The Living Yard:
Re-Making the Public Square for Community Identity

by

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

How do we design and develop in urban areas where we are witnessing the social impacts of gentrification? Through adaptive reuse, this thesis will investigate issues of the gentrification process in the North End of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Looking for inclusive development models to mitigate issues of identity loss and community retention in changing neighbourhoods, and provide new ways to interact with the public square, a living yard.

These ideas will be considered through an adaptive reuse project of Saint Patrick's Alexandra Junior High School in Halifax's North End. Through study of the systems of oppression within Halifax and meetings with representatives of the different communities directly implicated in the future of this site, this thesis intends to understand the needs of these stakeholders and provide a programmatic response that enables inclusive growth for all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Around the world we are continuously facing new challenges of mass urbanization as people move from rural and suburban areas in pursuit of work and education in both developed and developing countries. The foundation of colonies around the world is based on a history of genocide and entrapment, and has been perpetuated by urban planners, politicians/military and developers ever since. The corrupt foundations of our societies need to be reconsidered, and we, as architects, must re-evaluate the role we play in these systems of oppression. We have lost a sense of the public role of architecture and the responsibility to consider all the stakeholders implicated in urban development. As architects, how do we design and provide public programs that encourage entrepreneurship and reinforce community identity in the public realm.

The systemic oppression of lower income communities has been facilitated through the execution of modern urban planning. These outside forces have created conditions where communities are limited by their environment and a lack of access to opportunities of growth, both economically and socially. At the root of this problem is access to education, and in turn, income. As such, many marginalized communities are forced in to social housing or rent based economies, and are therefore, often the victims of forced migration (colonialism, urban planing and gentrification). Due to these outside forces, many public projects lack adequate public programs or poorly considered public programs. The cyclical correlation of education, wealth and home ownership can reduce a sense of self-determination and enable the forced migration of marginalized communities.

Gentrification as a process can be difficult to define because it takes many forms. It could be argued that it has been a product of urban development that has occurred throughout history. This should not; however, suggest an apathetic response to this process. We must create new models of development that consider marginalized communities and the historic oppression on which many cities have been built. The different scales of gentrification have different impacts on community identity. At best, gentrification can be small scale infill projects that reduce the direct displacement of families. Quite often; however, houses are bought for low costs and are then demolished or renovated and sold back at a much higher price. The worst scale of gentrification is at a large development scale. This

requires complete levelling of city blocks and quickly displaces families. In this process there are untold impacts to community identity and swift replacement with new wealthier communities. In this vein, adaptive reuse can be a potential resolution to preserving community identity and working with an already built and developed urban condition. Working with abandoned or unused buildings to provide new programs and affordable housing may be one way of addressing these modern challenges.

Personal Introduction

It is important for me to acknowledge my subjectivity in this investigation. I was born and raised in the North End of Halifax, this is my community. I could be said to be a second-generation gentrifier, as my parents moved to this neighbourhood in the 80's. They moved back to the Maritimes after living and studying in Los Angeles and they had to decide where to live. My father is an architect and was studying Architecture and Urban Design at UCLA. When considering the part of Halifax he wanted to live and work in, he wanted to live in a multi-cultural dynamic community, with a rich urban fabric and unique architectural form. Upon settling in the North End, my parents lost friends and support because the North End was considered "dangerous", but they saw that it was a vibrant and strong community. Aware of his role as an architect and outsider coming in to this community, my father made a deal with local community leaders that he would never directly displace families by flipping or demolishing houses. With his conscious position around infill being the most gentle form of gentrification, he fought for this community at a public level; often challenging developers who were looking to make a quick buck off of the low real estate costs. When my parents built our house they purchased an abandoned gas station with an empty lot attached to it. The gas station was turned in to my father's architectural practice and the lot was filled with affordable row houses. This project was very unique for that period of Canadian architecture and received a Governor General's Award of Architecture for an affordable live/work housing model. My parents truly believed in this community, and were highly engaged in community development. My sisters and I were raised to be conscious of our privilege and role in this community. To this day, the principles that we were taught are tenants that I live by. I have witnessed this community change drastically over my lifetime and feel a sense of responsibility to try to find a way to navigate this complex issue.

CHAPTER 2: THE HARD HISTORY OF HALIFAX
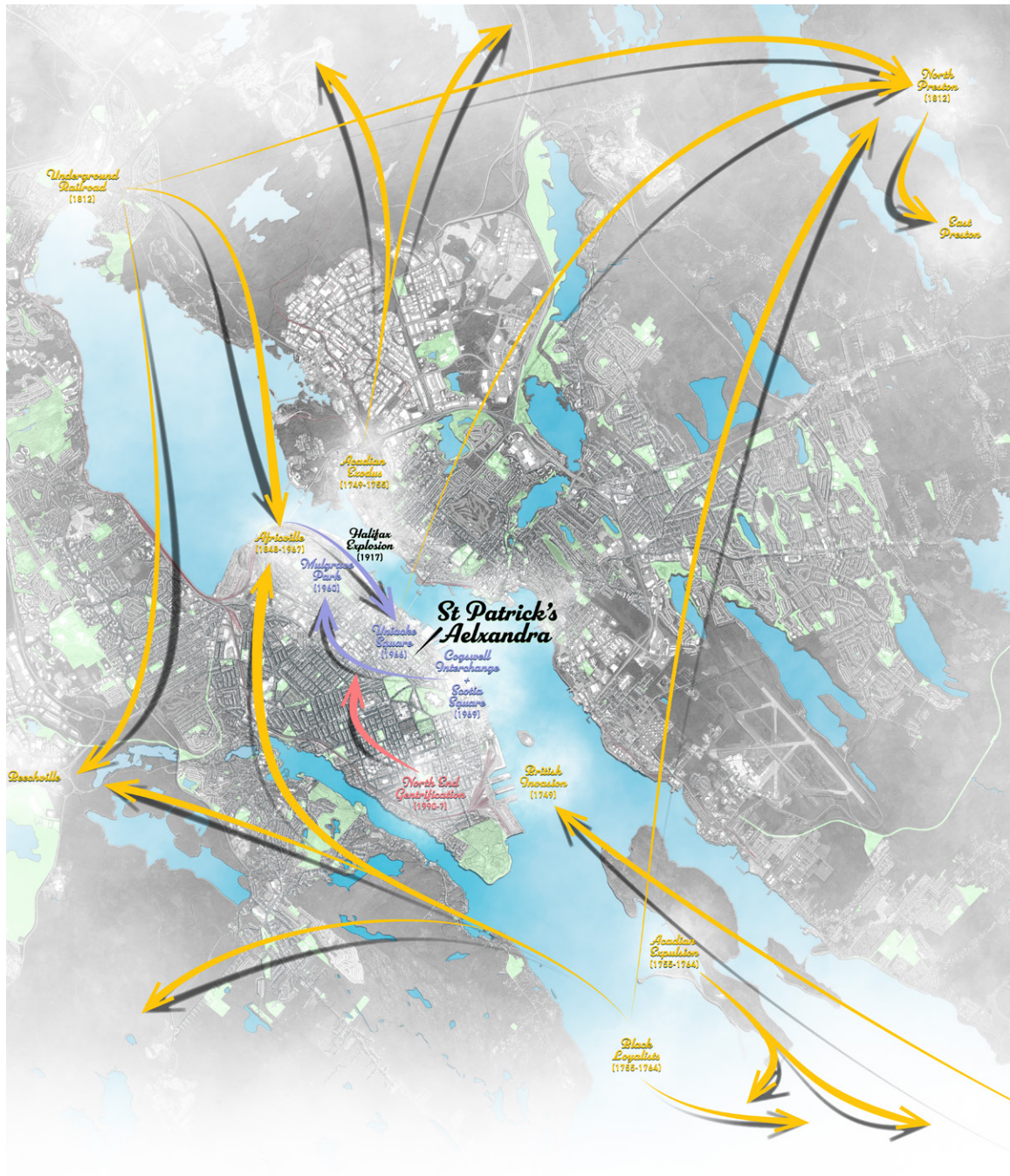
Systems of forced migration - Depicting Halifax's long history of environmental racism from colonialism to urban renewal to gentrification
Aerial map of HRM (Google Earth 2018)
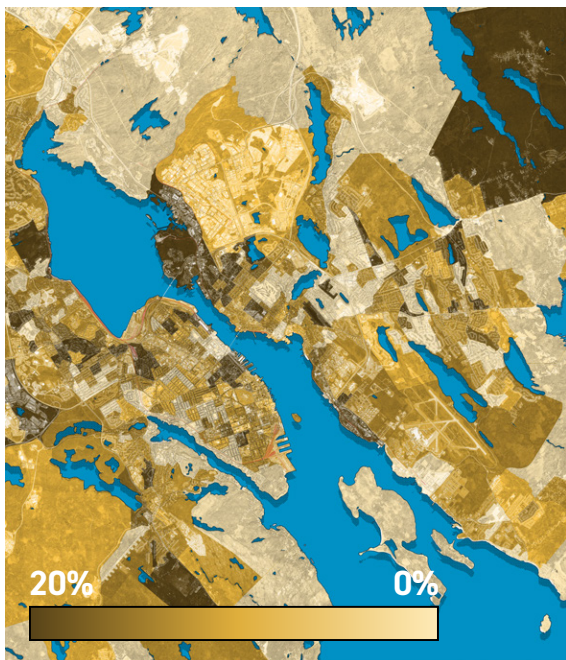
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African origins as percentage of Total - Ethnic origin for the population in private households - 25% sample data (Canada Census 2016)
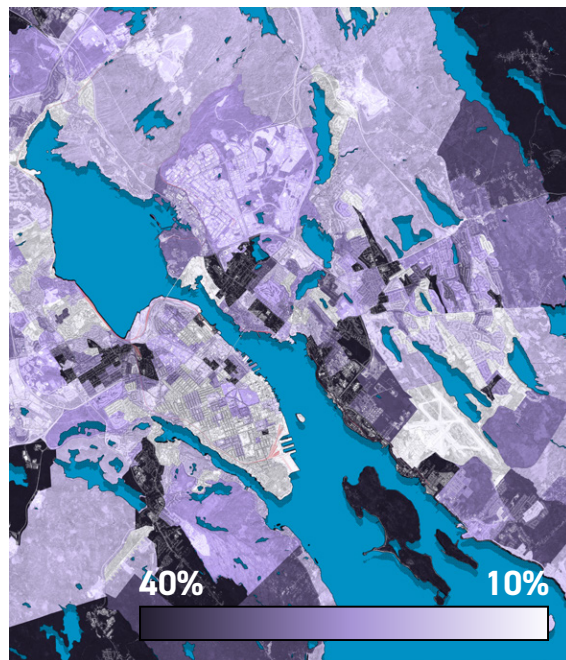
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Education:
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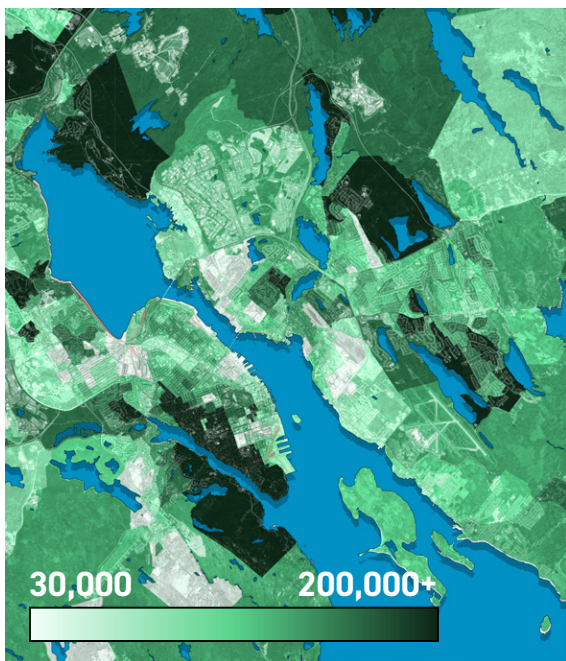
Income:
Median total income of economic families in 2015 ($) - 100% Sample Data (Canada Census 2016)
Aerial maps of HRM (Google Earth 2018)
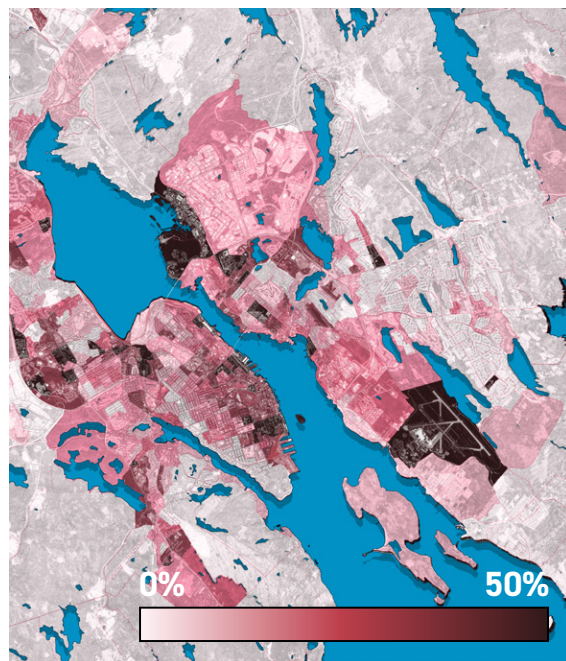
30,000 200,000+

Renters:
Renter as percentage of Total - Private households - 25% sample data (Canada Census 2016)

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The city of Halifax was founded on Mi'kma'ki, unceded Mi'kmaq territory in Nova Scotia, by General Cornwallis in the British Invasion of 1749. The industrial port of Halifax has been a primary military and trade point between Europe and North America given its protected harbour and north eastern location. Since its settlement, Halifax has been dominated by a white European (British, French, German, Dutch) upper class based in the South End. The deeply rooted racial segregation of the North End and South End of Halifax is still evident to this day, although that definition is blurring (disappearing?).

Mi'kmaq

K'jipuktuk, the Mi'kmaq name for Halifax, was forcefully taken from the Mi'kmaq people when the British settled Halifax in 1749. The Mi'kmaq had been living symbiotically with nature in Nova Scotia for thousands of years before Europeans began settling in the New World. The French were the first to settle in Nova Scotia in 1604; establishing Port Royal and Acadia. Despite several wars between European settlers, over the next 150 years, the Acadians developed a relatively peaceful alliance with the Mi'kmaq built on trade and intermarriage. It could be said that Samuel De Champlain, a French colonialist who helped discover much of eastern Canada, had dreams of a humanistic new world based on peace and tolerance (Fischer 2008, 180-181). Although this narrative needs to be taken with consideration, given most of the historical documentation was written from a European perspective.

