease is due to the emergence of diverse mobility options, fuel efficient vehicles and strict environmental policies. European countries have already outlined plans to end the sales and production of internal combustion vehicles: by 2025 for Norway and 2035 for the UK (Berman 2019). A survey done by consulting firm MJ Ervin & Associates found there are fewer than 11,850 gas stations in Canada, down from more than 20,000 in 1989 (Lee 2014).

Despite the modest plot size of a gas station, there is potential in the distribution of many gas stations throughout established neighborhoods in a city. The existing infrastructure and support systems are already in place, and with emerging technology and city plans, these gas stations could be transformed.

Limited Opportunities for Re-use

When a gas station closes, its possibilities for reuse are limited. A survey done by Brian Coffey and Darrel Norris studied the post-occupancy of gas stations in western New York. Their findings revealed that closed gas stations were adapted to either auto-related business or commercial use or were left vacant. Opportunities for residential zoning require stricter environmental regulations, due in part to the increased potential for human exposure, thus resulting in higher clean-up costs (EPA 2009, 13). When gas stations are left vacant, they are lined with wired fencing or concrete jersey barriers guarding the perimeter of the site, thus becoming symbols of blight. This would only amplify the

negative effect on the neighborhood. In turn, this would dissuade future investment and foot traffic. These places may also become areas for illegal dumping or crime to occur (RCI Consulting and MMM Group 2010, 2).

A vacant gas station, surrounded by concrete jersey barriers (Google Maps, 2009.)

Contamination

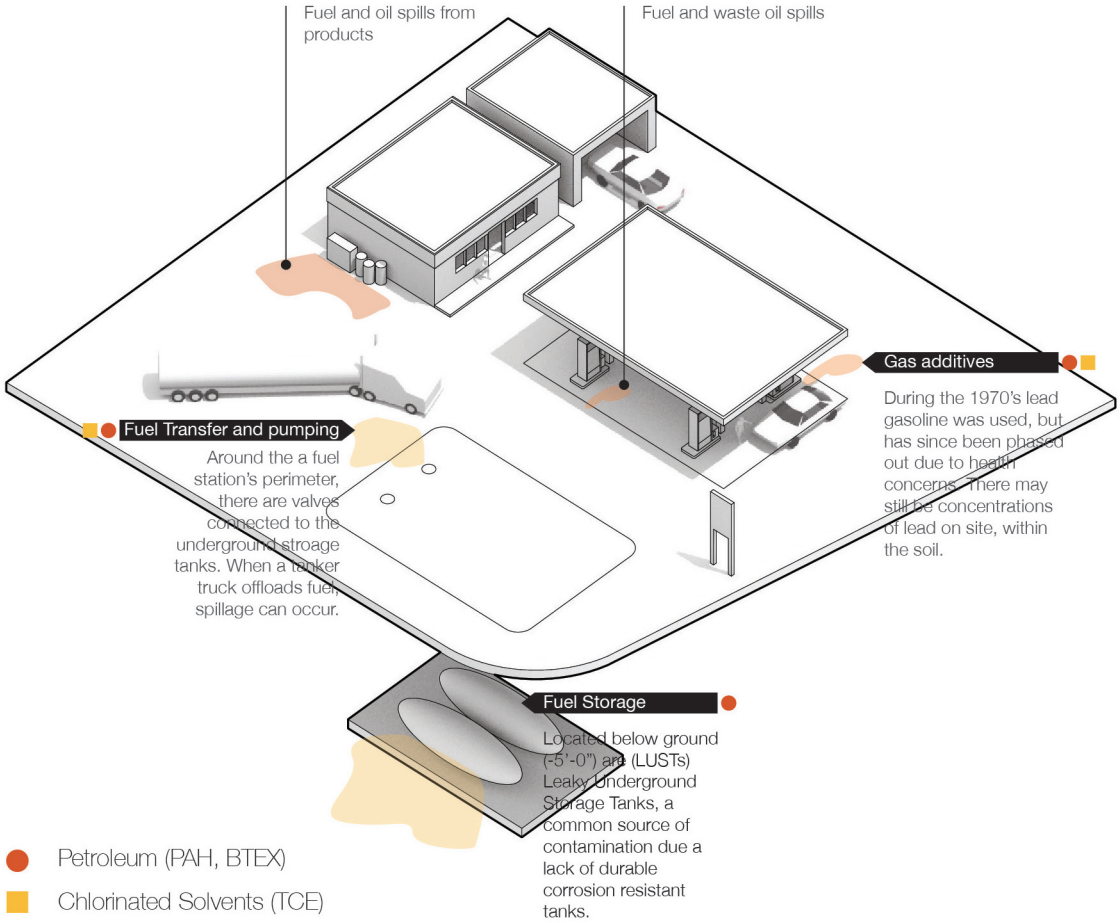
Gas stations carry an ecological burden, at risk for contaminants leaking from underground storage tanks located below the forecourt of the station (Kennen and Kirkwood 2015, 262). According to the US EPA the main sources of contamination on gas station sites are “product delivery piping failures, corrosion of unprotected tanks, and spills and overfills” (Kennen and Kirkwood 2015, 263). Before the 1970s oil crisis, underground storage tanks were built with single-walled steel tanks, which proved to be futile, as they often leaked. Due to tougher regulations, modern gas stations use double-walled steel tanks, resulting in less environmental contamination and less cleanup. Common contaminants found on these sites are: chlorinated solvents, total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH), and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), which are harmful to human health and can cause damage to our groundwater resource. The

status and liability of contamination is a big hindrance for future re-development of these sites.

In practice, there are a variety of remediation options available that prioritize speed, efficacy or cost. For gas stations, there are two common methods used: dig-and-haul and natural attenuation. Dig-and-haul is a relatively quick process involving the removal, transportation and treatment of the contaminated soil. However, this method incurs high costs, ranging from $75,000 to $125,000, in some cases exceeding the value of the land (Lomas-Jylha and Mullin 2015). In contrast, natural attenuation is a preferred method for its low maintenance and cost, despite its relatively slow remediation process, which can take 30 years.

Phasing

Following the many years of slow remediation, gas station sites throughout the city would be ready for full development again. Until then, short-term, low-risk uses for these sites could take advantage of their prime locations and contribute something to urban life. Particular uses could depend on their location (urban or suburban), neighborhood (residential or commercial), and local demographics (families, seniors, students, etc.).



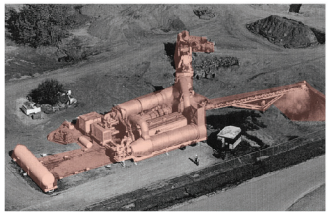
Locations of contamination on a typical gas station site.

Excavation

- Soil erosion
- High rates of fuel consumption; machinery work
- Deterioration of soil through off site disposal of excavated materials

Soil Washing

- Produces a residual clay-cake that has to be disposed of in a landfill
- Energy intensive; transportation of soil and the process of washing



Thermal Desorption

- Requires specific soil conditions; additional removal of large particles soils and de-watering
- Energy intensive process; Transportation of soil, Excavation of soil, and thermal process.
- Loss of potential land use for the surrounding neighbourhood

Phytotechnology

- Minimal impact; leaves the soil intact
- Assists in creating small microclimates
- Natural, low energy, visually and aesthetically pleasing

Natural Attenuation

- Fenced off area
- Sealing up the site
- Loss of potential land use for the surrounding neighbourhood

Methods for site remediation.

Chapter 3: Gas Stations as Opportunity

Community Node

> It's an experiment to see if a little beauty can't be incorporated in something as commonplace as a service station. (Wheeler 1960, 175)

Aside from refueling vehicles, gas stations can also be viewed as local nodes, places where people in the neighborhood gather throughout the week. The gas station served not just the automobile, but people. In the 1930s, Frank Lloyd Wright envisioned the ubiquitous gas station as pieces of architecture included in his Broadacre City proposal, a utopian suburban master plan. For Wright, the gas station was an important component of Broadacre City. Wright sought to elevate the utilitarian function of the gas station to that of art (Wheeler 1960, 174). He described it as “the future city in embryo” that would “naturally grow into a neighborhood distribution center, meeting-place, restaurant… or whatever else is needed” (Fromson 2011). In this regard, the gas station has more to offer than just a place for fuel and vehicles. The future gas station could take on a more public role, one that is more dedicated to community and event.

Stations of Inhabitation

> No longer are polluted and toxic landscapes beyond recovery and inhabitation, as many are now considered valuable city assists. (Berger 2006, 36)

In *Drosscape*, Alan Berger reminds us of the value of “polluted and toxic landscapes” and views them as “city assets.” As the city grows, the reuse of waste places in urban areas will increase. The reuse of gas stations holds hidden potential for both the public and city.

In *Architecture of the City*, Aldo Rossi presents his theory of persistence. Here he notes, “Sometimes these artifacts persist visually unchanged, endowed with a continuous vitality; other times they exhaust themselves, and then only the permanence of their form, their physical sign, their locus remains” (Rossi 1982, 59). Rossi argues that certain artifacts have more to give after their intended use has come to an end. If the structures of the gas station were to remain, new uses could be imagined. The public and designers already have been finding ways to inhabit these ubiquitous structures. In the following examples, the gas station takes on a new life beyond its intended function.

During his travels through Greece, photographer Nick Hannes observed a wedding reception taking place under the roof canopy of a gas station, despite the current economic downturn. Second, the Cineroleum project by the UK studio Assemble utilized the roof canopy of an

Left: Wedding reception in Greece, 2012; photograph by Nick Hannes (Hannes 2012)
Right: The Cineroleum Project done by Assemble Studio, 2010; photograph by Morley von Sternberg (Sternberg 2010)

abandoned gas station to create a temporary cinema and refitted the convenience store to become a reception area. The project was constructed by both staff members and volunteers. This created a unique experience for learning and making. Quite often, the gas station site is stripped of its existing structures and then left vacant with no intent for reuse. In both examples, these existing structures were maintained to provide the foundation for future uses. This thesis seeks to find and implement new narratives for the existing elements of the gas station.

Diverse Transportation

> Transportation infrastructure is less self-sufficient service element than an extremely visible and effective instrument in creating new networks and relationships. (Wall 1999, 238)

Alex Wall presents the idea of the urban surface as a “collector and distributor.” One of the unique qualities of gas stations is their distribution across the city, including dense neighborhoods and at street intersections. This network presents an opportunity to re-think the role of the post-gas station as a small transportation hub. With city master plans now encouraging diverse forms of active transportation, the declining network of gas station sites offers potential. The goal of active transportation is “creating safer, healthier, and

The Event Station as a mobility workshop

more dynamic public spaces for its residents" (Urban System Ltd 2019, 17). The adaptive re-use of the convenience store could provide workshops for personal mobility vehicles (bikes, skateboards, etc.). Moreover, city infrastructures such as bike routes, transit lines, and commercial amenities are already located near existing gas stations. Thus, the "distribution" network is already in place. New uses on disused gas station sites can add to the performance of the urban surface.

Event Station

A gas station has potential as a community node, an asset and a catalyst for active transportation. The need to invest, re-develop, and re-frame these urban spaces will increase as gas stations diminish. The Event Station aims to provide a framework for the future integration of gas stations.

Phytoremediation would be used to decontaminate to the site. During this period the gas station property would continue to be owned and insured by the oil company or owner. In exchange for reduced property taxes, the oil company would permit the City of Windsor to adapt the site for civic uses. The City would not be responsible or liable for remediation. However, brownfield incentives are provided through the City's Brownfield Redevelopment program. This would help in off-setting the remediation cost. After several decades, when the soil has been decontaminated, the oil company could sell the property, develop it, or let the City continue to use it as an Event Station.

Over the short-term period the Event Station would be managed by the City of Windsor's Parks and Recreation Department. The Event Station is two-fold: (1) it would adapt existing gas station elements and (2) event elements would

be introduced on site. These features would allow the Event Station to be flexible based on the event and program.

An on-site event designer with a small office in the former convenience store would work with community organizations in planning and staging weekend events. As an event designer, responsibilities would include: "creating an array of occasions, designing the environment, arranging the details, supporting and suggesting possibilities for the actions themselves" (Lynch 2009, 89). The building would also include a bicycle workshop, cleaning and storage facilities and a pair of restrooms. Its layout would change in response to city events throughout the year.

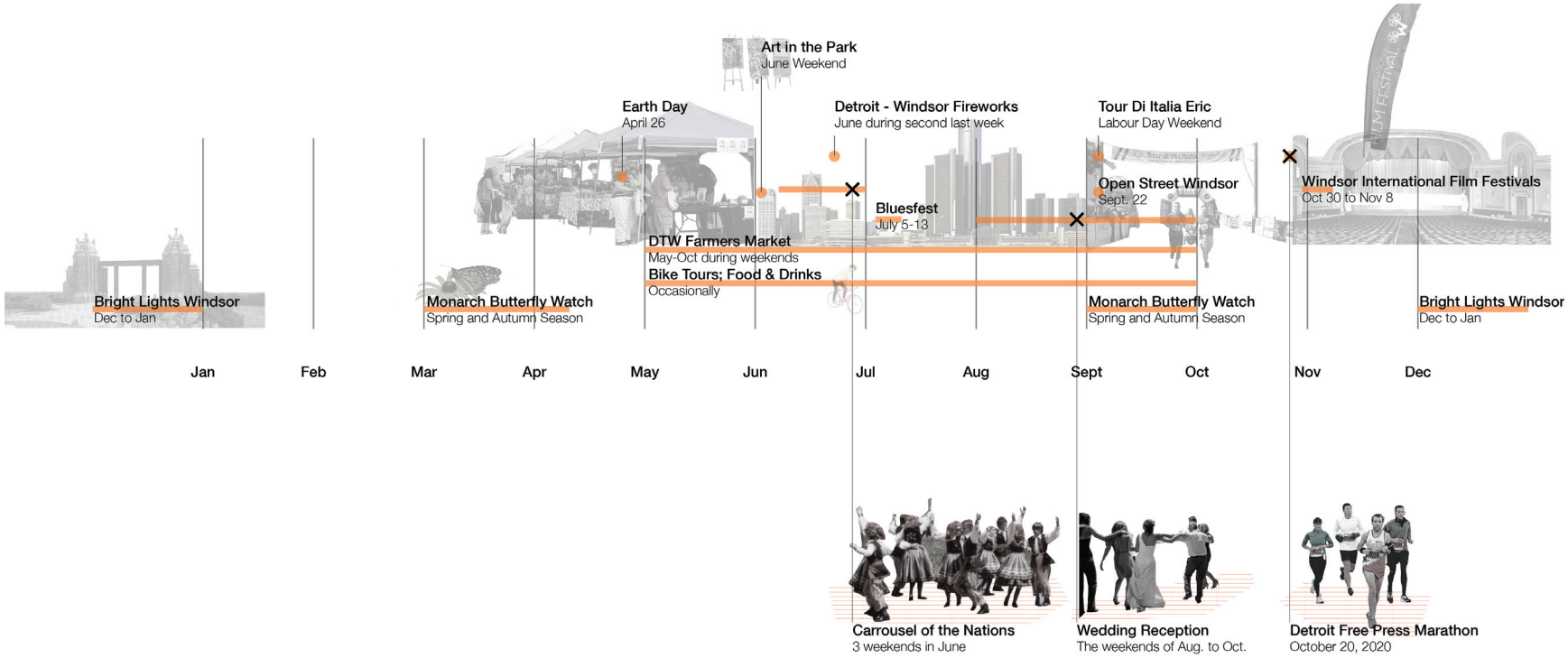
A rendering of the Event Station.

City Events

> We should be increasing the density of special events in our lives, not decreasing them as we do. It is not merely nostalgia that makes our childhoods seem richer in this regard. (Lynch 2009, 84)

The Event Station is shaped and inspired by local events. Progressing throughout the year, events celebrate the passing of time and the key moments we look forward to. Kevin Lynch notes, "Places and events can be designed

to enlarge our sense of the present, either by their own vivid characters or as they heighten our perception of the contained activity - setting off the people in a parade, an audience, or a market" (Lynch 2009, 83). In this regard, the Event Station seeks to transform a site previously occupied by the automobile into a space of inhabitation, a node for celebration and a place for the everyday. It is both special and ordinary.



Seasonal Events - A mapping of city events throughout the year in Windsor, Ontario.

Locating Test Sites

Gas stations throughout the city are located in dense neighborhoods and at major street intersections. In Windsor, the location of gas stations has been mapped manually using aerial photographs. There are currently 41 gas stations in the city, many owned by several petroleum companies. Seven more 7 are no longer in use, with most of their gas station elements removed. This thesis will be focusing on existing gas stations, as their building components (canopy, sign, and store) are intact and therefore present opportunities for reuse.

Potential sites for Event Stations were selected according to three main criteria: areas that have been designated for active transportation; sites within Windsor's Business Improvement Area; and sites near high-density residential areas. Gas stations located in suburban areas might be suitable for other purposes.

Active Transportation

In areas that are recognized as having high potential for active transportation development, several existing gas stations are within those boundaries. As a result, the Event Station would benefit from the added infrastructure of bike lanes and bus routes. A mobility workshop with the Event Station would encourage residents to use active transportation.

Business Improvement Areas (BIA)

For the Event Station initiative to begin, sources of financial support and incentives would need to be identified. In Windsor, the Business Improvement Areas (BIA) are districts identified by the city that provide support and incentives

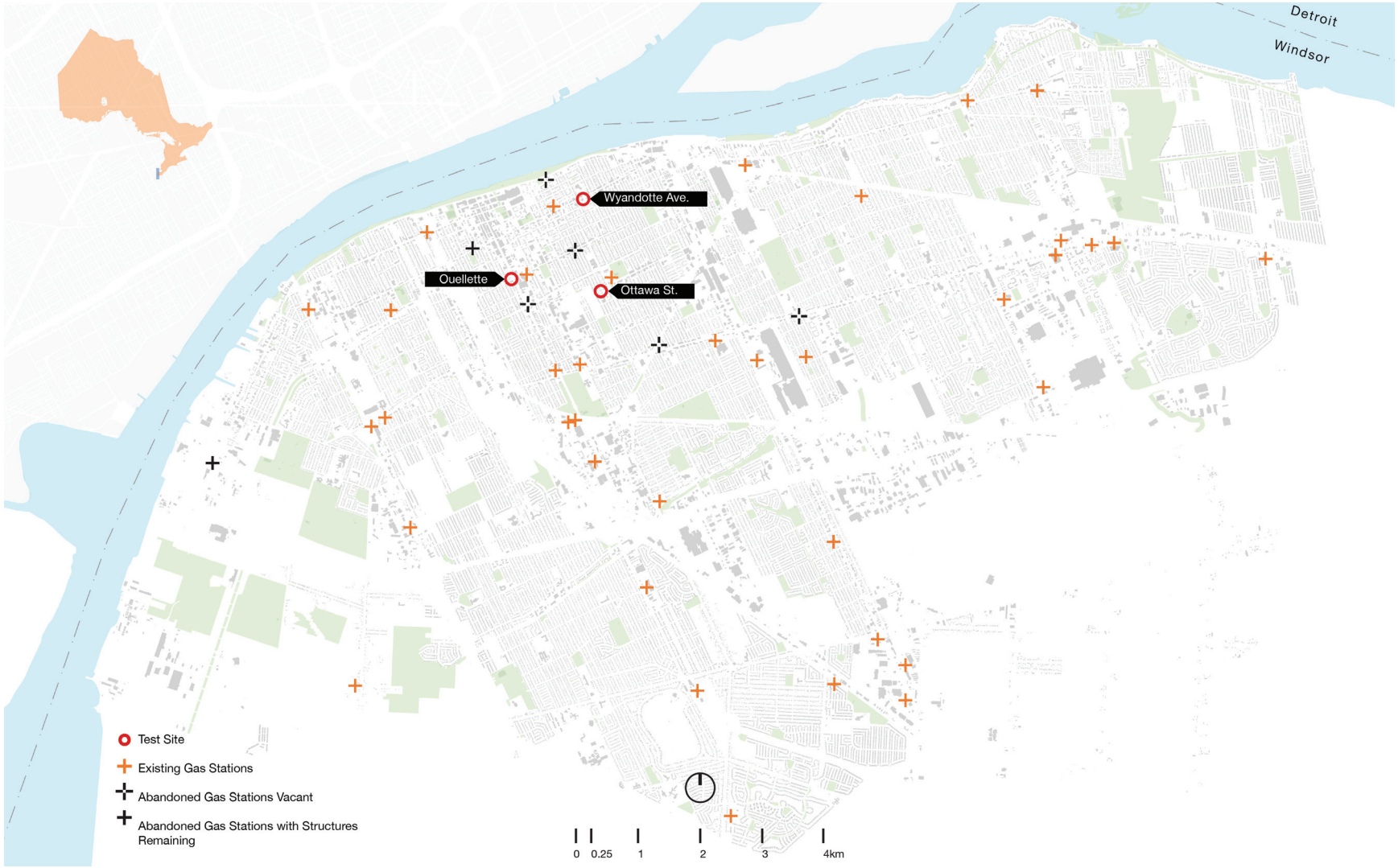
for urban and commercial investment. These areas also have historical roots, making them distinct neighborhoods. Further, many community organizations are found in these areas. Locations for group events and public events currently are hard to find, so the Event Station could meet this need by helping organizations host their programs and activities.

Key Destinations

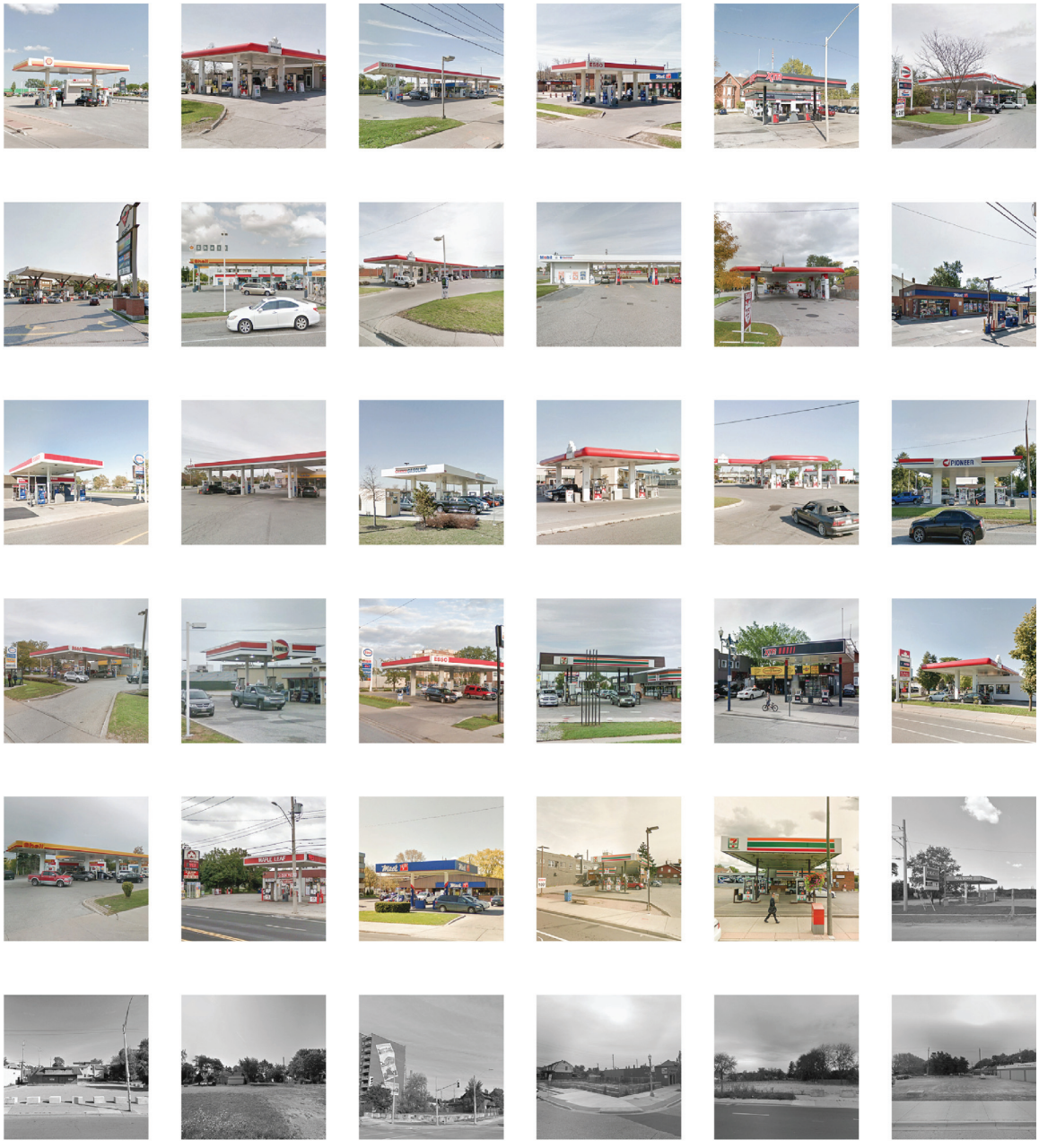
This map below identifies areas within the city that have high concentrations of educational institutions, community centers, commercial districts, and parks. These destinations show the vitality of these neighborhoods.