Mathieu Da Costa

Mathieu Da Costa, considered the first free black man in Canada, was a translator who came with several different European colonial expeditions. It is unclear as to why he, a translator of African heritage, was considered valuable in communicating with Indigenous North Americans, but it is expected that his mastery of multiple European languages and his work with colonialists in Africa, proved to be helpful in communicating with the Mi'kmaq and other indigenous tribes. Da Costa travelled several times to the New World, and even travelled with Champlain to Port Royal (Fischer 2008, 157).

Acadian Exodus + Expulsion

After several failed attempts to claim Port Royal, the British succeeded in 1710 in the Con-

quest of Acadia. This was the first time British forces successfully took a French colony. After the siege, Britain proclaimed the new colony as Nova Scotia. Upon founding the new British colony, several forts and military structures were built across Nova Scotia, including Halifax's Citadel Hill as well as several in Acadian communities. Following British occupation the Acadians were allowed to keep their land, but refused to sign an unconditional oath to the United Kingdom, which sparked several altercations and battles between the British and the Acadians/Mi'kmaq. This created a desire from Acadians and Mi'kmaq, to flee Nova Scotia, and with the aid of France, they started leaving for other French colonies in the Maritimes. With the unrest in the Acadian communities in Nova Scotia and their continued supply of aid to the French, the British became increasingly concerned, which led to the Acadian Expulsion in 1855. Over the following ten years, the British deported roughly 11,500 Acadians to Britain, France and other British North American colonies. Upon arrival to France, several Acadians decided to then emigrate to Louisiana, which was then a Spanish colony. The peaceful relationship between the French and Spanish, as well as their shared Catholic religion, made Louisiana a primary destination for Acadians. The Acadian population of Louisiana eventually became known as Cajuns and are to this day a primary contributor to the regional identity (Faragher 2006, 75).

Black Loyalists + Black Refugees

Black Loyalists were slaves who fought with the British in the American Revolutionary War on the promise of freedom afterwards. Nova Scotia was considered a new beginning for slaves and Black Loyalists fleeing the United States after the American Revolution. There were several communities across Nova Scotia where the Black Loyalists settled, but primarily Birchtown (Shelburne) and Africville. Halifax was not entirely immune from the slave trade. Several white Loyalists brought slaves with them as they settled in Nova Scotia and even sold slaves at auction in Halifax. The second, and largest, wave of Black immigrants came during the War of 1812, these were referred to as the Black Refugees. Many of these refugees settled in North and East Preston, and were amongst the settlers of Africville in Halifax. In this wave came Richard Preston, a prominent abolitionist who escaped slavery in the United States and played a significant role in establishing the rights of the black Nova Scotian community. Black Loyalists and Refugees were still welcomed with overt racism and abuse in Nova Scotia, and found it difficult to integrate. This lead to several clashes between white Nova Scotians and Black immigrants, forcing a large

population of Black immigrants to agree to help settle a free black colony in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The slave trade continued in Nova Scotia until the early 1800's. The Slave Trade Act of 1807 made slavery illegal in the British Empire, which included Nova Scotia.
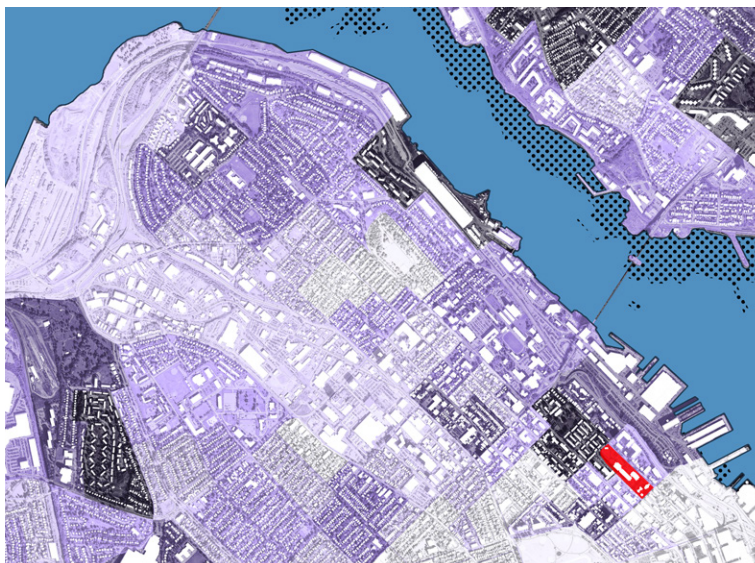
North End Halifax

The North End of the Halifax Peninsula has historically been the industrial, lower income, and multicultural region of Halifax. The geographical definitions differ depending on the time or community in question. Traditionally the North End of Halifax was defined by the Halifax Harbour to the east, Africville and the Bedford Basin to the north, Windsor Street to the west, and the northern edge of the historic Halifax settlement defined by General Cornwallis as the northern side of the Citadel Hill (now Cogswell). The original settlers of the North End of Halifax were a group known as Foreign Protestants. Even after the founding of Halifax, Nova Scotia was still predominantly Acadian and Mi'kmaq, so the British wanted to introduce more Protestants to the region. After having difficulty recruiting British Protestants due to the cold weather in Nova Scotia, the British resorted to foreign Protestants, mainly from Germany. The Foreign Protestants built the Little Dutch Church on the corner of Brunswick St. and Gerrish St. in 1756, which makes it the second oldest building still standing in Halifax. Following the construction of the Nova Scotia Railway, which had it's primary station located in Richmond, in 1853, industry began to concentrate in the North End. On December 6th, 1917, during the First World War, a tragic explosion, referred to as the Halifax Explosion, occurred in the Narrows of the Halifax Harbour when two war ships collided. The community of Richmond was completely destroyed, as well as many other parts of downtown Halifax and the North End. Fortunately, the Africville community was relatively unharmed due to the location on North facing slope of the peninsula sheltering them from the direct blast. Windows were blown out and several people were injured or blind following the blast (Erickson 2004, 43).

40% **10%**

Education:
No certificate, diploma or degree as percentage of Total - in private households
- 25% sample data
(Canada Census 2016)

Aerial Map of North End Halifax
(Google Earth 2018)

30,000 **200,000+**

Income:
Median total income of economic families in 2015 ($) - 100% Sample Data
(Canada Census 2016)

Aerial Map of North End Halifax
(Google Earth 2018)

0% **50%**
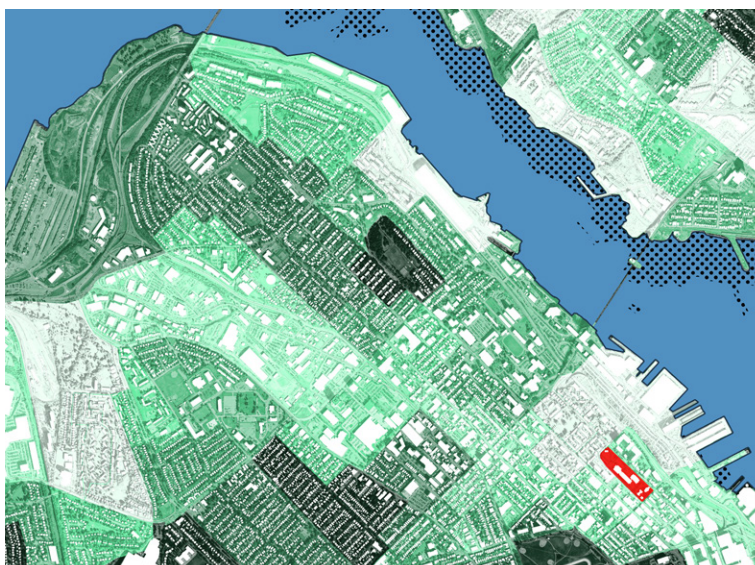
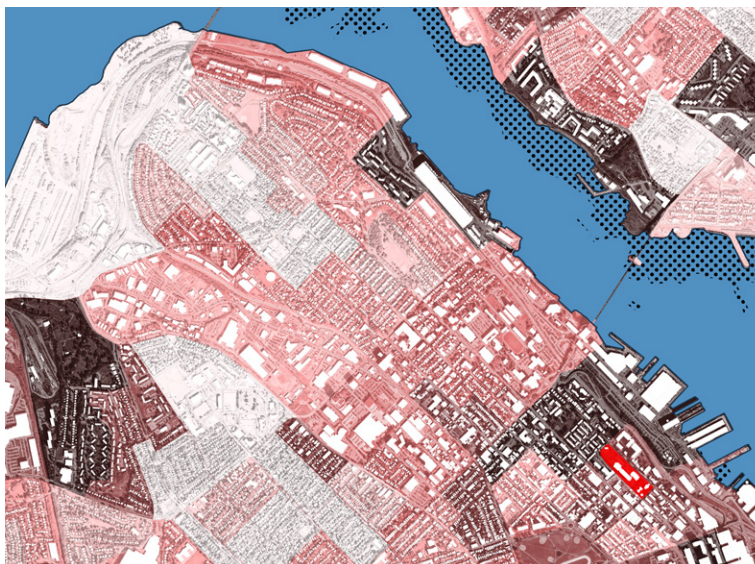Renters:
Renter as percentage of Total - Private households
- 25% sample data
(Canada Census 2016)

Aerial Maps of North End Halifax (Google Earth 2018)

Africville

The first black community of slaves and freemen in Halifax was located on Albermarle St in the (now) downtown district. This community then migrated to Africville with the Black Loyalists and Refuges. Africville is located on the most northern point of the Halifax Peninsula. Black Loyalists were promised land by the British to build their own community in Halifax in the 1800's. Upon arrival to their new home, the community of Africville was left to more or less defend for themselves. With very little money and resources, the community struggled to survive. The community persevered while facing poor conditions, lack of services and education, and no support from the city of Halifax (quite the opposite in fact). The city began initiating urban planning moves to further impact the public health of Africville. Due to the housing conditions and lack of proper paperwork for land ownership, it was easy for the city to put pressure on the community through urban planning. They started with a prison, then an infectious disease hospital, then a slaughterhouse and then a dump. The systematic implementation of "dirty" industries was calculated to enable further control over the community and to officially declare it a "slum". This coincided with a period of urban planning in North America referred to as Urban Renewal, where cities decided to relocate communities living in "slums" due to what they perceived as land that was not being used effectively. In 1964, the city voted to relocate the Africville community, and swiftly began forcing people out of their homes. Between 1964 and 1967 almost all of the community of Africville had been destroyed, and the process culminated in the demolition of The Seaview African United Baptist Church in the night of November 20th, 1967. The city bulldozed the Church a whole year before even properly owning the building, and even post-edited official records regarding the sale of the property. Inside the church when it was demolished were the official records of most of the community members. The destruction of these documents made it even more difficult for residents prove land ownership and familial lineage. Most of the residents were relocated to public housing projects throughout Halifax, but mainly Uniacke Square on Gottingen St. where they faced equally difficult conditions and few opportunities for employment (Rutland 2018, 61).

Photo taken from Africville Park, 2018

Reconciliation

Africville Apology

Initiated in 2002, the city of Halifax and the Government of Canada have begun restitution measures regarding the tragic treatment of Africville. The Africville Apology was officially given on February 24th, 2010 along with 4.5 million dollars and the promise to re-build the Seaview African United Baptist Church. The church reopened in the fall of 2011 as a museum dedicated to the foundation of Africville and the atrocities committed by the City of Halifax.


Africville Museum, 2018

Viola Desmond

Viola Desmond was the first black woman in Nova Scotia to own a hair salon after opening one next to her husband's barbershop on Gottingen St. She was a self-made entrepreneur after being forced to attend beauty school in Montreal because black people were not allowed to attend the school in Halifax at the time. She returned to Halifax to open Vi's Studio of Beauty Culture, and went on to open The Desmond School of Beauty Culture, a beauty school dedicated to educating black women to run their own salons, and Vi's Beauty Products. While out driving on a sales trip, her car broke down in New Glasgow. She was forced to spend the day in New Glasgow, so she decided to attend a movie at the Roseland Film Theatre. Despite there being no signs regarding segregation, Viola decided to move from the balcony to the floor, where she was confronted and asked to move. She refused to move back to the balcony, so they forcefully removed her from the theatre and put her in jail for the night. In the end she was convicted of tax evasion due to the different costs of balcony and floor seats. On April 14th, 2010, Mayan Francis, Nova Scotia's first black Lieutenant Governor, signed the first posthumous pardon in Canadian history to forgive Viola. On November 19th, 2018, Viola Desmond was the first Canadian-born woman to appear alone on a Canadian bank note, when the 10 dollar bill was released with her face on it. Also appearing on the bill is a map of Halifax's North End community where she ran her businesses (Reynolds and Robson 2018, 15).

Viola Desmond on the new 10$ Bill, 2018 ("Canada Just Got a New 10$ Bill." blogTO, 2018)
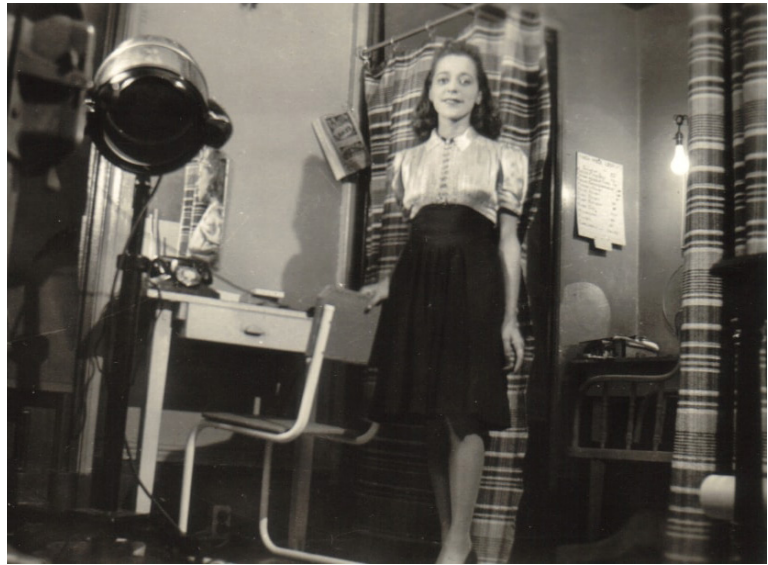
Viola Desmond in Vi's Studio of Beauty Culture ("Viola Desmond." *The Canadian Encyclopedia* 2018)

Cornwallis Statue

A statue of the Lieutenant General Edward Cornwallis, who founded Halifax in 1749, stood in Halifax for 87 years. The statue is a bronze figure of Cornwallis atop a granite pedestal and was built in 1931 by John Massey Rhind. Due to the controversial role of Cornwallis in the colonization of Halifax, and his actions against the Mi'kmaq people, there has long been demand for the removal of the statue. On Canada Day (July 1st) 2017, there was a scheduled protest of the Cornwallis statue by the Mi'kmaq community. The protest was peaceful and intended to provoke conversation, but was quickly co-opted when four members of the Canadian Military who identify with The Proud Boys arrived as a counter protest. The Proud Boys are a chauvinist hate group founded on the idea that males (mostly white, despite their best efforts to suggest non-racial definitions) should no longer have to apologize for the severe traumas executed in the founding of North America. They believe that men are now being profiled and oppressed, and that traditional sexual definitions are threatened and in turn our histories are being lost. This event sparked nation-wide controversy and led to their suspension from the Armed Forces. However, this was only temporary and after counselling, they were allowed to resume their posts. On January 31, 2018 the statue was finally removed and placed in storage until further deliberations to decide the fate of the controversial figure. Cornwallis' name was also removed from Cornwallis Junior High School in 2012, and is now called Central Halifax Junior High (Patil 2018).