Selection of Test Sites

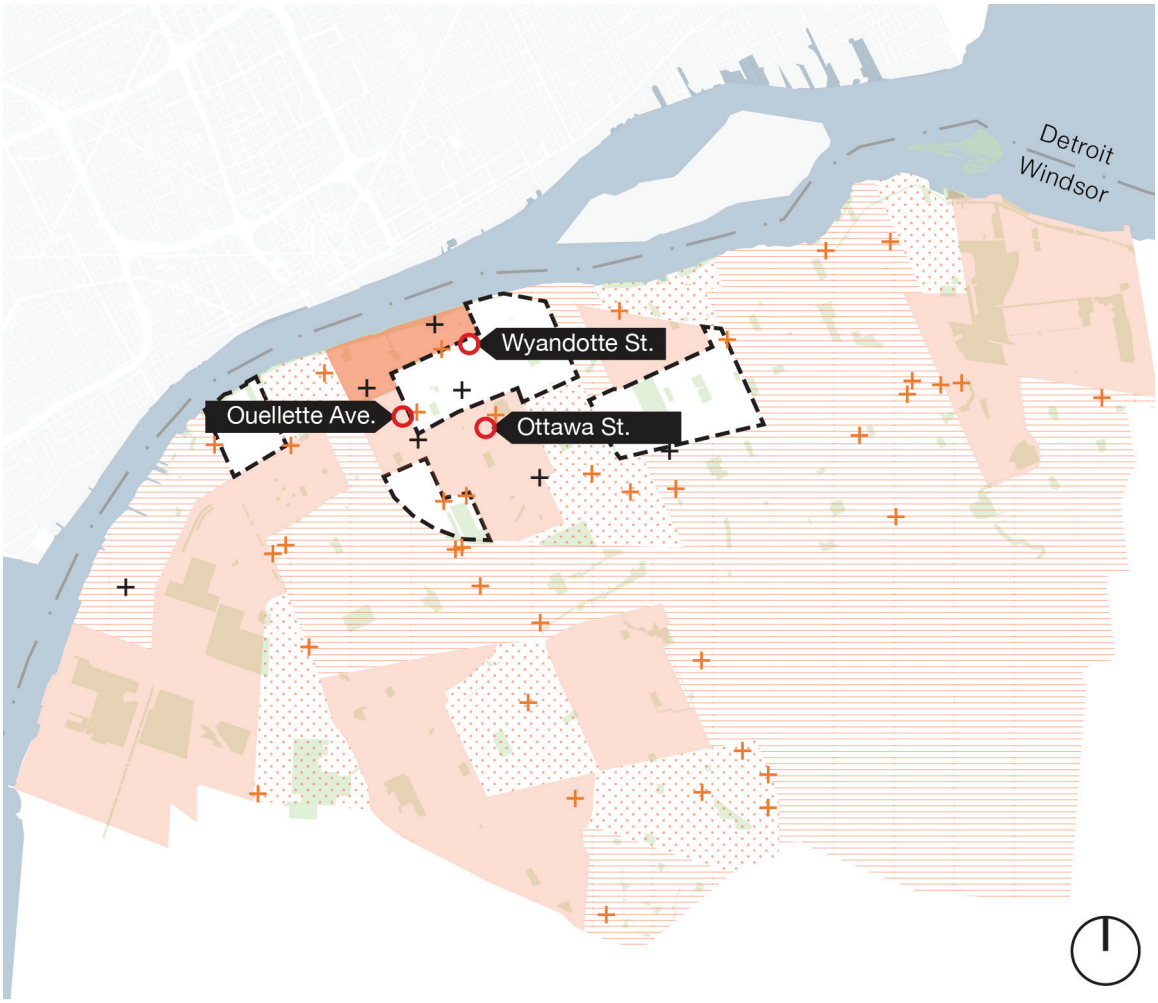
The chosen test sites for the Event Station are on Ouellette Avenue, Ottawa Street and Wyandotte Street East. Each test site presents a different configuration in response to the urban condition and event.



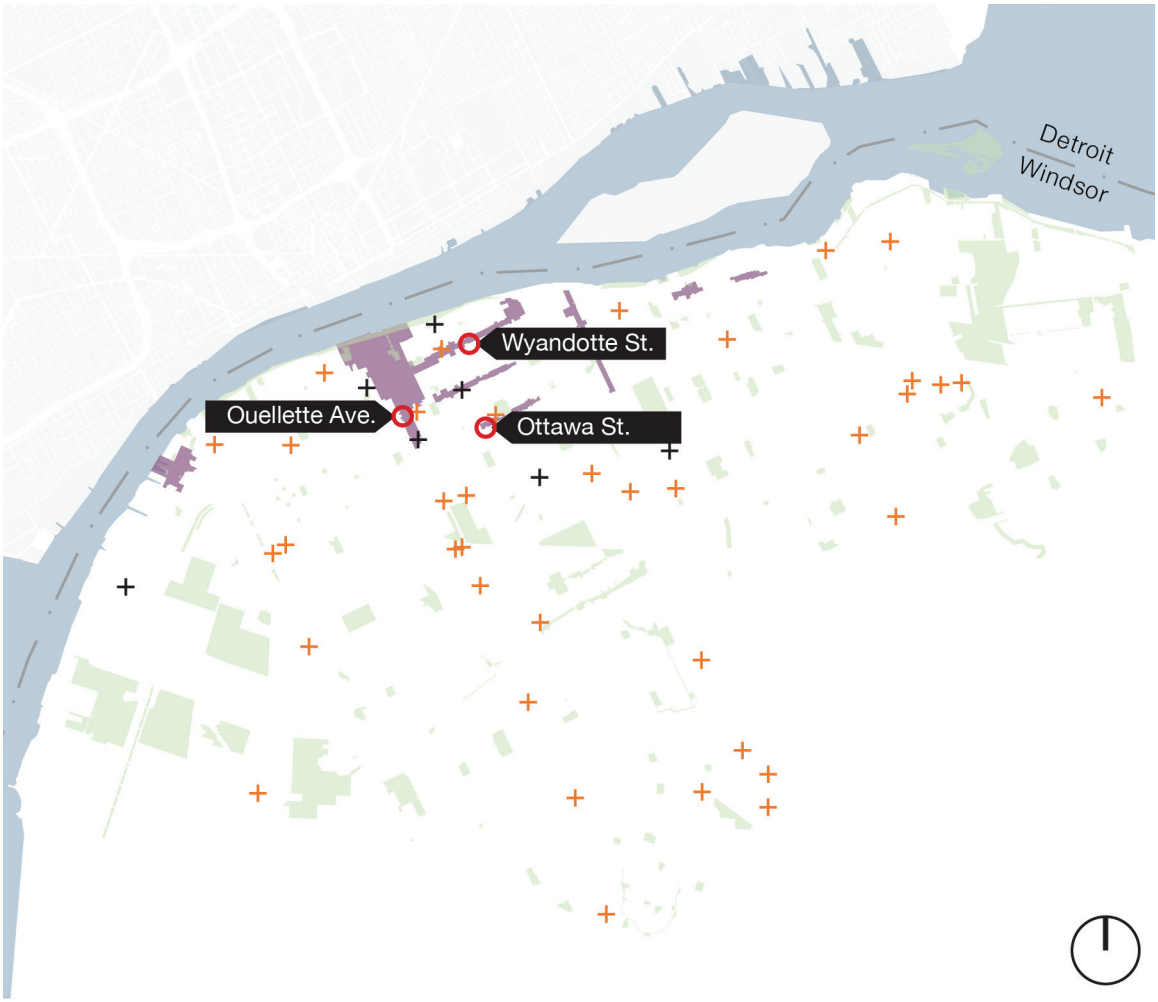
Map of proposed test sites, existing and abandoned gas stations (base map from The Corporation of the City of Windsor 2019).



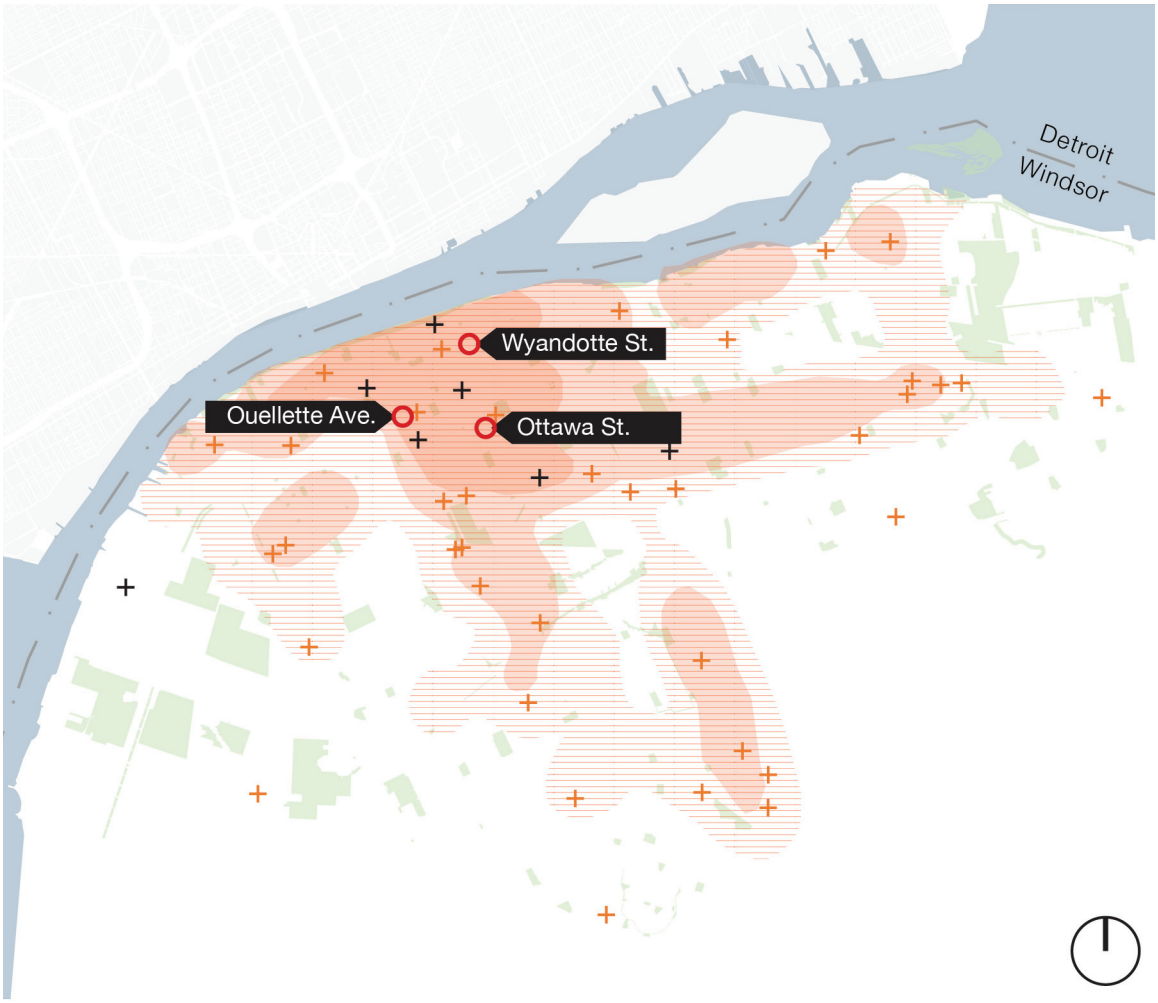
Street view images of existing and abandoned gas stations (shown in color and b/w respectively) in Windsor (Google Maps, 2018.)



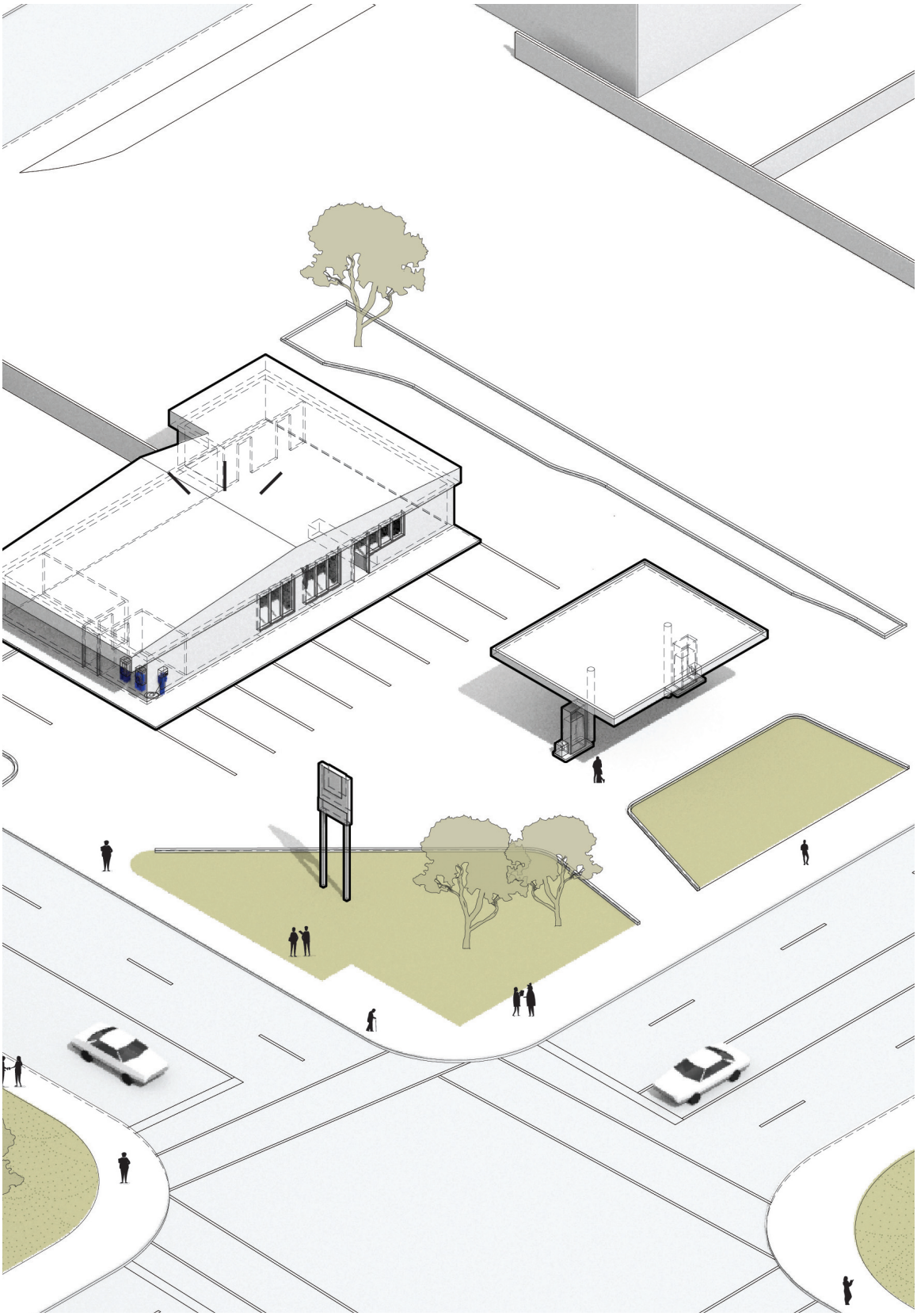
Map locating potential areas for active transportation and their relationship to existing gas stations (base map from The Corporation of the City of Windsor 2019; data from Urban Systems Ltd. 2019)



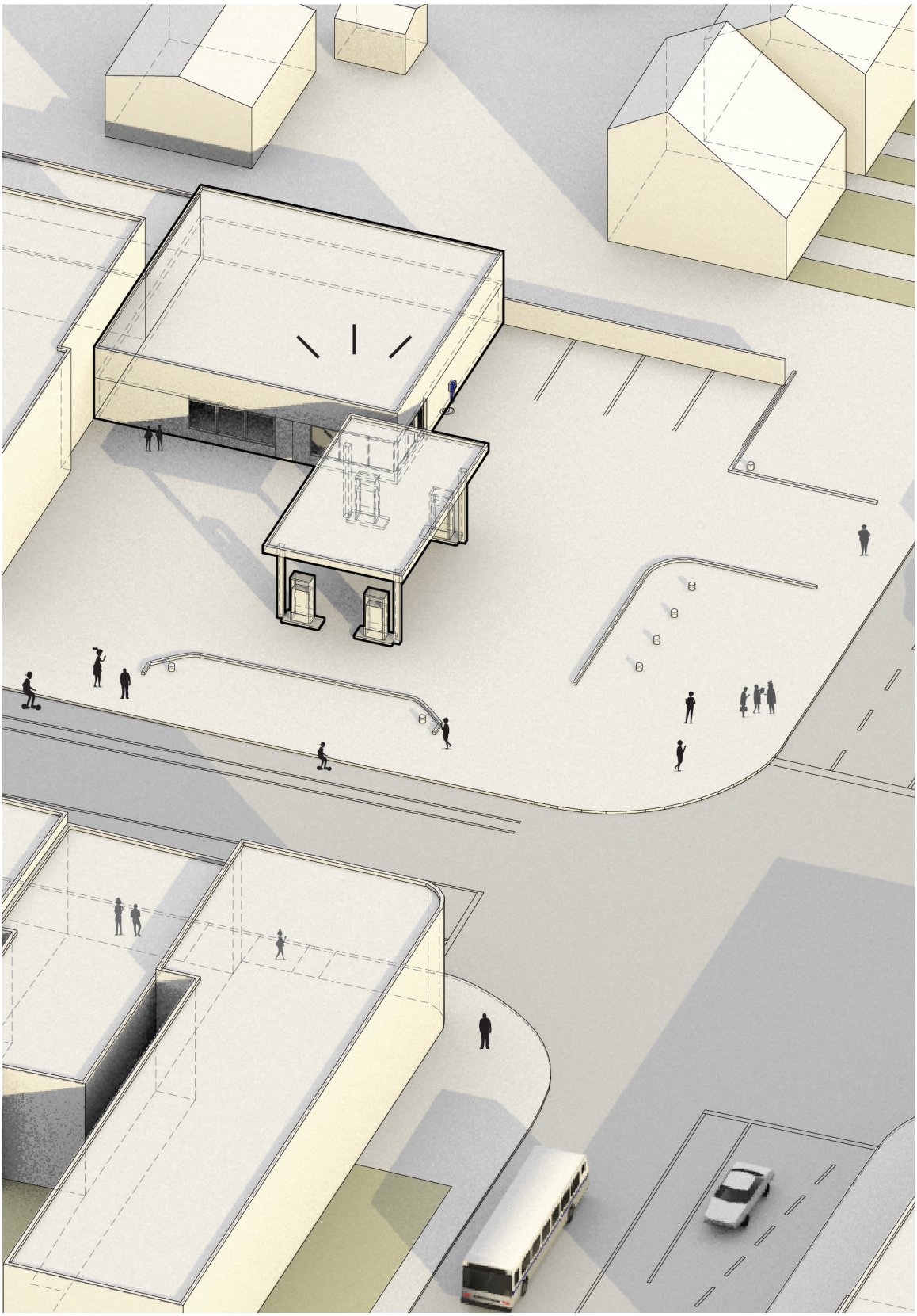
Map locating Business Improvement Areas (BIA) areas and their relationship to existing gas stations (base map and data from The Corporation of the City of Windsor 2019)



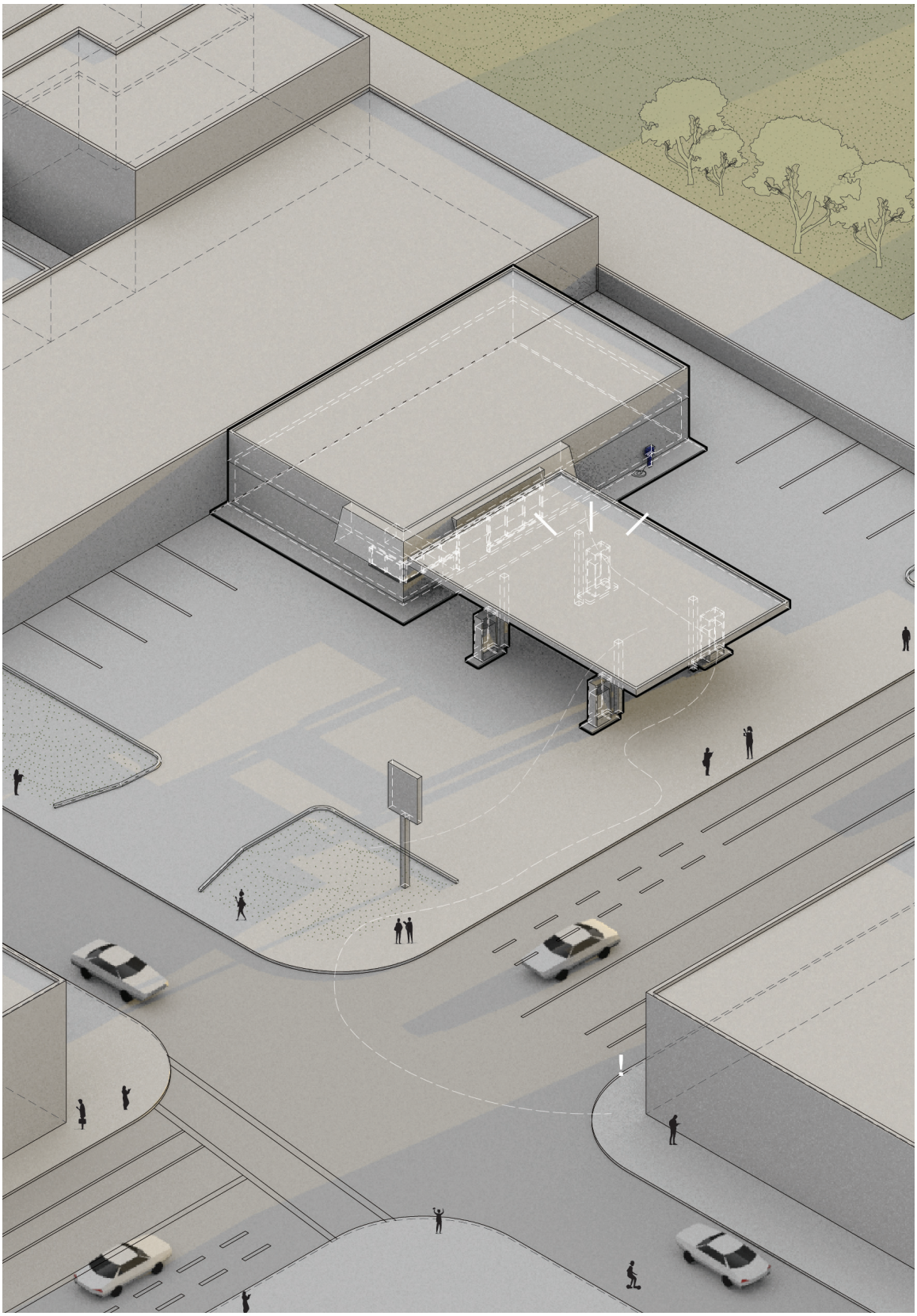
Map locating showing the population density and their relationship to existing gas stations (base map and data from The Corporation of the City of Windsor 2019)



The urban conditions of the existing gas station at Ouellette Avenue.



The urban conditions of the existing gas station at Ottawa Street.



The urban conditions of the existing gas station at Wyandotte Street.

Chapter 4: Introducing, Adapting, Inventing

Introducing Permanent Elements

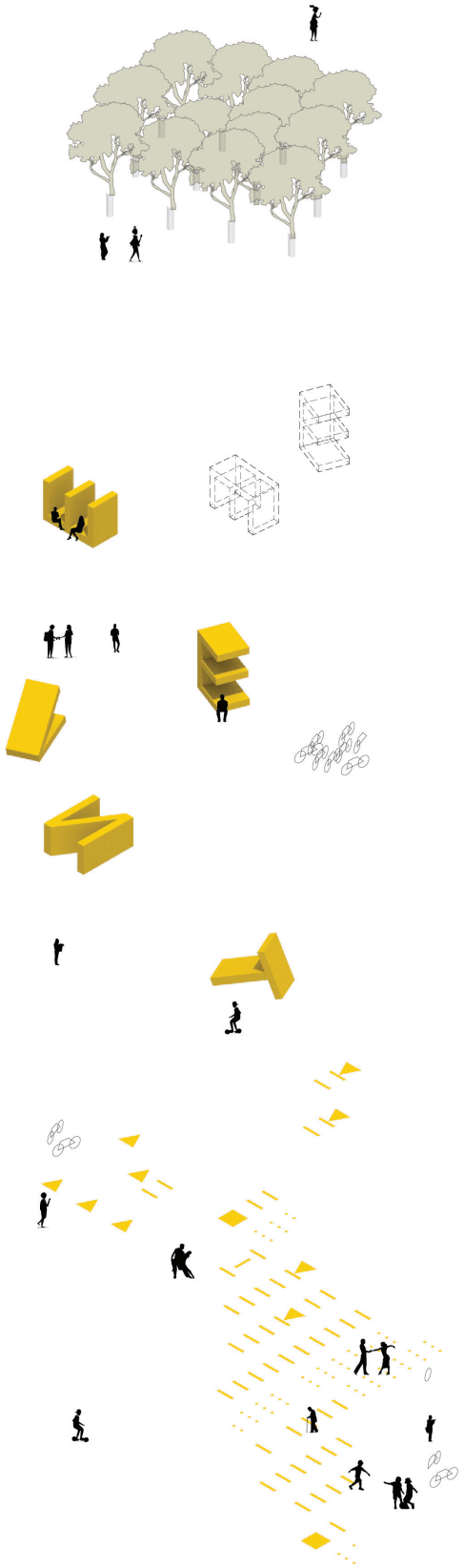
A hindrance to the reuse of the gas station is the potential contamination resulting from underground storage tank leaks. Introducing permanent elements involves a remediation strategy. Standard remediation methods such as dig-and-haul are costly, and in some cases would cost more than the market value of the land. The proposal would introduce phytoremediation, a natural, less invasive, and cost-effective strategy for restoring the contaminated ground over time. Phytoremediation introduces specific plants "to remediate, contain or prevent contaminants in soils, sediments, groundwater" (Kennen and Kirkwood 2015, 3). Phytoremediation effectiveness is determined by the root depth and the location of contamination in the soil. For contaminants located within two feet of the surface, specific herbaceous plant species would be used. For contaminants located 10 feet or more below the surface, plant species with a tap-root structure would be used (e.g. poplar trees). The typical depth of storage tanks is five feet underground. Therefore, a combination of plants and trees would be used for phytoremediation. Additional site assessment would have to be conducted in consultation with experts to determine the degree and extent of contamination.

Phytotechnology

Event Letters

Surface

Top to bottom are collages of elements introduced on site.



Top to bottom: a diagram of the Event elements (phytotechnology, event letters, and surface).

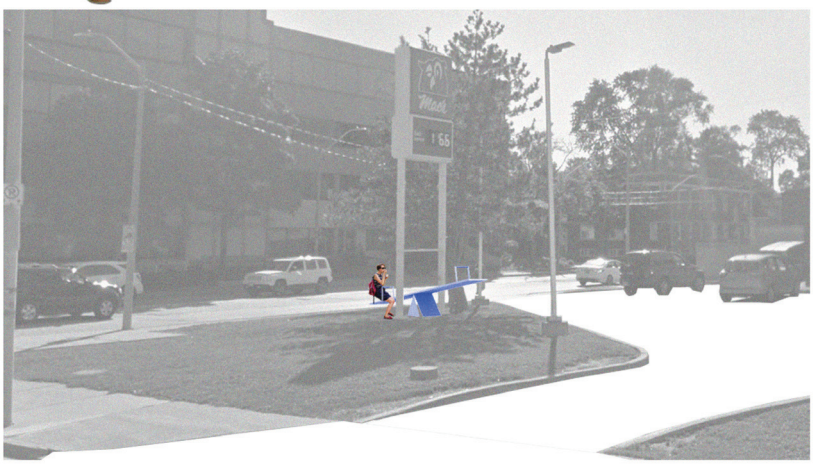
Adapting Existing Elements

> His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand', that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogenous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions. (Lévi-Strauss 2000, 17)

In *The Savage Mind*, Claude Levi-Strauss describes the actions of the bricoleur as: “taking and connecting what is already there" (Lévi-Strauss 2000, 17). Common to the typical gas station are its basic elements: the sign, the canopy, the convenience store, the telephone booth and air pump. Repurposing gas station elements as Event Station elements would promote a bricolage attitude. The air pump, an element that goes unnoticed, has been refitted to become a supply of air and helium for everyday needs and special events. The canopy, formerly used to protect customers and vehicles from the weather, has now become a source of cool mist from nozzles around the perimeter on hot summer days, as well as a source of radiant heat on cold days later in the year.