Proud Boys at Edward Cornwallis Statue Protest (Zone Justice Et Faits Divers - ICI.Radio-Canada. ca 2018)

CHAPTER 3: COLONIALISM = URBAN RENEWAL = GENTRIFICA-TION

Colonialism

The process of one country invading another nation, region, or people, wherein they force-fully establish their dominance through militaristic, political and social measures. This has been common practice for powerful nations throughout history, and could still be said to still occur in modern times through capitalism and global warfare. English, French, Dutch and Germans were among the colonial forces that invaded Nova Scotia.

Urban Renewal

A heavy handed approach to urban revitalization prevalent throughout North America, and other parts of the world, from the late 19th century onwards. Using a language of effective land use and revitalization, governments and developers began taking privately owned properties they deemed as "slums" or poorly used/managed properties to be redeveloped for infrastructure, housing and parks. One of the first and most well-known examples of urban renewal was Haussman's renovation of Paris in 1854. This process involved a major overhaul of Paris' urban infrastructure in hopes of increasing sanitation and health, while redefining the image of Paris. In the process of refurbishing the water systems and transportation network, and developing the now synonymous Parisian boulevards, Hauss-man destroyed several hundred houses that belonged to the working class. Following the development, many of the lower working class lost their homes and communities, and were replaced by the nobility and gentry classes. This process of urban renewal really took off in North America in the early to mid 20th century. One of the earliest and most highly celebrated redevelopment projects was the construction of New York's Central Park which began in 1857. In the height of urban renewal, projects were completed across al-most every major North American city to "revitalize" urban centres. Post-industrial cities around the world were facing issues of poor health conditions related to the proximity to dirty industry and the lack of infrastructure and wealth. This was often the direct impact of calculated urban planning moves to control the poorer working class. The business elites who owned the companies, and lobbied (or controlled) the governments, were able to maintain high profits at the cost of the health of the poor who were forced to work for

almost nothing. The upper class therefore were able to afford to live outside of urban centres and began the process of suburbanization. This however, created the conditions that had negative impacts on the "image" of cities from an outside perspective, and therefore, enabled cities to reclaim these parts as they deemed them a "blight" on their character As often was the case, many of the displaced communities were black or lower income. Although it was never framed as overt racism, it was often perceived as such; the powerful white upperclass attempting to remove the black population from their city's identity. Of course, as previously mentioned, Halifax followed the lead of urban developers in the destruction of Africville and the imposition of the Cogswell Interchange in the 60's. The relocation of the Africville resulted in the construction of Uniacke Square, a social housing complex off of Gottingen St. While the Cogswell Interchange construction forced the re-settlement of the community to Mulgrave Park. As with many aspects of Halifax's delayed development, this was after the negative impacts of other North American urban renewal projects were being considered, and the conversation around urban renewal began to change. One of the primary critics of urban renewal was the highly regarded Jane Jacobs. Although not an "urban planner", Jacobs was a critical of the disenfranchisement of lower income communities impacted from urban renewal projects. She found that vibrant cities were multi-cultural, mixed use, and often unplanned. Her counter-planning approach was celebrated by communities as she helped lead revolutions against city planners. Although not always successful, Jacobs was one of the first true "allies" in urban planning; by fighting for communities beyond her own and standing for what she believed in (Jacobs 1974).

Gentrification

This could be said to be a natural process of urban development, wherein lower income communities are displaced by higher income residents due to low real estate values. This process can take many forms, from large development to single family homes. Often times, these communities are located in, or near, down town districts or desirable areas where new parks or infrastructure have been built. The High Line in New York City has been a recent example where an existing abandoned railroad was repurposed as a park that connected multiple neighbourhoods of Manhattan. Seen as a successful revitalization of a decaying infrastructure, this project has been celebrated around the world for the level of public engagement with the park, and has attracted new developments from

famous architects. This has increased real estate values along the High Line, where as the former decaying railroad decreased real estate value (Moss 2012). Urban renewal is quite literally gentrification, although most modern uses of the term gentrification apply to a less politically calculated execution, and more of an individual basis. Gentrification can also be expressed through a desire to live in more diverse neighbourhoods, but this can, in turn, further displace the diverse community due to increasing real estate values and lack of employment opportunities for the traditional community. Coming with these new families and developments are often new businesses that cater to these new residents at a cost that is unaffordable or out of touch with the displaced communities needs. This can result in alienation and division between these parties, and create tension. The walkable, diverse and well situated neighbourhood of the North End of Halifax has been dealing with this problem for decades. Although once seen as a "dangerous" part of town (mostly due to the racist association of the black population and crime), it is now considered amongst the most valuable districts in Halifax. As we push towards a more sustainable way of life, the process of urbanization and densification must occur to reduce our dependency on cars for transportation and urban sprawl. As well as an environmental consciousness, many cities face geographic limitations that confine urban sprawl, and therefore are forced to redevelop lower income neighbourhoods.

In 2015, CBC published a divisive two part article titled "Halifax: A City With Two North Ends". Part one focused on the black communities perspective of the gentrifying process of the North End, and the second part focused on the perspective of the new business owners who have recently opened up shop in the community. Of course, this article was intending to be divisive by making the point that these communities are divided. In this article they interviewed two prominent members of the black community, one was Lindell Smith, who would go on to become the North End City Councillor the following year, and the other was Rodney Small, a community leader. Smith and Small went on to found the One North End Project as a direct response to the CBC article (McGregor 2015). They hope to spark dialogue and attempt to resolve the division within the neighbourhood by working with both parts to find a unified vision for the future.

House flipping

Small business

Infill

Row housing

Apartments

Scales of gentrification in the North End

Condos

Brunswick Street heritage collage (Nova Scotia Archives)

Maitland + Prince William Street lost fabric collage (Nova Scotia Archives)

Uniack Square historic image from construction 1965 (Nova Scotia Archives)

CHAPTER 4: INHABITED COMMUNITY YARD

History of The Square

As a key building block of almost every urban metropolis in the world, the square, agora, piazza, plaza, or mall, has served as the centre of civic life. The true origins of the first square are unknown, as it is considered fundamental to human settlement; the space between two shelters. Throughout history, the many forms have served as the theatres of their time; from the ancient Ancient Agora of Athens, to the Piazza San Marco in Venice, to New York City's Times Square. Centres of commerce, culture and politics, the meeting place has defined human evolution and urban development. The public aspect of the square carries different memories through time and place. The nexus of urban life, the square, represents something different to every culture. As a meeting place, we have come to the square to trade and celebrate, as a political space, the square is a representation of power and revolution. The square has lost its place in our daily lives, as we spend more time at home on the internet, we turn to our public spaces only for special occasions. Public space has lost its life, we feel uncomfortable in the void. Agoraphobia is an anxiety disorder where you fear being in situations where you feel trapped or powerless, often associated with a fear of public spaces. The syntax of agoraphobia says it all; agora-phobia, fear of the square (Glancey 2014).

As previously discussed, Halifax has a complicated political history of colonialism. When the English forcefully claimed their land in Halifax, they drew a typical English town grid, with the military square, the Grand Parade, at its centre. On one side of the grand parade is St. Paul's Church and on the other is City Hall (the classic church and state). The representations of power on the Grand Parade create an uneasy feeling of hallowed reverence, a place where citizens are meant to feel their presence. Today the square is used for ceremonial events, celebrations, and demonstrations, but has lost its role in the daily life of Haligonians.
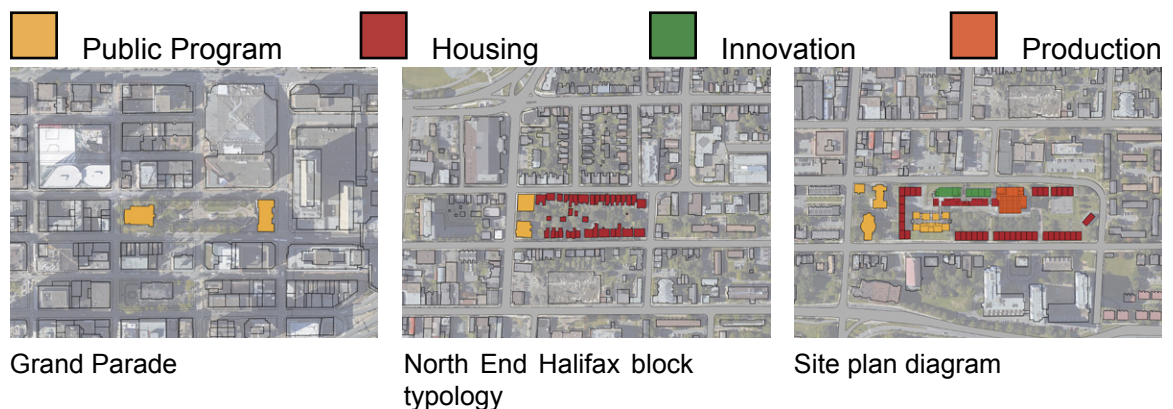
Source of Revolution

The dichotic relationship of positive social reforms throughout history, have often come from open revolution. Most squares have seen revolts, riots and rebellions. A place where

people gather to show solidarity against an issue or government, while at the same time, a place where governments have come to exert control and dominance. On Bloody Sunday, November, 13th 1887, Irish people marched to Trafalgar Square to revolt against the British government. On August 28th, 1963, Martin Luther King marched on the Washington Mall, and spoke the iconic phrase, "I Have a Dream". On February 11, 2011 President Mubarak stepped down following an 18-day protest in Tahrir Square, Cairo. Looking back to gallows and guillotines, citizens have been summoned to squares to watch the government impose authority and uphold the rule of law. Countless governments have used squares as both local and global stages for military force. Fidel Castro frequently addressed the citizens of Cuba from The Plaza de la Revolución, knowing he was speaking to the world. Mao held countless military marches in Tiananmen Square, showing the power and order of the Chinese military. The iconic image of the man staring down the barrel of a tank in Tiananmen Square could be the most appropriate representation of the political history of the square. The place where people gather to exert their collective power and freedom (Glancey 2014).

The Yard, Counter Colonial

As a challenge to the colonial town square, I investigate the living yard. How do we develop in complex urban environments to reintroduce daily life in to public space? Can we create a new urban typology that fully integrates all assets of life and provide opportunities for community self-determination? Yard carries connotations of different typologies, like the working yards, i.e. dockyard, train yard, or living yards, i.e. courtyard, backyard, or growing yards, i.e. farmyard, vineyard. The yard implies a sense of ownership, collaboration and co-habitation. Through this thesis design project I will investigate ways of designing around the idea of a living yard, a woven tapestry of modern urban life.

Public Program   Housing   Innovation   Production

Grand Parade

North End Halifax block typology

Site plan diagram

CHAPTER 5: SITE: THE HEART OF HALIFAX

Located just south of Uniacke Square, a public housing neighborhood, Saint Patrick's Alexandra was a junior high school that was closed in 2011 after being declared surplus in 2008, and has been rife in conflict ever since. After years of negotiations and lawsuits between the community and Jono Developments, the site was sold for 3.6 Million dollars in 2016. As with most developments and proposals in Halifax, the plan is to demolish the building and replace it with unaffordable housing. This development has received a lot of push back from the community on the basis that it is not considering the community's needs and is just further displacing an already threatened community. Historically this neighbourhood has been a multi-cultural community, facing several social and economic challenges. The politically charged site would provide an opportunity to address the dark history of the development of Halifax, and hopefully a way to start healing the divided community.

Site map with significant buildings (Google Maps 2018)

Saint Patrick's Boys School

The oldest portion still standing on the site was built in 1921. It was designed by prominent Halifax architect Andrew Cobb. Originally built to complement the Saint Patrick's Girls school which was built in 1911 on the site. The original building's primary entrance was located on the Brunswick St. side, but was removed, along with the girl's school, upon the expansion of the new Saint Patrick's Alexandra Junior High School. The structure of the building is heavy concrete posts with self supporting brick walls. Due to the mass structure and rigid structural grid, the rooms are laid out in a cellular plan.