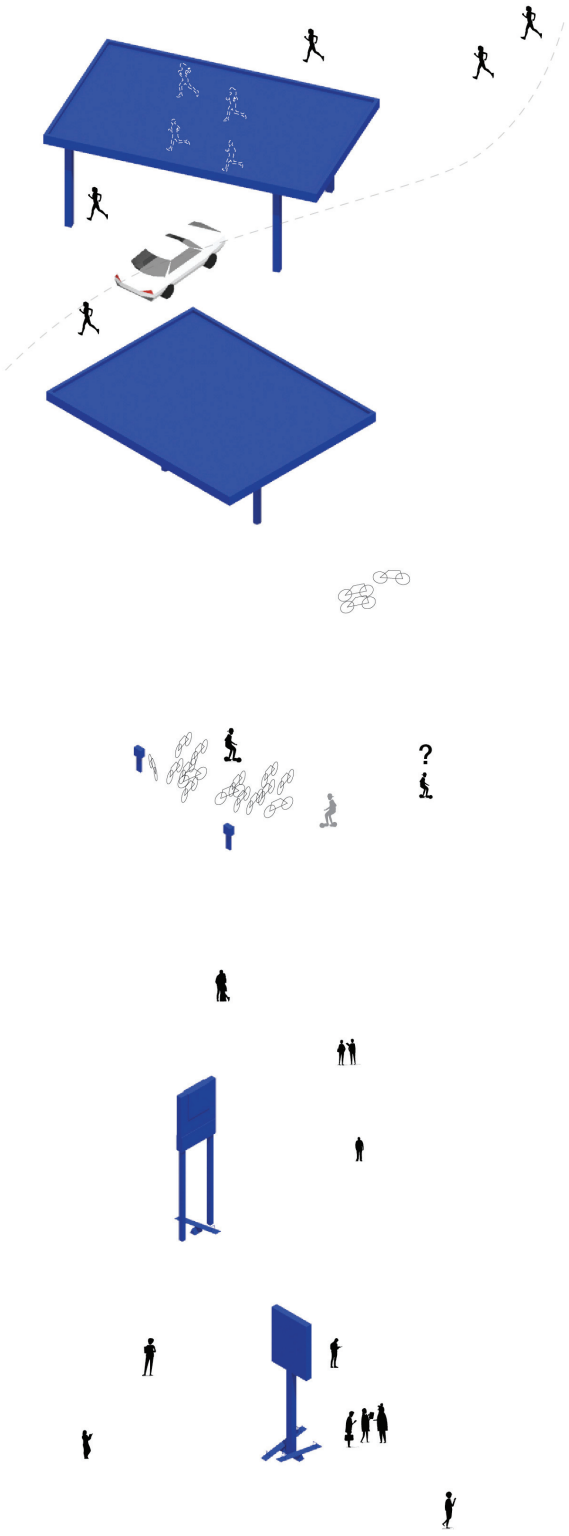
Mist Maker

Balloon Factory



Seesaw

Top to bottom are collages of existing gas station elements (canopy, air pump, and sign) being adapted for reuse.



Top to bottom: a diagram of the Event elements (mist maker, balloon factory, and seesaw)

Inventing Event Elements

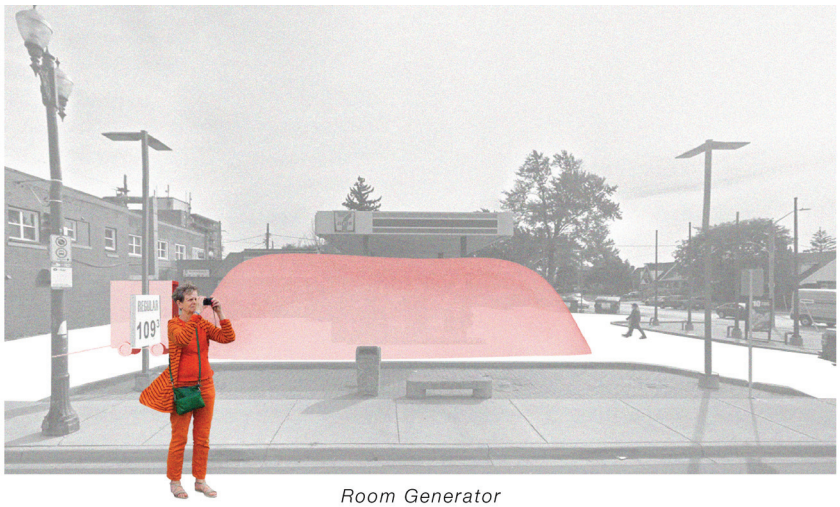
> The surface had to be equipped and staged in such a way as to both anticipate and accommodate any number of changing demands and programs. (Wall 1999, 237)

Throughout the year the Event Station hosts different city events. The temporality of each event requires a strategy that is dynamic and could be staged accordingly. Here, the event elements - playful and engaging - are instruments for the Event Station. The intention of these elements can be summarized as the following: "They don't have to be beautiful; they just have to be appealing, to call out to be used, to be observed, to be enjoyed or to be changed" (Apuzzo, Maier, and Raumlaborberlin 2008, 11). Event elements become activators in city spaces that lack urban life. They provide opportunities for designers, communities and the public to arrange them to complement the type of event taking place. Here, I propose 3 event elements, each with different functions and arrangements.

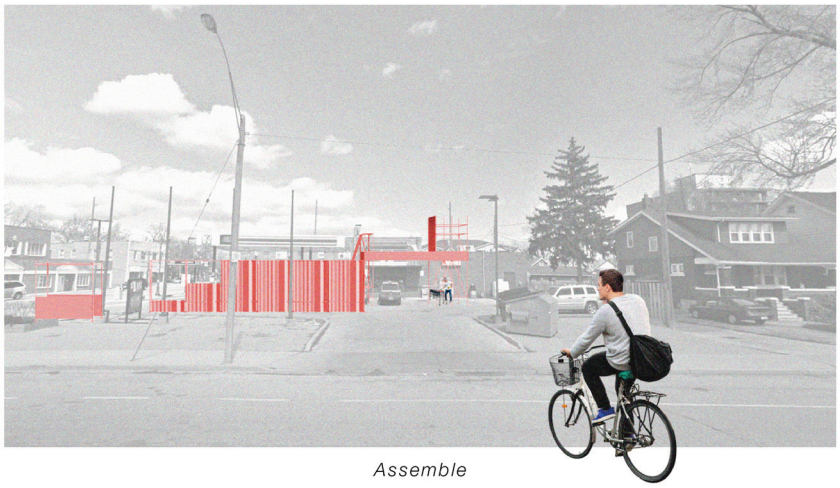
Room Generator: a billboard, a threshold, a living room. An inflatable room made of plastic, when inflated, creates a temporary separation between outside (the city) and inside (the living room). A host of large gatherings can take place, including eating, movie screenings and dance parties.

Assemble: a point, a line, a field. Beginning with scaffolding, Assemble can be constructed to satisfy the needs of an event. It can be both a point and a field by multiplying itself.

Table For: a table for 2, a table for 8, a table for the neighborhood. This urban workbench begins as a single table with wheels on one end. The table can be extended with additional tables – some long, some short, some made of different materials – thus forming one continuous table.



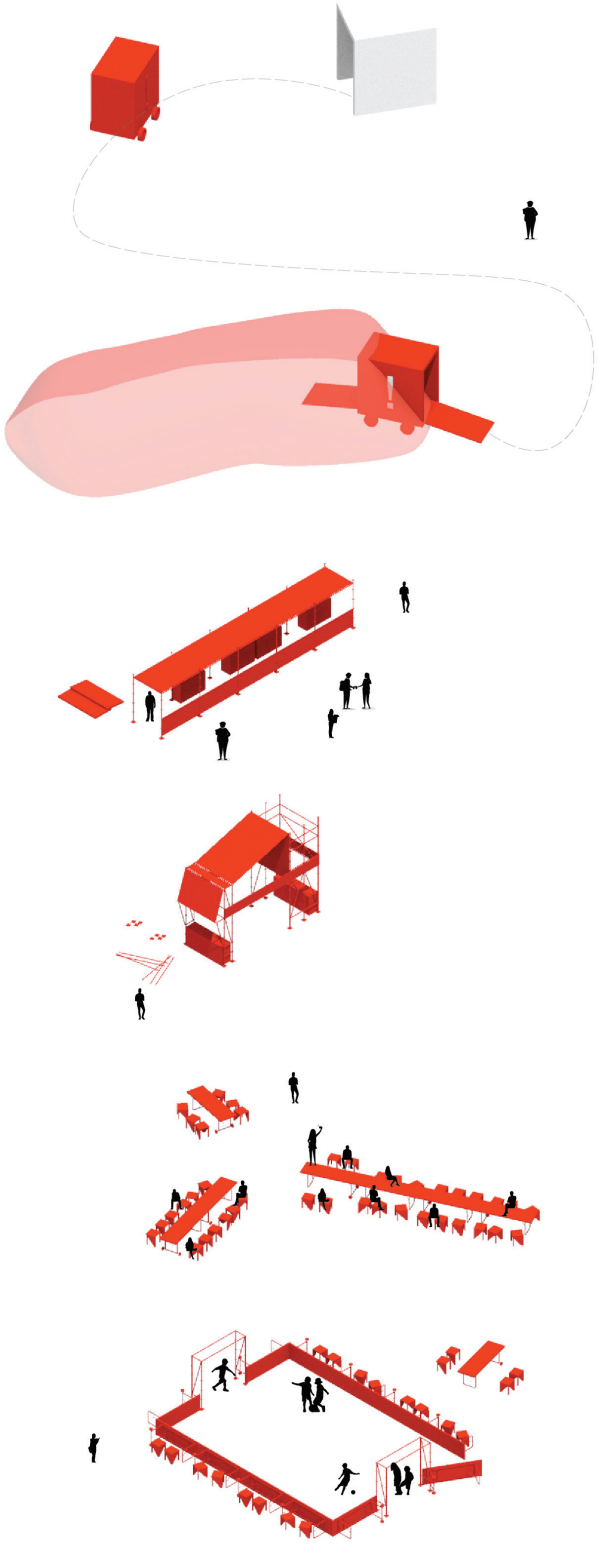
Room Generator



Assemble

Table for...

Top to bottom: a collage of the Event elements (room generator, assemble, and table for).



Top to bottom: a diagram of the Event elements (room generator, assemble, and table for).

Chapter 5: Event Stations for the City

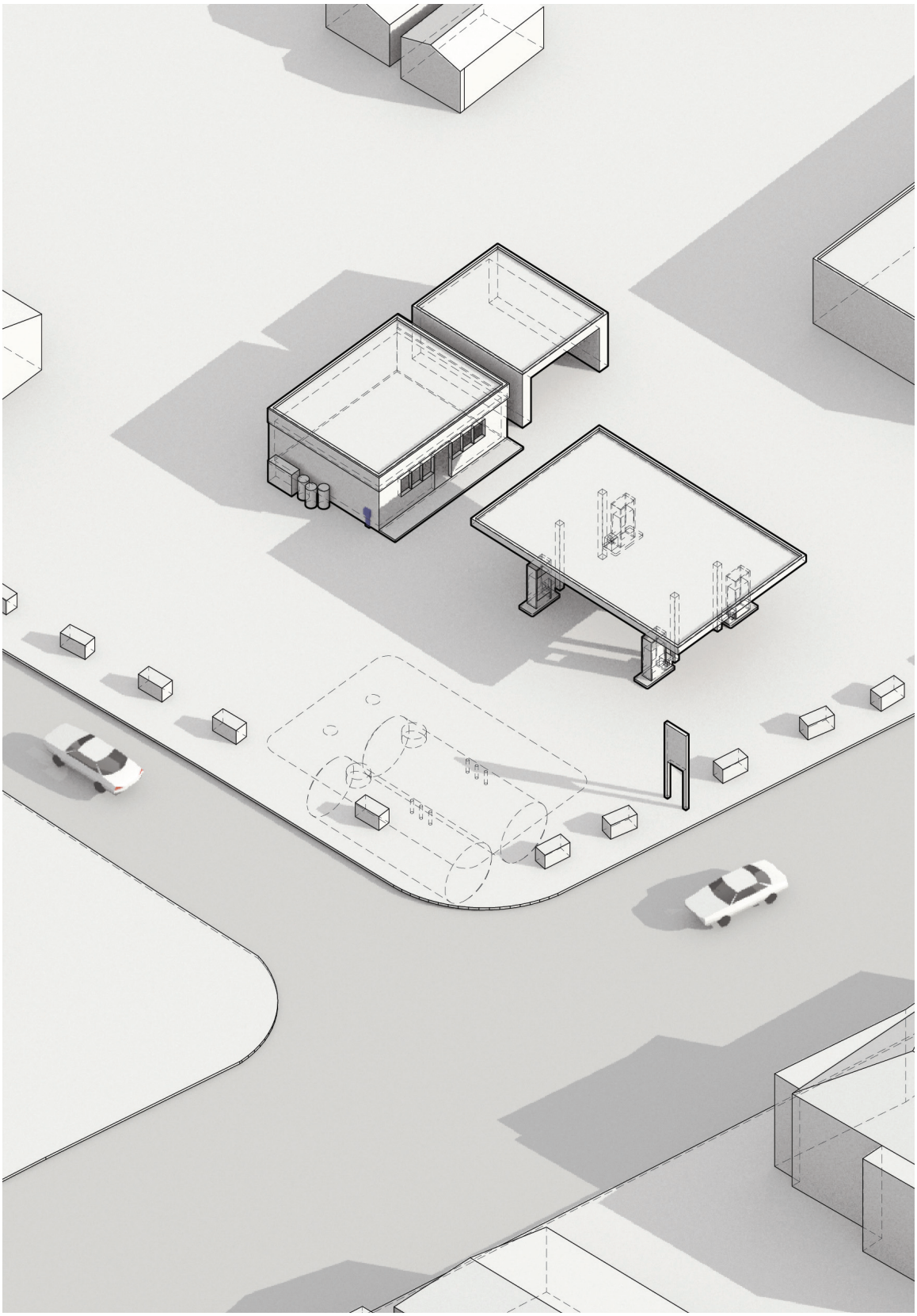
Existing Condition

The gas station has seen its last days of service. It was once a space for the gathering of vehicles. Now the place is quiet and uninhabited. It holds uncertainty and certainty. Now is it an opportunity to organize city events.