Intricate Window Details, 2018

Brunswick St Elevation, 2018

North Elevation, 2018

Brunswick St Elevation with Evidence of Former Entrance, 2018

Saint Patrick's Alexandra Junior High School

As a response to a demand for better educational facilities in the neighbourhood, the school was renovated in 1971. Designed by Robert Flinn, they kept the original Boy's School, but demolished the girl's school and relocated the main entrance to Maitland St. The construction was very typical of low-cost developments of the time, being a primarily light steel structure on a 12' grid, with a large-span light steel truss system in the gymnasium. The attempt to build a quad-like square on the North Side further isolated the building from the street edge, and created a difficult space to properly occupy. Two redeeming features are: the arcade along the North side of the addition and the bridge connecting the two structures.
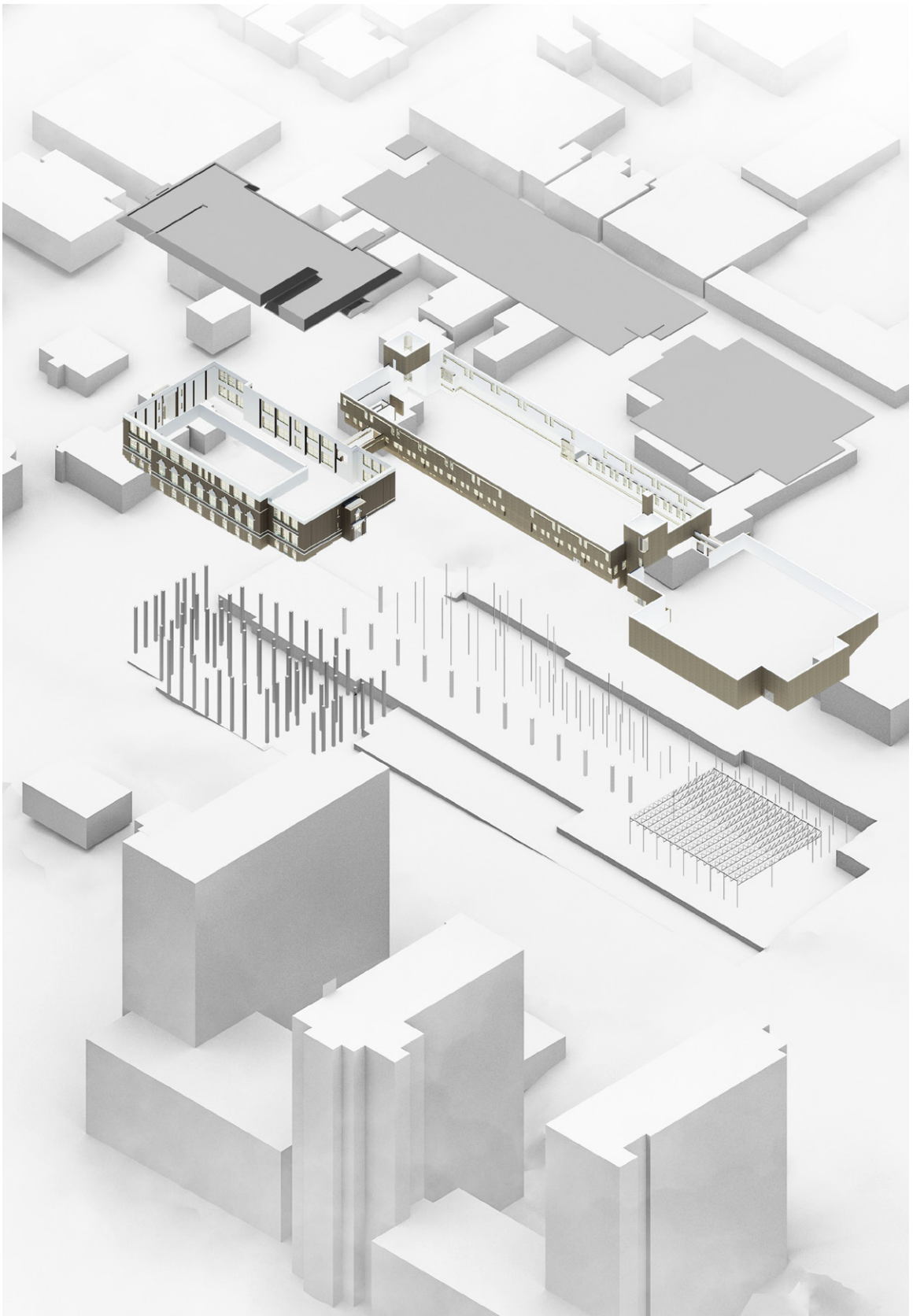

Arcade + Bridge, 2018

Courtyard Side, 2018

Maitland St. Entrance, 2018

Structural exploded axo of St. Patrick's Alexandra School, 2018

Hope Blooms

Founded in 2008 by Jessie Jollymore, Hope Blooms is a community led urban farming initiative intended to educate local youth to lead a self-sufficient healthy lifestyle, and to engage their entrepreneurial spirit. Since its inception, Hope Blooms has had a profound impact on the community. Focusing primarily on educating urban youth to learn how to grow their own food and run their own business. There is a heavy emphasis on family and the community as educators and contributors. On May 1st, 2015 Hope Blooms had the grand opening of their new greenhouse on the site of St. Patrick's Alexandra. The green- house was designed and built in collaboration with Brian Lilley, FBM, Build Right Nova Scotia and the youth of Hope Blooms (Wade 2018, 17).

Hope Blooms Greenhouse, 2018

Significant Buildings Near Site

Little Dutch Church (LDC)
Built in 1756 by the Foreign Protestants, this church is the second oldest building still standing in Halifax. The Foreign Protestants were a group of Germans, brought to Halifax by the Edward Cornwallis to try to introduce Protestantism to predominantly Catholic and Mi'kmaq region at the time. The church later became Anglican. (Roper. n.d)


St George's Round Church
The LDC congregation outgrew the small church and needed a new home. Opening in 1801, the church was built in the round Palladian style to increase the quality of architecture in Halifax. The architect is unknown, but Prince Edward played a prominent role in the erection of this beautiful wood structure. In 1994 a fire destroyed a large portion of the building. Although it was costly, the church was fully restored. The church runs a program called YouthNet; a youth-education centre intended to teach life-skills. (Roper. n.d)

New Horizons Baptist Church
Under the leadership of Richard Preston, the church was built by by Black Refugees in 1832 as part of a network of Black Baptist Churches across Nova Scotia. The New Horizons Baptist Church (originally called the African Baptist Church, and then the Cornwallis Street Baptist Church) was built as a symbol for a new free black Nova Scotian community. The church has played a significant role in the fight against discrimination in Halifax and the establishment of Black Nova Scotian civil rights. (MacKerrow, 1895) The church played a key role in supporting Viola Desmond in court. As the move towards removing association with Edward Cornwallis, the church was renamed in 2018 to embody new values of the community.
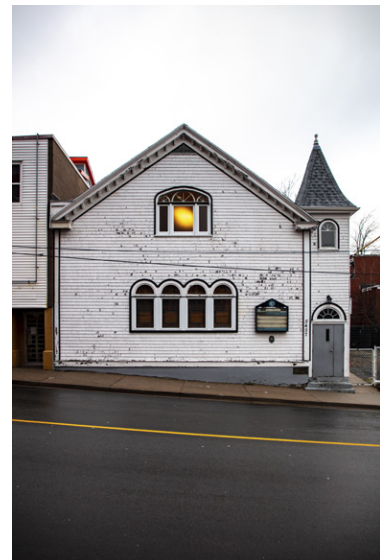
St Patrick's Catholic Church
The original chapel on this site held the first St. Patrick's school in its basement. Upon growth in the community a new structure was erected in its place in 1885. Built in the Gothic Revival style, the church is a prominent and beautiful structure in the neighbourhood and has held an important role in the Irish community of Halifax. (Saint Patrick's Church n.d.)


Halifax North Memorial Public Library
An inclusive community centre and learning space built in 1966 as a memorial to the Halifax Explosion. It was designed by prominent Nova Scotian architect Keith Graham (Canadian Architect 1968), who passed away in 2018 and was a significant loss to the Nova Scotian architectural community. The public and social programs have had a profound impact on the local community. Lindell Smith began his work as a community leader a program director at the library.

Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre
As a response to the challenges faced with the urbanization of the Indigenous communities across Canada, several friendship centres were founded to provide gathering spaces for Indigenous Canadians. The Halifax branch opened in 1973 and changed locations twice before settling on Gottingen St in 1984. It was Intended to promote Indigenous identities, and ensure their protection in the modern urban condition, the centre helps provide educational and entrepreneurial opportunities to their community and beyond. The prominent art on the facade has been a staple in the community identity of this neighbourhood. ("History" n.d.)
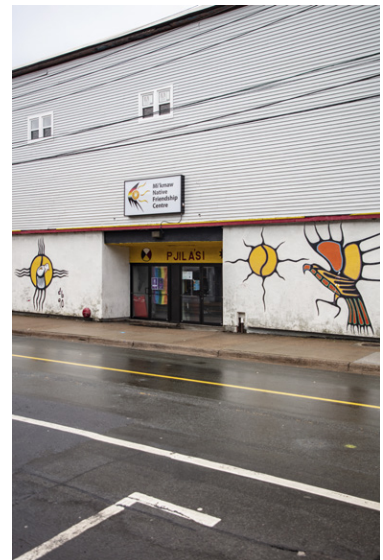
Local Allies

Jessie Jollymore
- Founder of Hope Blooms
- Educating local youth in Health and Entrepeneurship
- Several Hope Blooms alumni have received scholarships and have pursued university educations. Often citing their work with Jessie and Hope Blooms as a catalyst (Halifax Regional Centre for Education 2017)

Lindell Smith
- District 8 City Councillor
- First Halifax black councillor in 16 years
- Co-founder of the O.N.E. North End Project
- Initiating conversations regarding gentrification in the North End
- Prominent community leader and activist ("District 8 Update" 2017)

Rodney Small
- Social Enterprise Manager at Common Good Solutions
- Co-Founder of the O.N.E. North End Project
- Addressing issues of gentrification of the North End and promoting inclusive growth
- Arrested for assaulting a police officer. Case was overturned at the Supreme Court as it was deemed racial profiling ("Herring Cove Man" 2018)

CHAPTER 6: PROGRAM: EDUCATION + ENTREPRENEURSHIP

As a response to the previously raised issues of community identity in the gentrifying community of the North End of Halifax, I believe the site of Saint Patrick's Alexandra would be a great place to develop a program that would address the relationship of education and entrepeneurship. In my interviews with several different key figures in the community, three main issues were consistently brought up: the lack of entrepreneurial opportunities, a reduced feeling of self-determination and a lack of affordable housing. The generally highly educated new wave of gentrifiers bring skills and business acumen to the neighbourhood and should have a means of sharing their knowledge with the local community. We need to develop a symbiotic relationship, and find new ways of working together towards a more equitable and integrated future. If we continue on our current trajectory, we will lose a very important community in Halifax's complicated identity. As such, I propose that a phase design development where the community learns to adapt and reuse the school to meet their needs, while providing affordable housing for an inclusive and integrated work/live community.
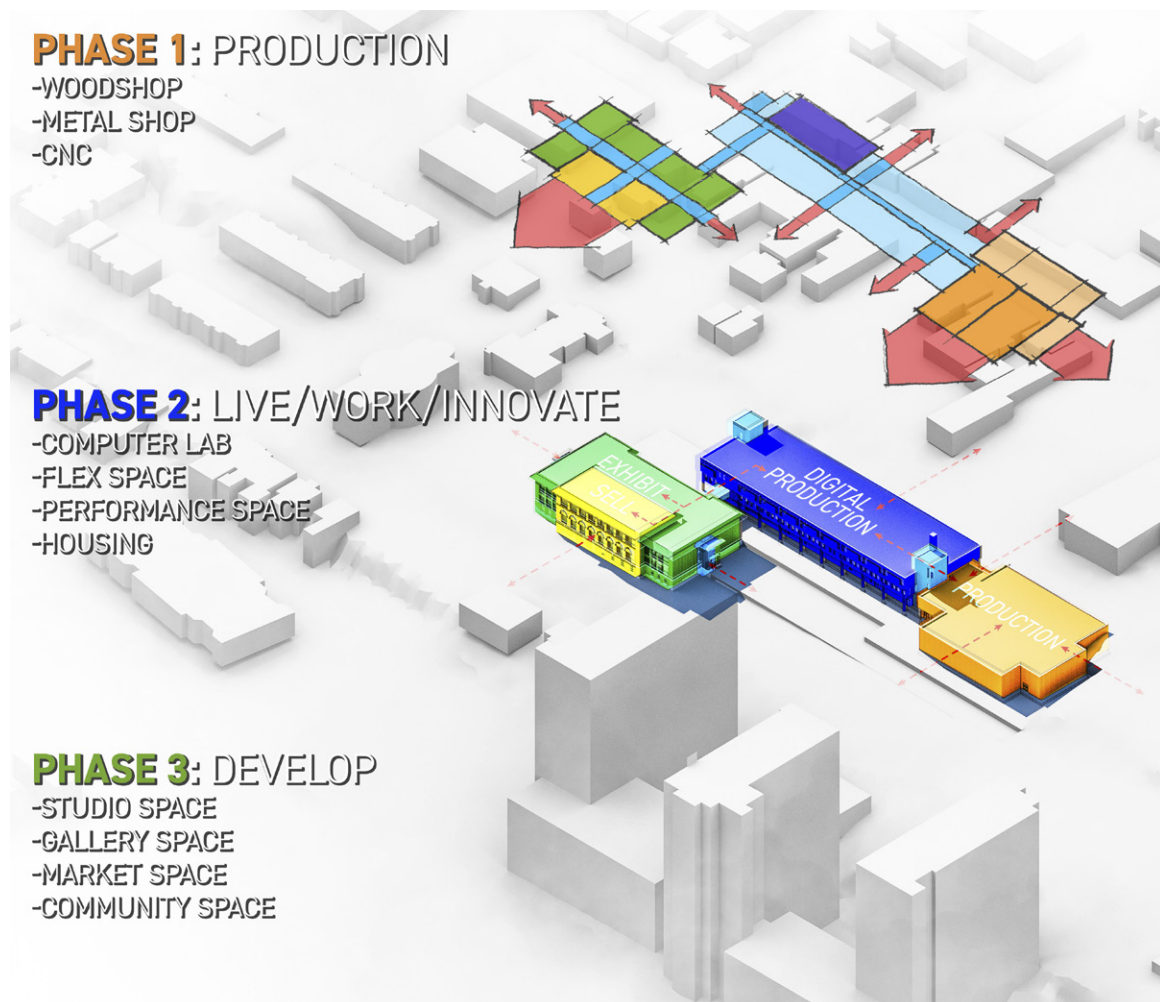
Self-Determination/Definition/Design

The success of Hope Blooms in engaging the youth of the community and instilling a sense of self-determination has been profound. This is the seed of my programmatic response. In my discussions with local community leaders, the often reoccurring topics were the lack of black owned businesses, the unaffordable cost of housing, and how those impact a sense of self-determination. The lack of opportunities for black residents to engage in businesses and the changing demographics increased a sense of helplessness in the community. As city planners and politicians (before Lindell…) seemed to sit by and even enable the redevelopment of the North End, the local community has felt excluded and ignored. We must figure out ways to provide opportunities in architecture and design to allow communities to design for themselves. Giving opportunities to define and carry on their community identity. Architecture and design are rarely given much credit in a standard North American education. Because most people haven't had much of an architectural education, we have lost the public discourse around the built environment. Architecture has been commodified and is often perceived as an elitist endeavour. Architecture needs

to return to its humanistic values and reengage the public dialogue in Canada.