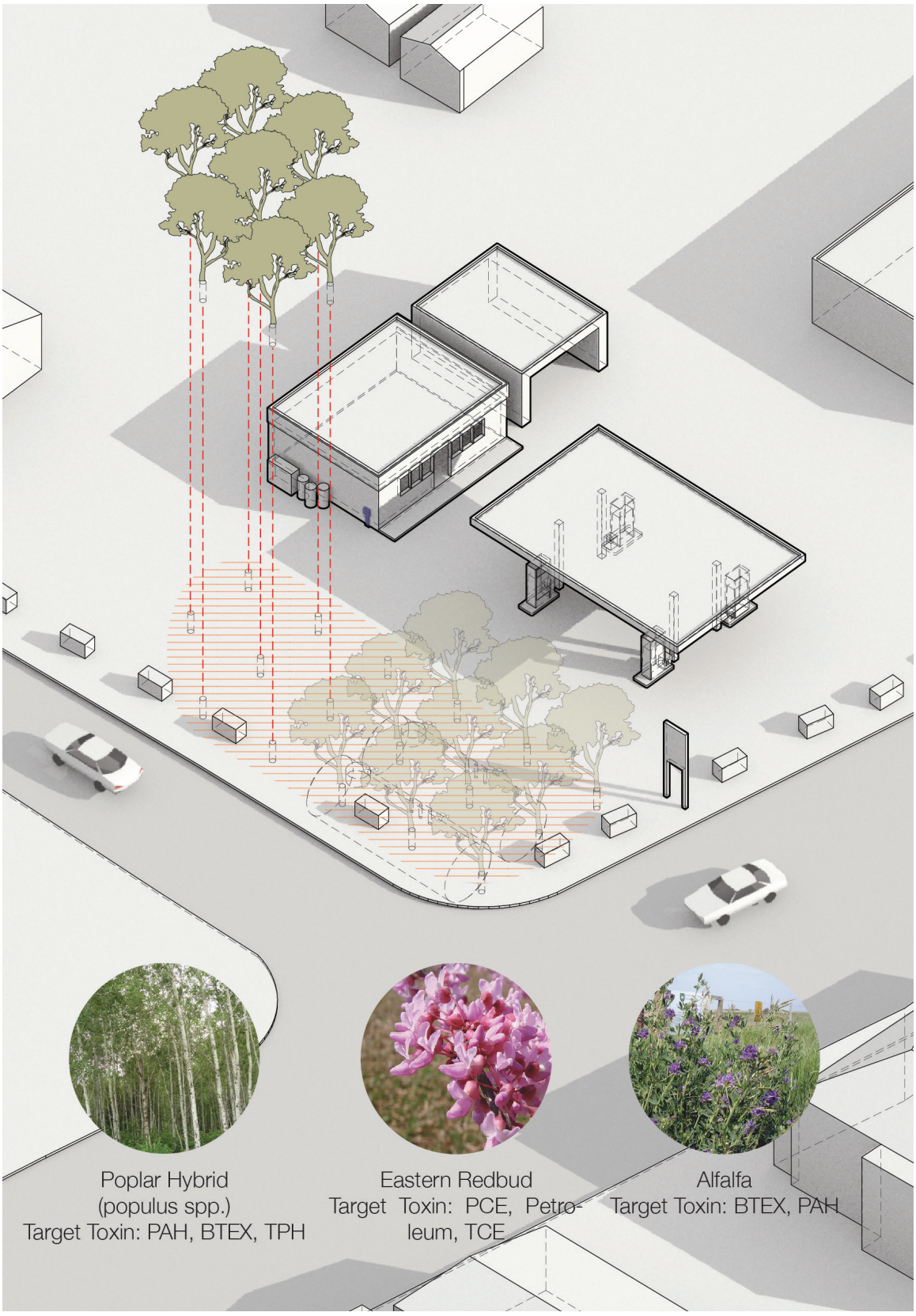
Staging the Surface

Recovery – Introduction of Remediation

A few months have passed, and the existing surface is scraped, underground storage tanks are dug up and removed. Phyto-technology is introduced as a method for healing the contaminated ground. A variety of plants – trees, shrubs and perennials - are planted, thus marking the beginning of new life, inhabitation and recovery. The road surface markings that used to organize and direct the flow of vehicular traffic are now repainted into an engaging surface using primary shapes and patterns that encourage the movement of people. In addition, large Event Letters and Flags are introduced as preliminary elements. Letters are movable furniture that can be rotated, moved, leaned on and sat on. Flags indicate when city events are happening at the Event Station.



Typical site - existing condition



Typical site - remediation strategy

The Weekday (9:00 to 5:00)

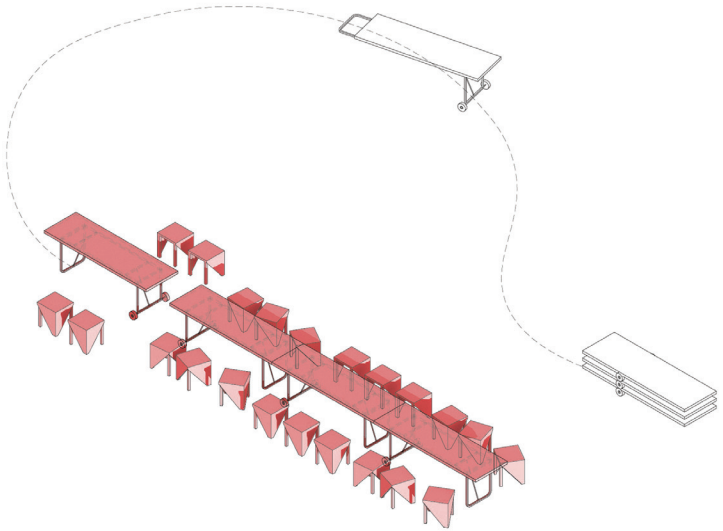
Morning, Lunch, Afternoon

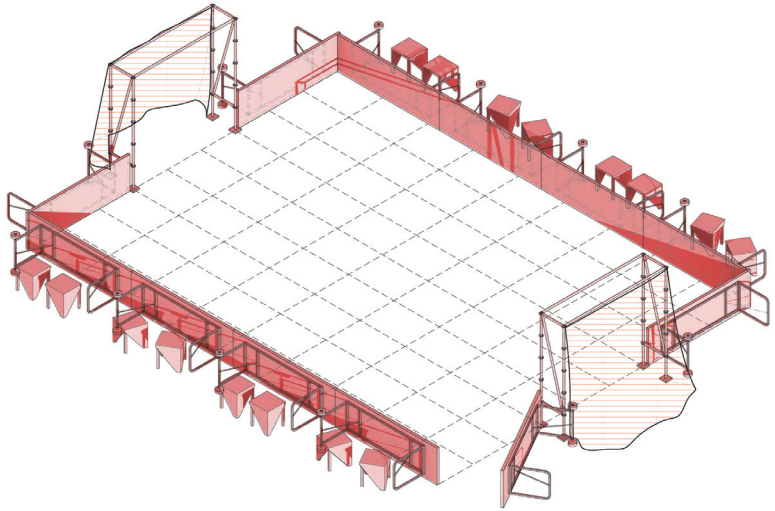
During the week the Event Station serves as a bike workshop. This proposed program supports the city's Active Transportation Master Plan in "creating safer, healthier, and more dynamic public spaces for its residents" (Urban System Ltd 2019, 17). In addition, Event Elements could be brought out: tables turned on their side can be arranged to create a small field or can be organized into a line. Next, The Room Generator could be brought out to host gatherings for community-related activities.

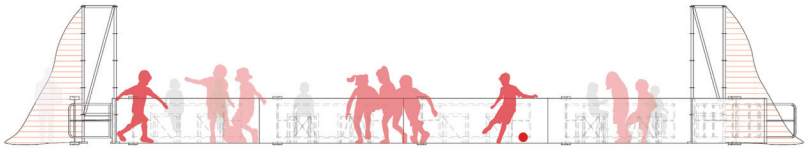
View from the street - The Event Station as a mobility workshop during the weekday.

At Ouellette Avenue, the Event Station is arranged during the weekday.

Table for...







Event Element - Table For shown in two forms: (left) as a long dining table and (right) as an enclosed play field.

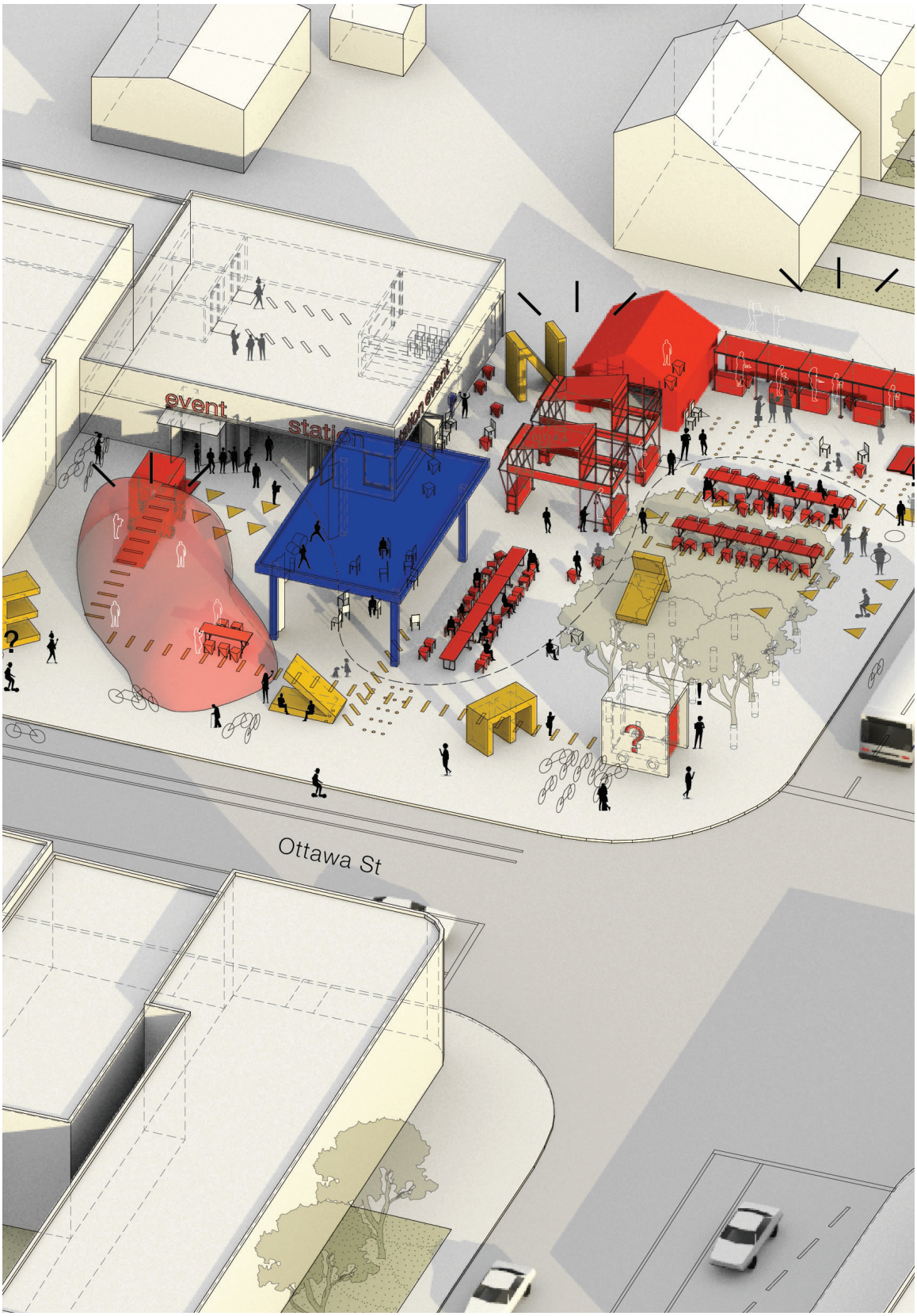
Weekend Event – Carrousel of the Nations (June 06, 2020)

Cultural, Gathering, Exchange

Dating back to 1974, the Carrousel of the Nations is one of the longest active festivals in Windsor and the oldest cultural festival in Ontario. Spanning over 3 weekends in June, the Carrousel of the Nations is a stage for bringing together locals, tourists and cultures in celebration of cultural diversity. Scotland, Poland, and Ukraine will be the nations that are represented at this location (Ottawa Street). The Event Elements are brought out.

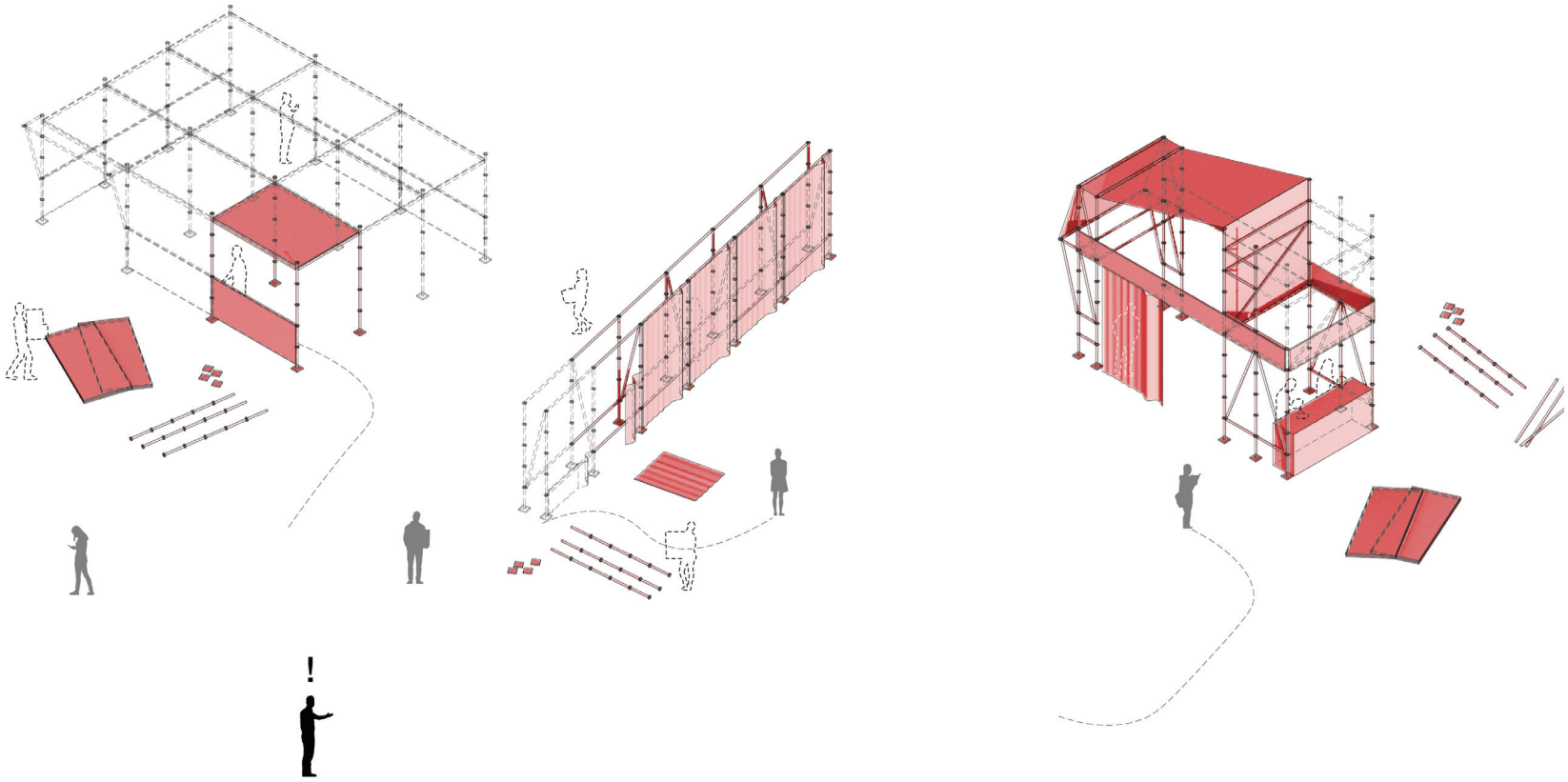
Approaching the site, Assemble has been constructed to be both a field and a line. Here food kiosks are stationed. With a meal in hand, you are drawn to the sounds of traditional music and performances underneath the canopy. Then the Room Generator is brought out and inflated to create an urban room to host workshops and other activities.

View from the street - The Event Station hosting the Carrousel of the Nations event. Here the Event elements Assemble and Table For are brought out.



At Ottawa Street, the Event Station is arranged to stage the Carrousel of the Nations.

Assemble



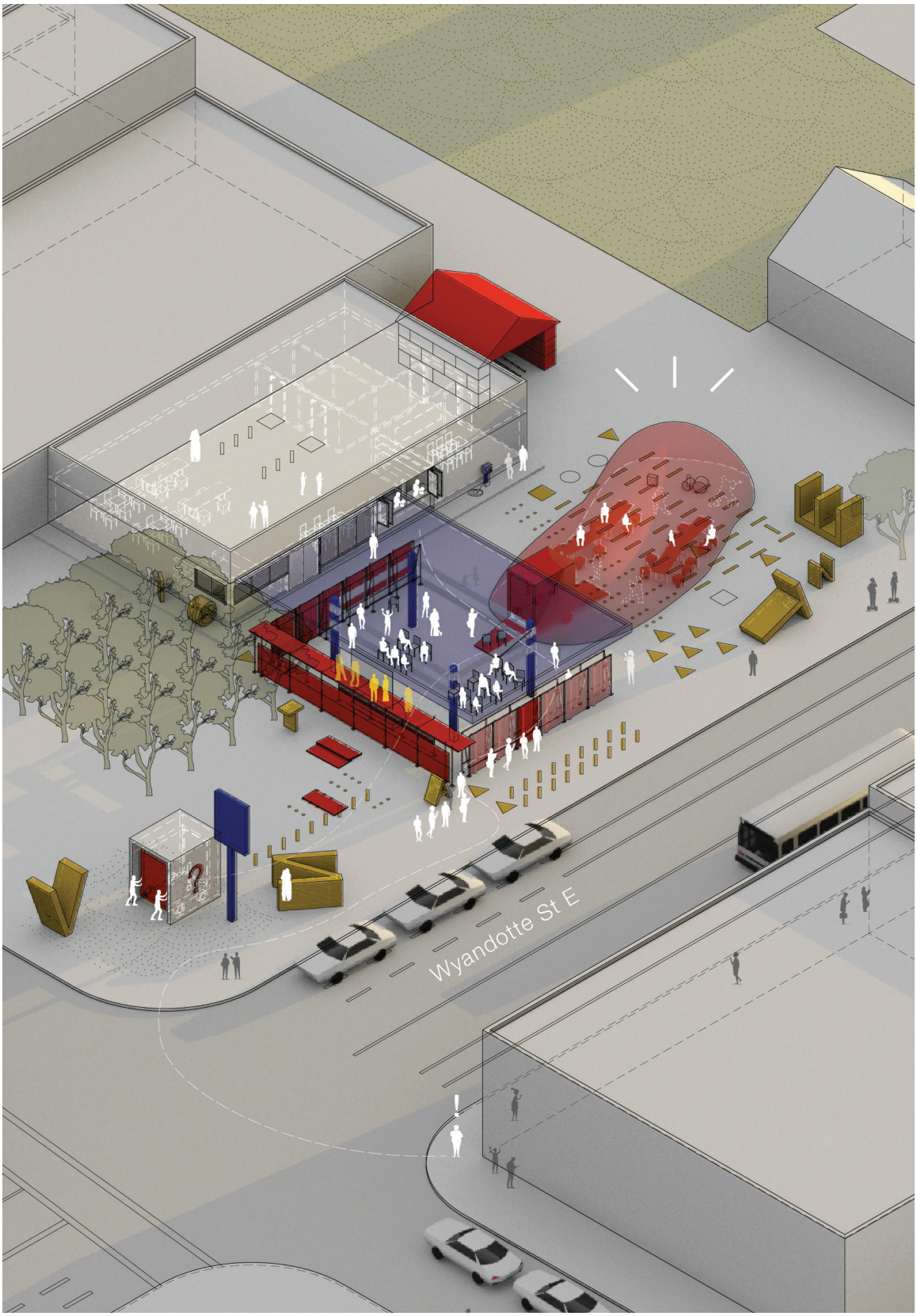
Event Element - Assemble shown in 3 forms: as (1) a point, (2) a line, and (3) a field.

Weekend Event – Wedding Receptions (August)

Ceremony, Performance, Celebration

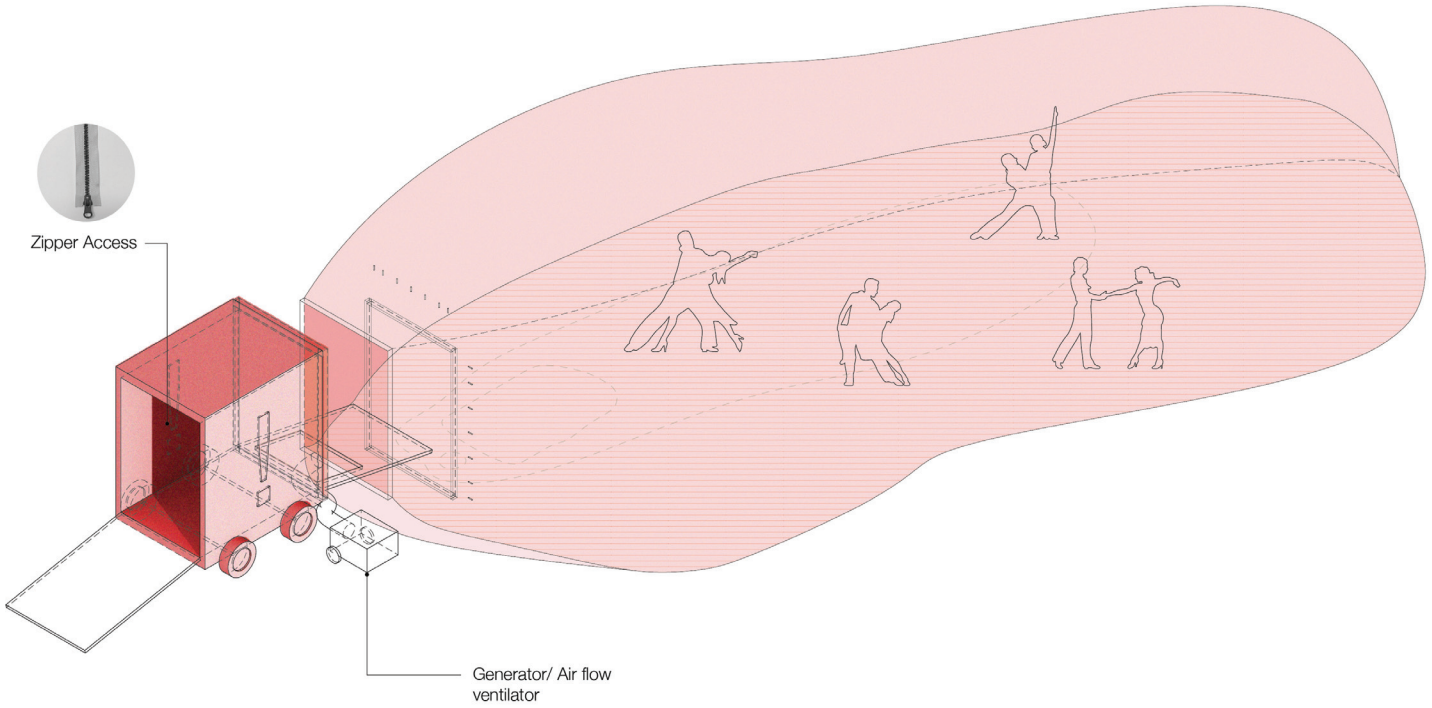
Viewed from across the street are silhouettes of people in celebration. The Event Station is arranged into a private gathering for a special moment, a wedding reception, a midsummer promise. Here, multiple couples gather in a group. For an evening, the canopy is encased on three sides, assembled using scaffolding and fabric, so that only silhouettes of the participants are revealed. The Room Generator is deployed on the open side. Made of transparent PVC, it is inflated to be 36 feet long and 18 feet wide. As minutes pass, an urban room is created. Tables, chairs and a local DJ are brought in. Now the night begins.

View from the street - The Event Station hosting a wedding reception.



At Wyandotte Street, the Event Station is arranged to stage a wedding reception.

Room Generator



Event Element - Room Generator.