Incremental Building

Saint Patrick's Alexandra has three primary structural types. The 1921 portion is a heavy concrete post structure with self-supporting brick exterior walls, and a cellular floor plan based within the concrete column grid. The 1971 addition has two distinct parts: The flexible steel structure of the southwest portion running about two thirds of the way before terminating at the gymnasium, and the gym structure that has a large span light steel truss system. In my analysis of these structural systems I concluded that they lend themselves to three distinct programs that enable self-determination and entrepeneurship.

PHASE 1: PRODUCTION
-WOODSHOP
-METAL SHOP
-CNC

PHASE 2: LIVE/WORK/INNOVATE
-COMPUTER LAB
-FLEX SPACE
-PERFORMANCE SPACE
-HOUSING

PHASE 3: DEVELOP
-STUDIO SPACE
-GALLERY SPACE
-MARKET SPACE
-COMMUNITY SPACE

Phase development diagram

Site Strategy: Life Blooms

Following the renovations of the building, the program could spill out on to the site. Throughout the initial phases, I see Hope Blooms growing and shifting to fit whatever corners of the site are not being occupied. At some point, more affordable housing units or commercial spaces may be required to maintain a dynamic community. Readdressing the site edge condition to potentially return the urban fabric to the original row house models that have since been destroyed. Developing a site plan that draws in the community to the site and building will be pivotal in addressing the isolating nature of the site.

Phase One: Production

The first phase of the project would be the retrofitting of the gym space to a production facility. In this facility there would be a wood shop, a metal shop and other production tools. This program would enable the construction of the next phases and a means for improving Hope Blooms, while providing a collaborative education and introduction to craft and construction. Materials and spaces could be developed entirely on site, further embedding a sense of community identity in the built environment.

Phase Two: Work-Live-Innovate

The second phase would be the demolition of all interior walls in the southwest wing to reveal the grid of steel columns that would allow for adaptable or movable wall systems to fit different programmatic requirements the community deems necessary. In the southwest corner of this wing, the old library space would lend itself to a computer lab that would help provide opportunities to educate digital design tools and integrate with the production lab. The ground level relationship of the south Maitland St. elevation and the north quad level arcade could be readdressed to allow for my commercial spaces that benefit from foot traffic, and a more porous and inviting circulation. The elevated spaces could fit other flexible community needs or even turn in to affordable housing units.

Phase Three: Co-Operation

The final phase of the project would be adapting the 1921 building to reintroduce a public facade along Brunswick St. and provide co-operative studio/business programs. The cellular floor plan surrounding a large central space would allow for incubator/ small businesses to share the central space to exhibit or sell products, or hold meetings and lectures. Reintroducing the Brunswick St entrance would further connect the community back to a prominent street and invite more community engagement with the site.

🟧 Production	🟨 Co-Operation	🟥 Housing
🟦 Innovation	🟩 Commercial	🟦 Circulation
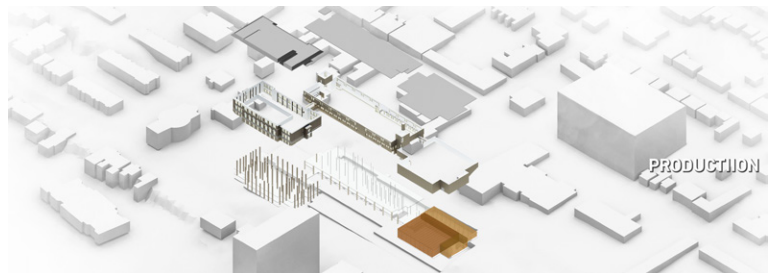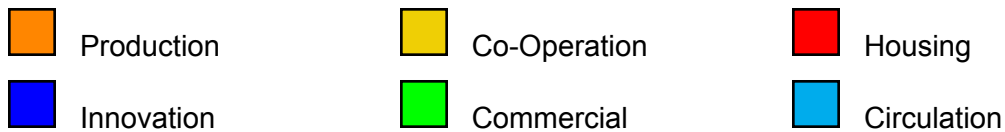
The old gymnasium to be retrofitted to a production facility

The large span truss lends itself to a production facility and can reinforce a strong relationship of education and entrepeneurship that would feed back into the community.
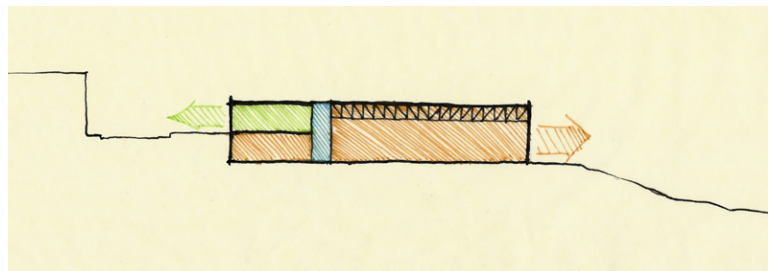
The Maitland St. side of the basement floor lacks adequate natural light, which would lend itself to computer labs and digital design labs that require low natural light to reduce monitor glare.
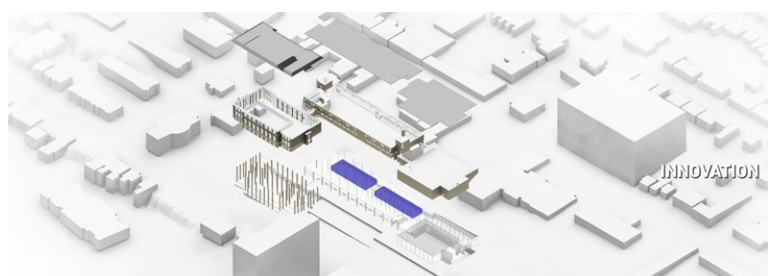
The split ground relationship of the Maitland St side and the courtyard side would benefit more commercial spaces for direct access to the community. The above ground floor levels could be used for housing or community spaces.
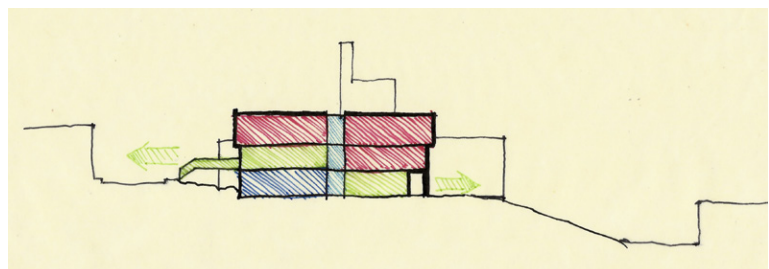
Using the flexible sturctural system of the 1971 addition could allow for adaptable housing units. The site edge condition could allow for a row housing model. The bands are intended to represent the street edge with a 30 foot setback.
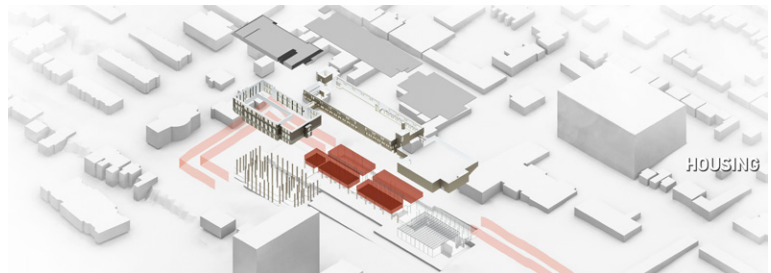

The flexible nature of the 1971 addition could allow for a varying scales of commercial spaces, whilw the cellular nature of the 1921 structure could allow for more studio scale spaces that require less foot traffic.
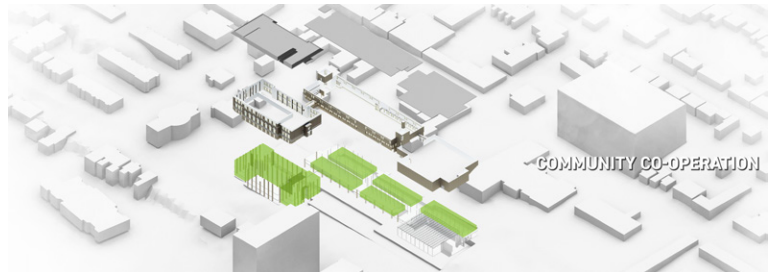
The 1921 structure has rooms that surround a central space, this could be used to support community gatherings or markets.

Tying across the two structures to increase circulation between the two wings and bring the public back into the isolated building.
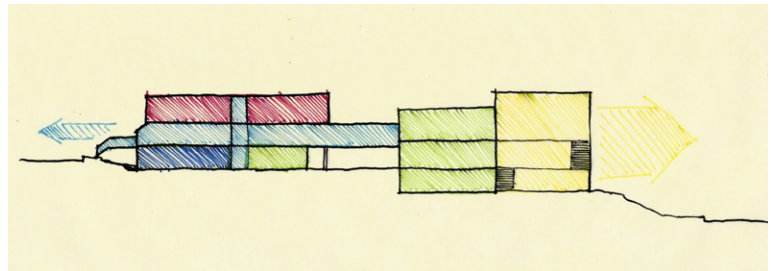
Program expanding back into the community

CHAPTER 7: ARCHITECTURAL ALLIES

Hip Hop Architecture

One effective program that has introduced urban youth to architecture is a camp called Hip Hop Architecture. By using the popular story telling musical medium of Hip Hop, Michael Ford, founder, is trying to introduce architecture to urban youth who are often under represented in architecture. Ford hopes to empower future architects who will give form to their communities and better understand their needs than the often outsider architects and planners. Ford draws the connection between the era of urban renewal that developed the housing projects in cities like Chicago, New York and Detroit, in which many of the most famous Hip Hop artists were raised and how they are a direct reflection of those environments (Ford, n.d.).

Michael Ford at a Hip Hop Architecture Camp (Michael Ford Twitter, 2017)

Francis Kéré

Francis Kéré is one of the few African architects to achieve international acclaim for his work. What sets Francis apart from his counterparts is his truly regional approach to working in his home country of Burkina Faso. He has worked outside of Burkina Faso, but carries his regionalist design philosophy with him. He engages the local traditions through

two platforms: community and technology. By working with his community in both design and construction, he is directly embedding a sense of responsibility and and identity. The typical international development model for schools in Africa generally consists of concrete block classrooms that operate like ovens with very limited natural lighting. He has developed a passive ventilation technique through the use of a double roof system that reflects heat from the top roof, and draws air between it and the lower roof, greatly reducing the amount of direct heat being carried through the roofing material. This allows for a more permeable facade with operable openings to control light and air flow. The low-tech approach to his architecture is immediately legible in his work and are very easy to build. He often uses rammed earth, or bricks cut out of the hard packed and dry soil. These have been techniques his community has used for thousands of years, but he has only introduced new tools or processes to increase the lifespan of these materials. He also often uses steel roof structures made of spot welded rebar to form simple, but elegant and light weight shells. The simplicity of the welding requires relatively low-skilled labourers and uses the construction process as a means to educate. The community often comes together by the hundreds to help erect these structures and in doing so feel a sense of ownership of the projects. (Avanyur 2017).

Gando Primary School, Burkina Faso by Kéré Architecture ("Five Books on African Urbanism" 2017)

Alejandro Aravena

Pritzker Prize winning Chilean architect, Alejandro Aravena, has built several half built affordable housing developments in Chile. By meeting the basic needs of affordable housing with the intention of growth and development over time, Aravena's firm, ELEMENTAL, provides a framework for a family and community to complete the project to their own needs. Allowing families to grow as the family grows, or to define their own public identity. These projects provide canvases for self-determination, where the families' identity irepresented in their artefacts and usage (Craven 2018).

ELEMENTAL's Quinta Monroy Half House elevation (Mark 2016)

ELEMENTAL's Quinta Monroy Half House before and after (Craven 2018)

CHAPTER 8: DESIGN

O.N.E. Yard - 4 Yards

After reading the urban pattern of the community and the form of the existing buildings on site, I started by dividing the site in to four yards; the Market Yard, the Live Yard, the Work Yard, and the Grow Yard. Adapting parts of the original building for the different programs while using row housing bars to frame the interior yards. The ground level would be concrete commercial spaces or accessible housing units. At the yard elevation, flexible public program spaces built on top of the concrete bars, with light timber framed community built housing on top.