Weekend Event – Detroit Free Press Marathon (October 20, 2020)

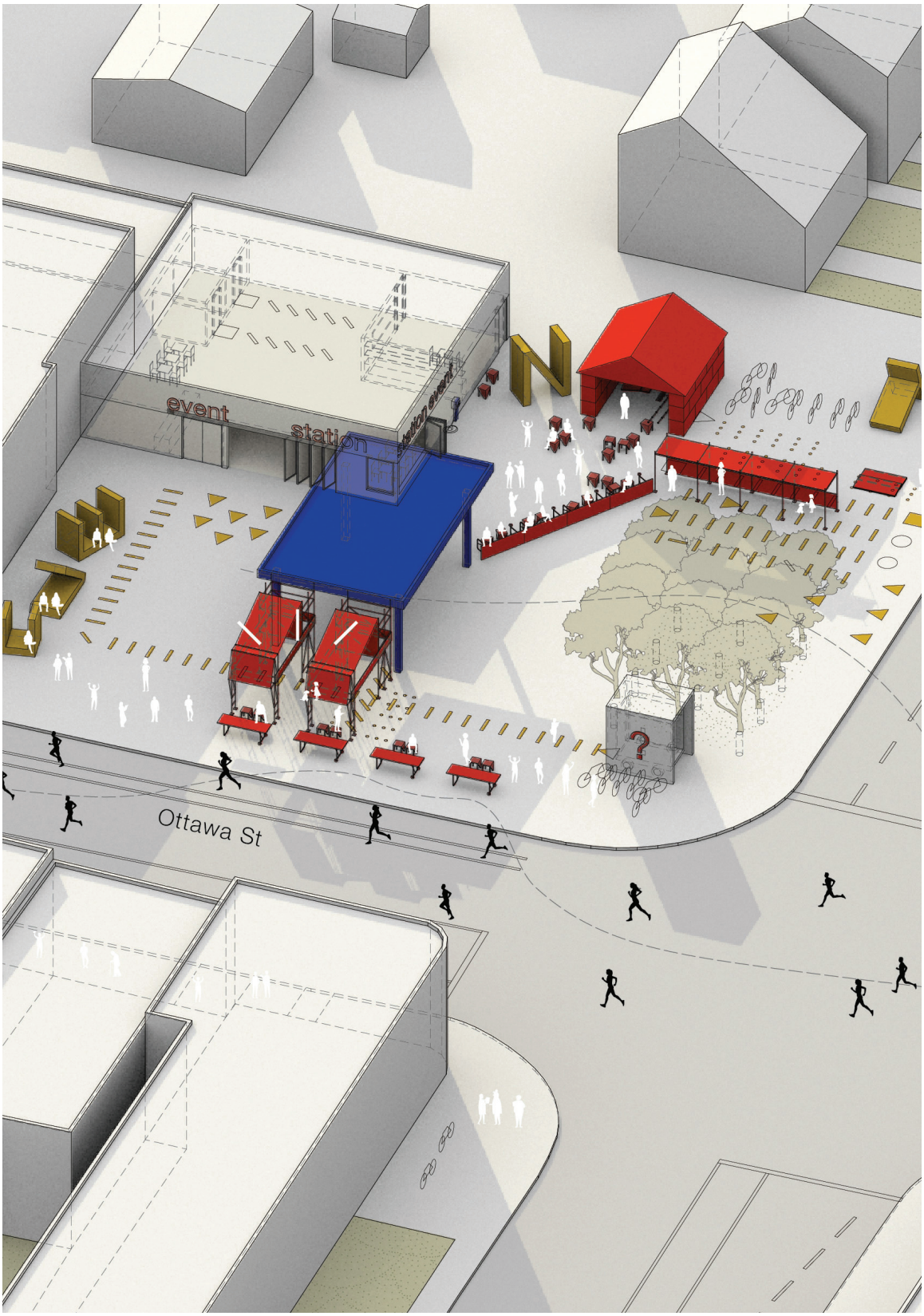
Start, Replenish, Finish

You have waited a year for the Detroit Free Press Marathon. After months of training, runners of all ages gather at the start line. 5k, 10k and half-marathon races are set to start.

Hearing cheers and screams, you are approaching the half-way point. Running through the Event Station, you replenish with water at the table and off you go to finish what you started.

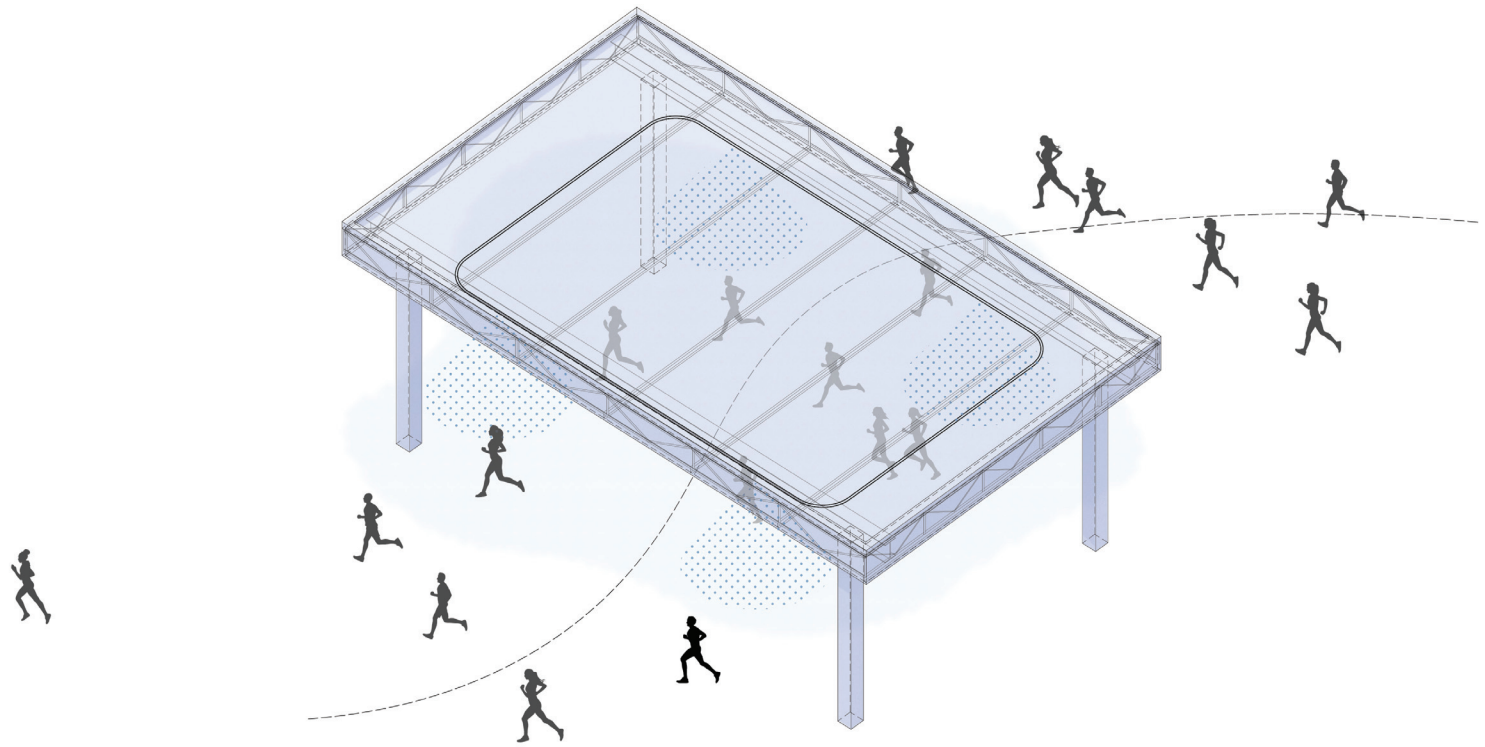
Approaching the finish line, you and with many others run past the roof canopy, which has been adapted to dispense mist, cooling you off from the morning sun and run.

View from the street - The Event Station becomes a water station during the Detroit Free Press Marathon.



At Ottawa Street, the Event Station is arranged to stage the Detroit Free Press Marathon.

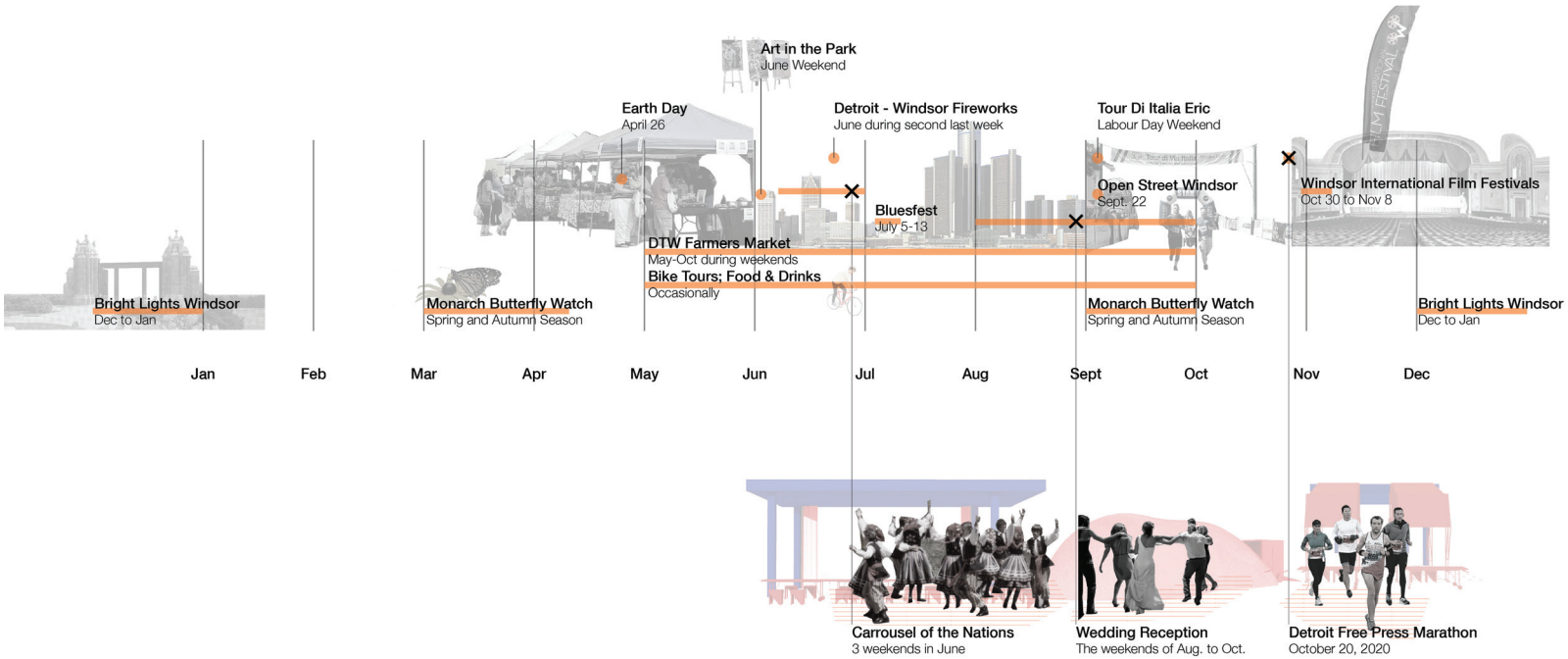
Mist Maker



Adapted Element - the roof canopy includes a sprinkler system that dispenses mist below.

Other City Events

I have shown the Event Station during the weekdays and highlighted 3 events during the weekend that would occur during the months of June, August and October. Windsor's annual calendar of civic events shows that the Event Station can support many other events throughout the year.



Other city events throughout the year that the Event Station could host.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

As the decline of existing gas stations continues and contamination remains on site, the need to address these spaces will grow. The intent of the proposed Event Station is to begin a conversation of about how existing gas stations may be integrated into city life, as opposed to leaving them as spaces in waiting. By adapting existing gas stations and introducing new elements, this proposal invites new narratives for the gas station, as a place for city events and a support for urban infrastructure.

In general, these spaces "have few stakeholders, caretakers, guardians, or spokespersons" (Berger 2006, 239) and therefore lack the imagination, support, and funding needed to instigate change. During this process, it became evident that the realization and success of the Event Station would require further speculation on how to advance the project. These projects challenge the role of the architect, designer, citizen, landowner, and city official in how we can begin to see these spaces as civic assets.

Today, the architect is not limited to the office, meetings and site visits, but is instead called to perform other roles. In 2015 the Canadian Centre for Architecture held *The Other Architect* exhibition, which questioned the role and agency of architecture and architects.

> To find another way of building architecture, we have to be willing to broaden our understanding of what architecture is and what architects can do. From a set of varied approaches drawn from many people, places, and times, the other architect emerges: searching for different operating models, aiming for collaborative strategies, introducing strange concepts, and experimenting with new kinds of tools. (Borasi 2015)

This invites the architect/ event designer to look beyond the traditional approach of acquiring a project (e.g., request for

proposals or design competitions), in which the proposal has been predetermined. Instead, the architect/ event designer would use a more bottom-up approach that includes defining the problem, establishing the narrative, and gathering the cast of characters: community members, local organizations, neighboring businesses, citizens, experts, and city officials.

Assemble, a 15-member multi-disciplinary collective in the UK that spreads their work across art, design, and architecture, practices in a manner that is both democratic and co-operative, while engaging the community, shown in their Cineroleum project. Similarly, Free Labs, a design-build studio offered each summer at Dalhousie School of Architecture, bring together students, educators, clients and the community in constructing built projects ranging in type and scale. In both approaches, the designer is challenged with broadening their agency across a range of disciplines and networks while adopting different roles, including designer, builder, and advocate. Perhaps this approach will allow the transition of the gas station to the Event Station.

Collage of the Event Station - mapping out the potential ripple effect of the Event Station throughout Windsor.

Local Partners/ Sponsors | Community Organizations | Volunteers | Owner | City | Event Designer/ Architect | Local Businesses | Neighbour-hood | Tourist

The cast of characters involved in transforming an existing gas station into the Event Station.

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