O.N.E. Yard Site Diagram
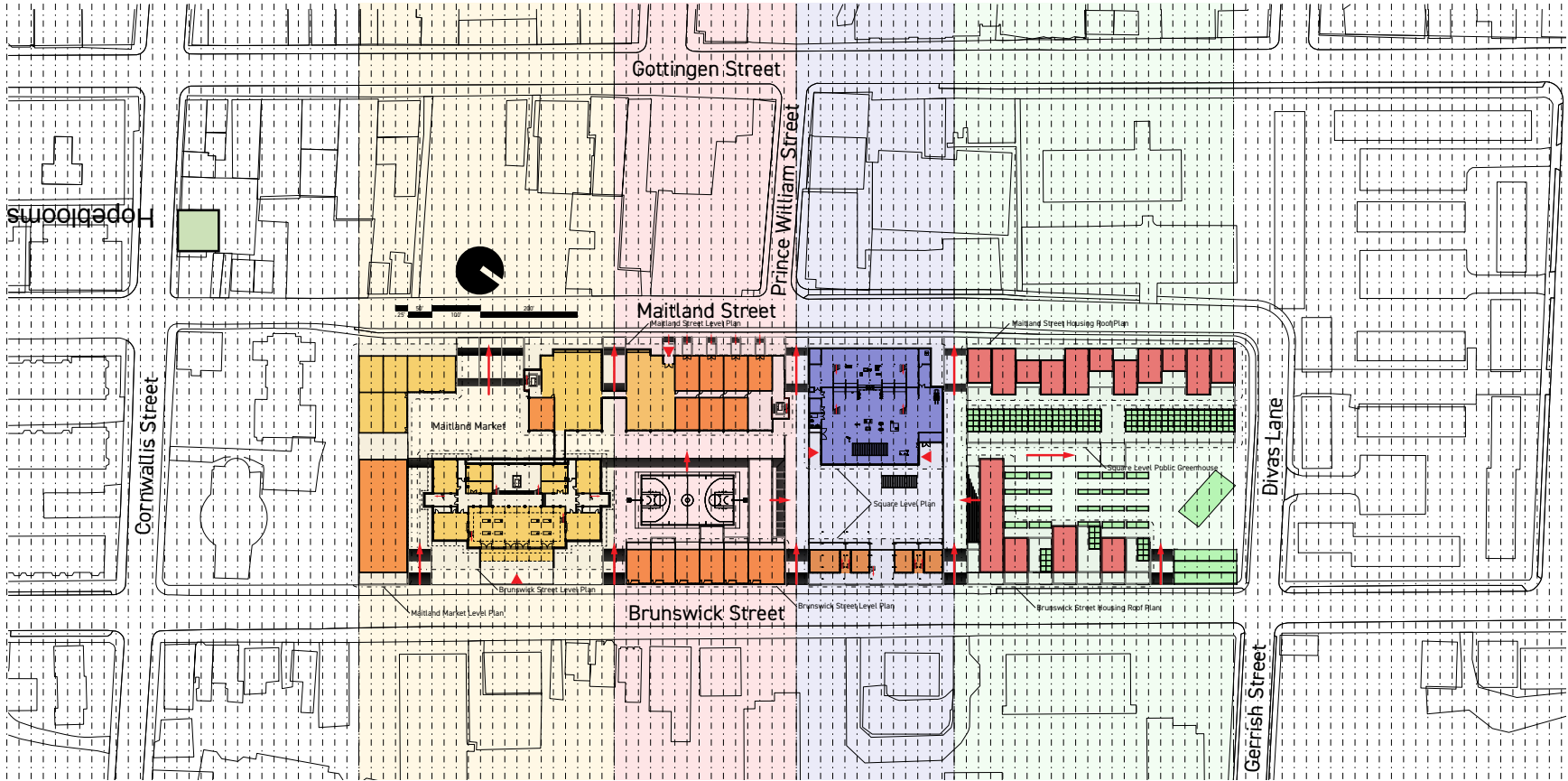
O.N.E. Yard Program Diagram

Legend:
- Commercial
- Commercial/Public
- Affordable Housing
- Wood+Metal Shop
- Hope Blooms

Labels visible on diagram:
- Gottingen Street
- Prince William Street
- Maitland Street
- Maitland Street Level Plan
- Maitland Street Housing Roof Plan
- Maitland Market
- Cornwallis Street
- Square Level Public Greenhouse
- Square Level Plan
- Brunswick Street
- Brunswick Street Level Plan
- Brunswick Street Housing Roof Plan
- Maitland Market Level Plan
- Brunswick Street Level Plan
- Divas Lane
- Gerrish Street
- Hopebiooms

Maitland Street

Brunswick Street

Divas Lane

h Street

Commercial

Commercial/Public

Affordable Housing

Wood+Metal Shop

Hope Blooms

O.N.E. Yard Sections
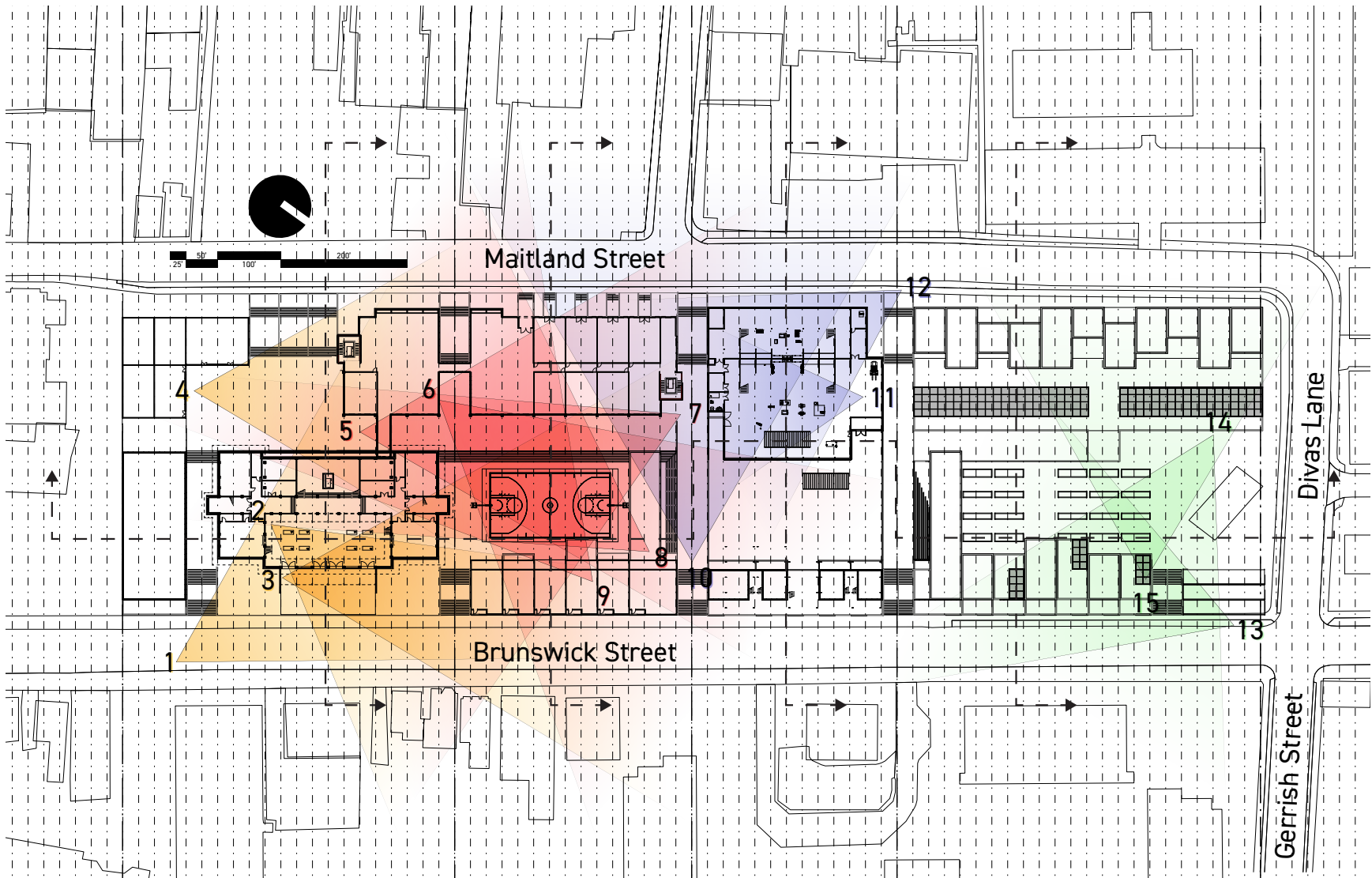
Commercial   Commercial/Public   Affordable Housing   Wood+Metal Shop   Hope Blooms

O.N.E. Yard - Brunswick Elevation
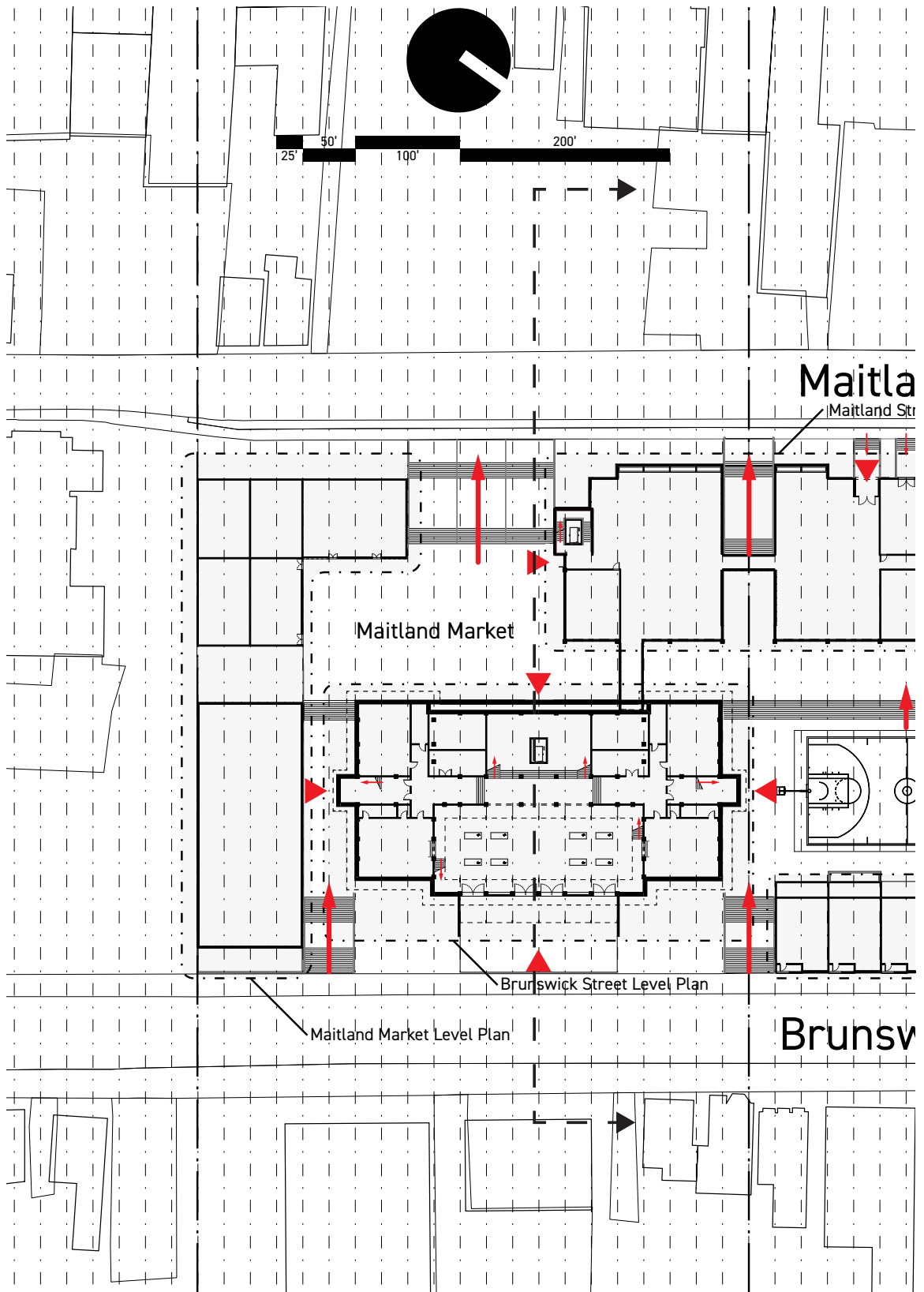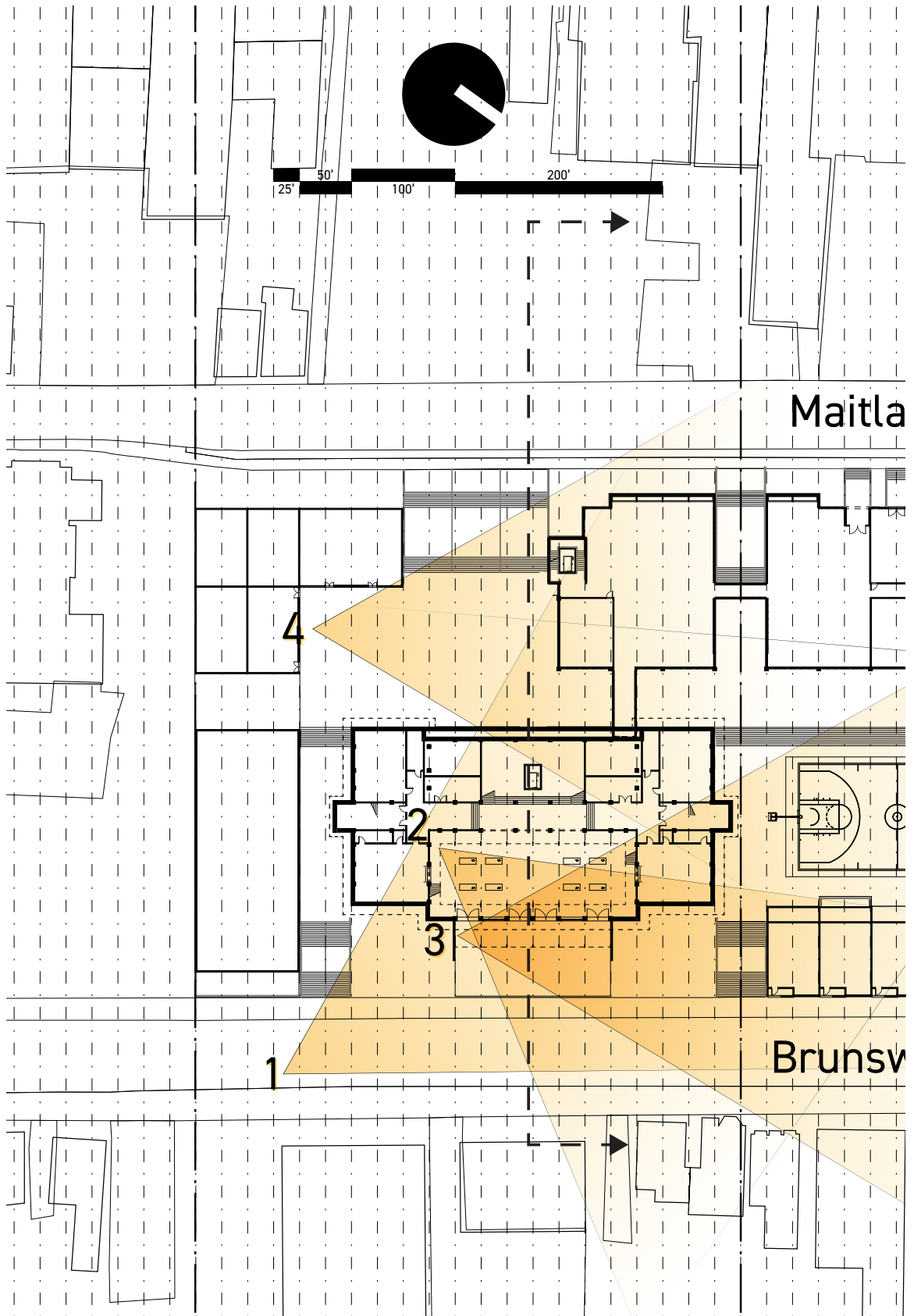
O.N.E. Yard - Long Section

Maitland Street

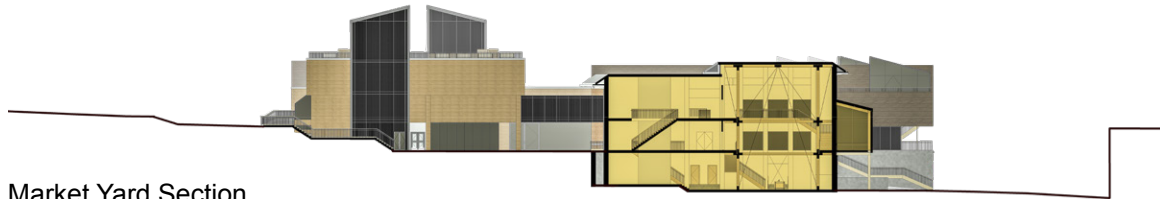Brunswick Street

Divas Lane

Gerrish Street

O.N.E. Yard Render Views

Market Yard

Maitl...

Maitland Str...

Maitland Market

Maitland Market Level Plan

Brunswick Street Level Plan

Brunsw...

Market Yard Plan - Section and Entrances

Maitla

Brunsw

4

2

3

1

Market Yard Plan - Section and Render Views

Commercial

Affordable Housing

Hope Blooms

Commercial/Public

Wood+Metal Shop

Market Yard Section

Brunswick Street Approach (1 in plan)

Brunswick Street Market Hall (2 in plan)

Room on Brunswick Street (3 in plan)
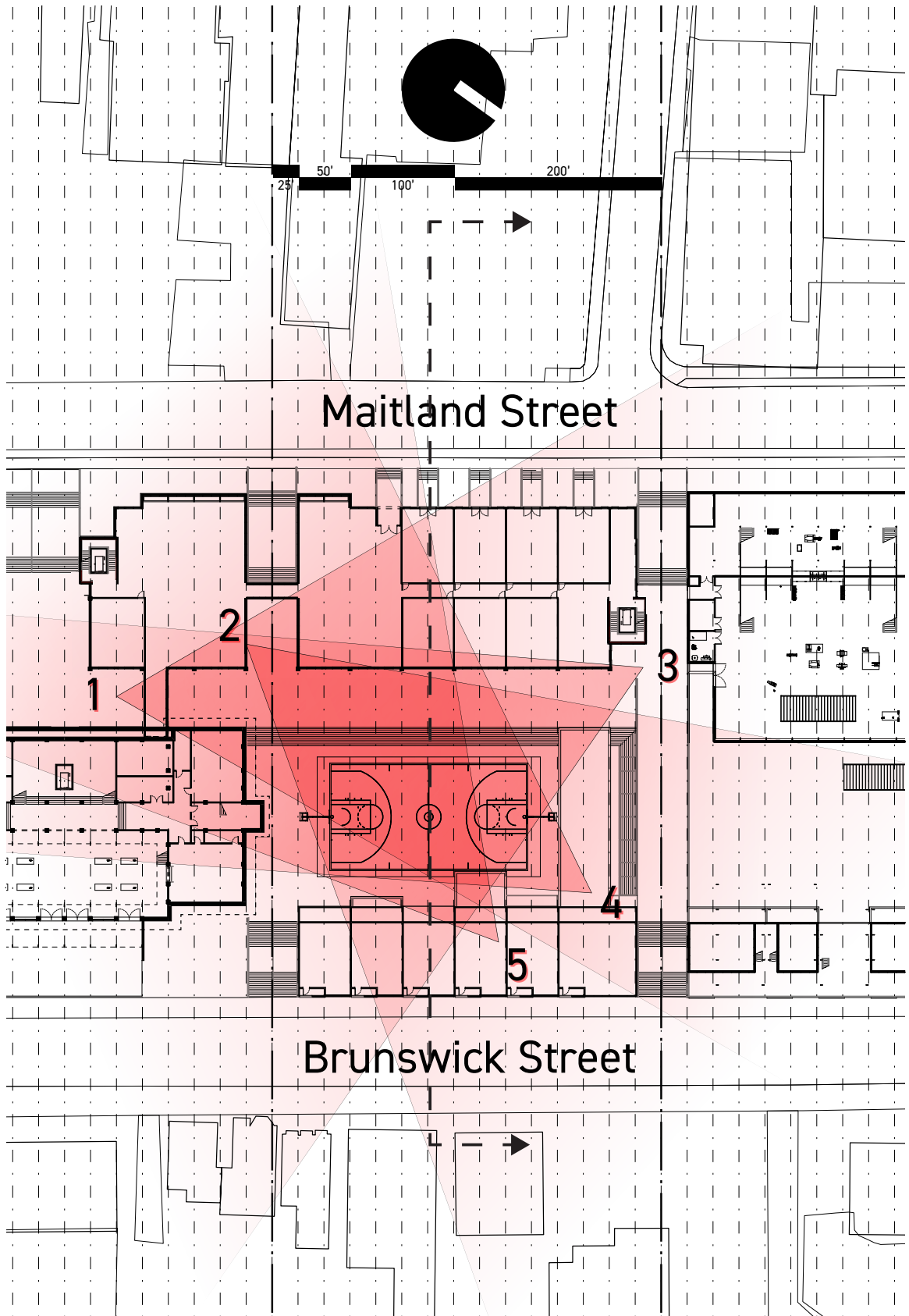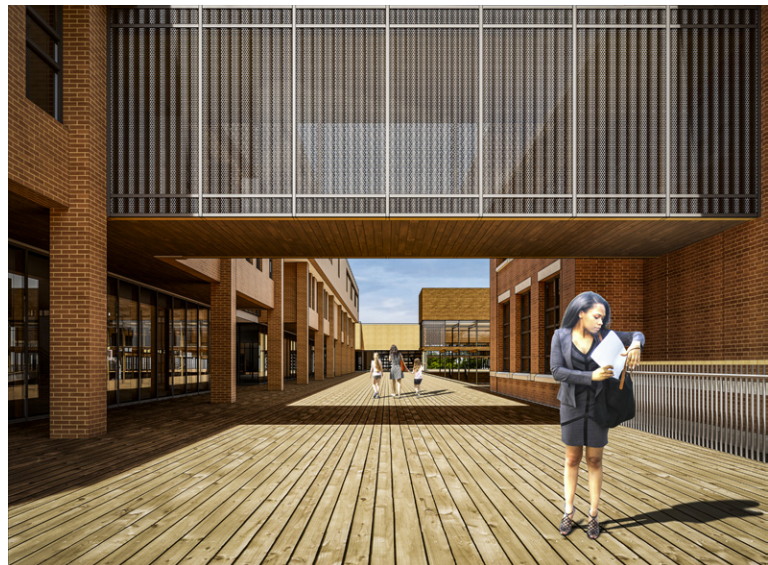

Maitland Market (4 in plan)

Live Yard
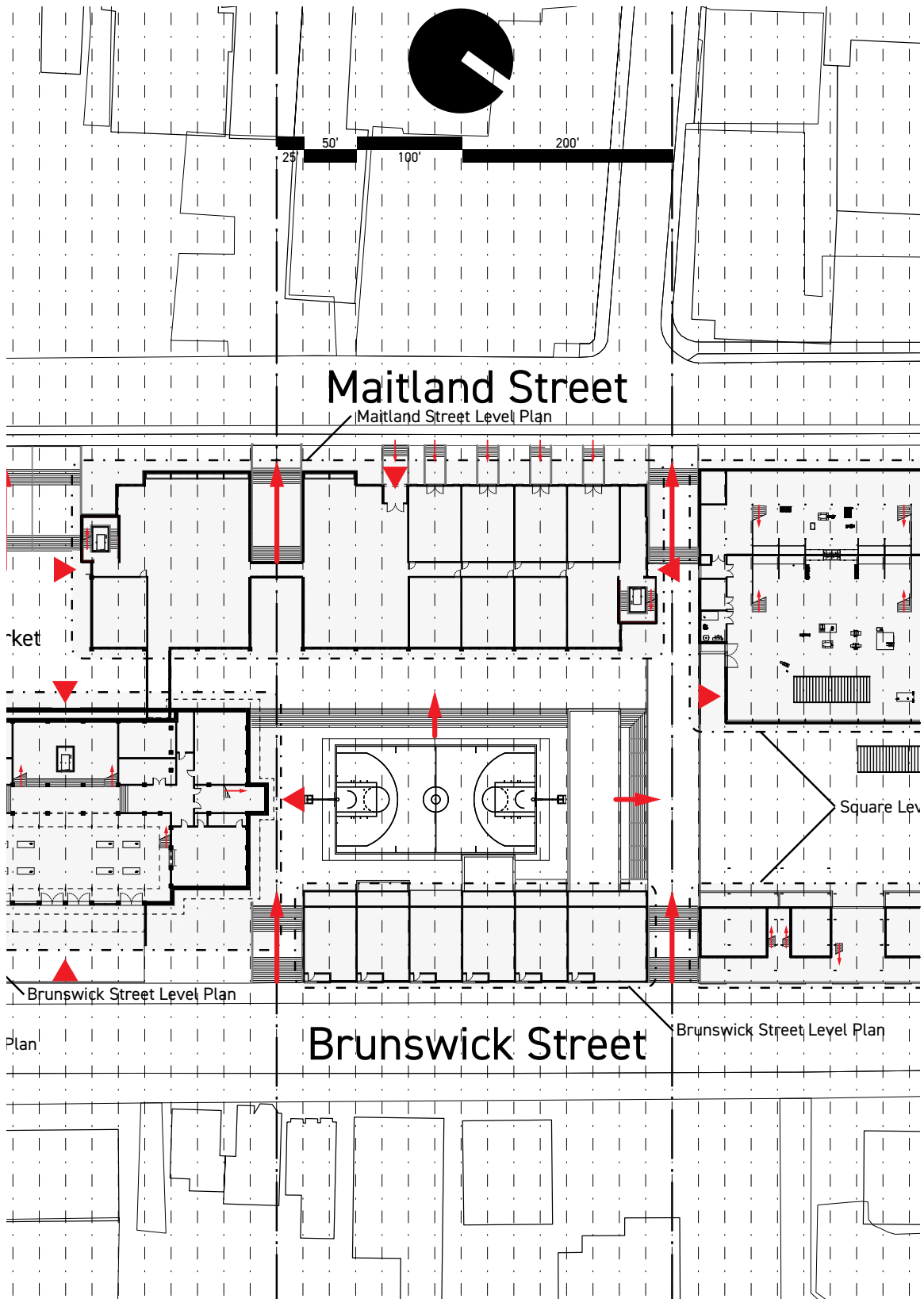
Maitland Street

Maitland Street Level Plan

ket

Brunswick Street Level Plan

Plan

Brunswick Street Level Plan

Square Lev

Brunswick Street

Live Yard Plan - Section and Entrances

50' 100' 200'
25'

Maitland Street

2
1
3
4
5

Brunswick Street

Live Yard Plan - Section and Render Views

Commercial

Affordable Housing

Hope Blooms

Commercial/Public

Wood+Metal Shop

Live Yard Section

Under the Bridge (1 in plan)

The Live Yarrd (2 in plan)

Looking Back (3 in plan)

O.N.E. Yard Rec Center (4 in plan)

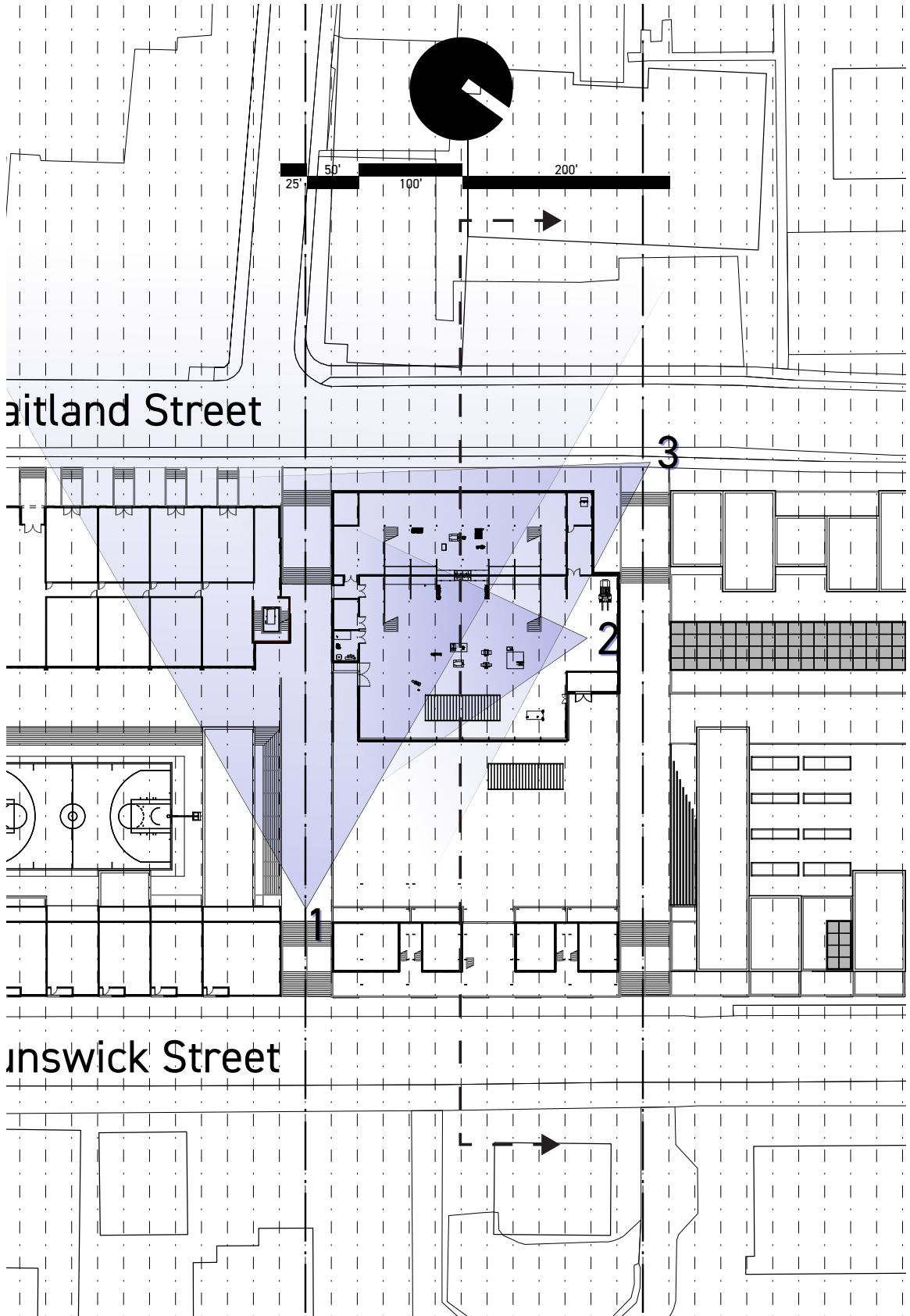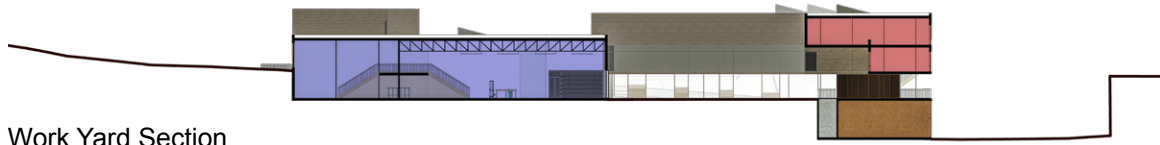House Interior (5 in plan)

Work Yard
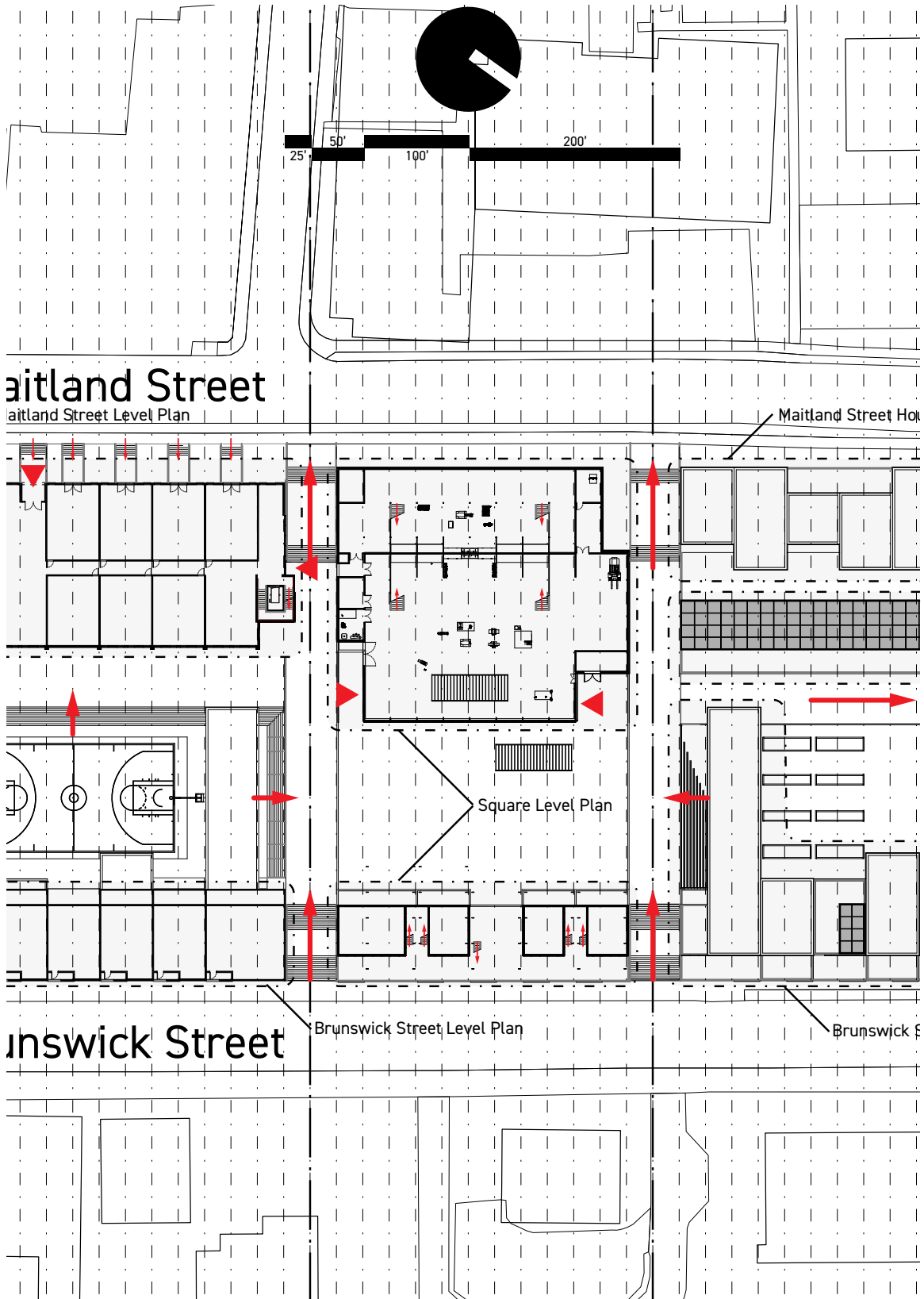
Maitland Street

Maitland Street Level Plan

Maitland Street Hou

Square Level Plan

Brunswick Street Level Plan

Brunswick S

nswick Street

Work Yard Plan - Section and Entrances

25' 50' 100' 200'

aitland Street

3

2

1

nswick Street

Work Yard Plan - Section and Render Views

Commercial

Affordable Housing

Hope Blooms

Commercial/Public

Wood+Metal Shop

Work Yard Section

Primary Axis looking back towards Gottingen (1 in plan)

Wood Shop Interior (2 in plan)

Maitland Street view of work shop (3 in plan)

Grow Yard
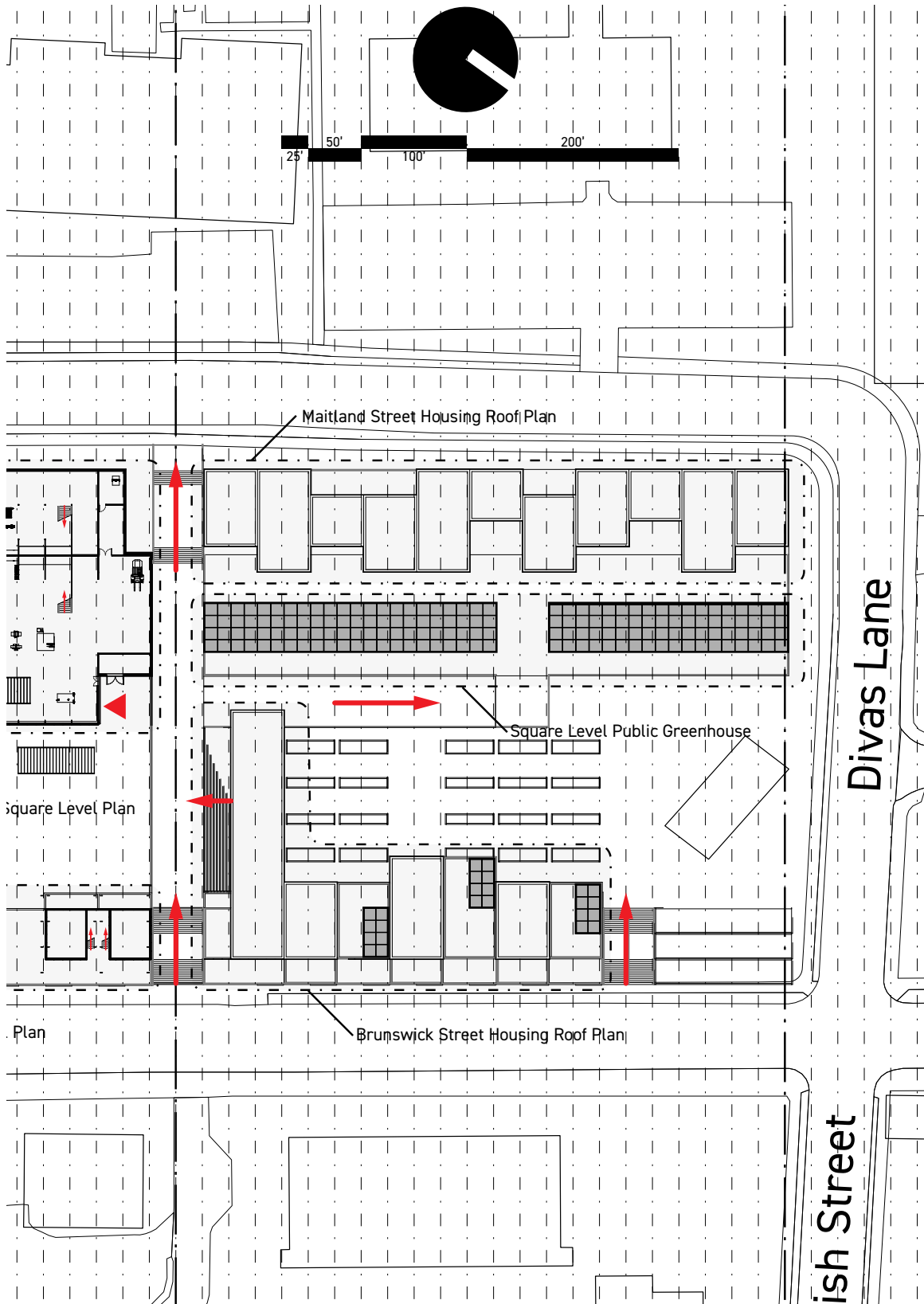
Maitland Street Housing Roof Plan

Square Level Public Greenhouse

Square Level Plan

Brunswick Street Housing Roof Plan

Plan

Divas Lane

ish Street

Grow Yard Plan - Section and Entrances

25'
50'
100'
200'

Divas Lane

2

3

1

ish Street

Grow Yard Plan - Section and Render Views

Commercial

Affordable Housing

Hope Blooms

Commercial/Public

Wood+Metal Shop
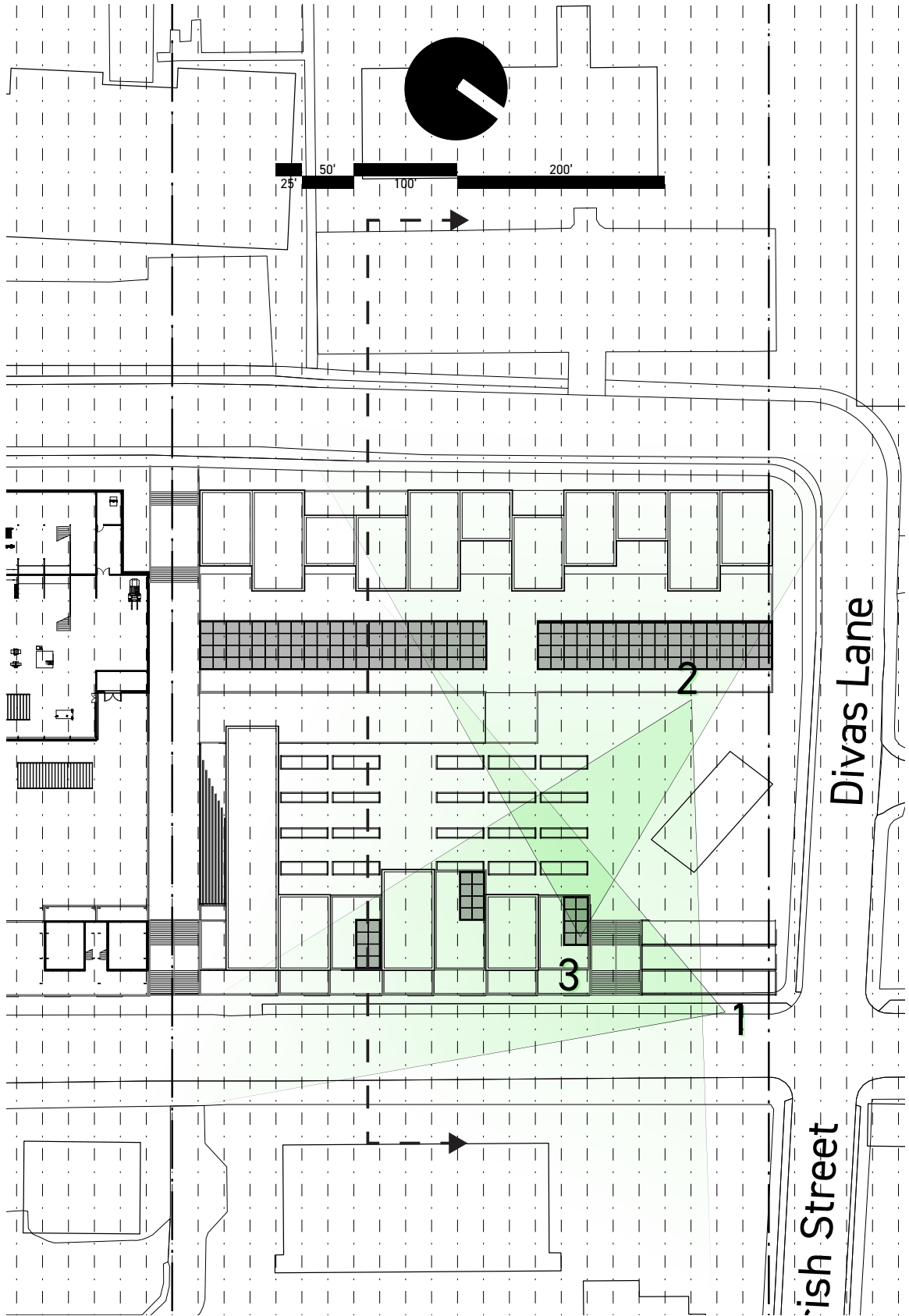
Grow Yard Section
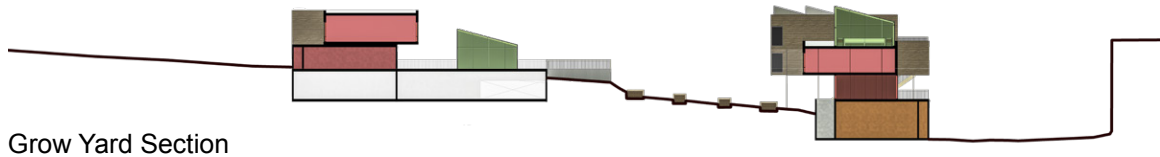
Brunswick Street Elevation (1 in plan)

View from Hopeblooms Greenhouse (2 in plan)

Rooftop Greenhouse (3 in plan)
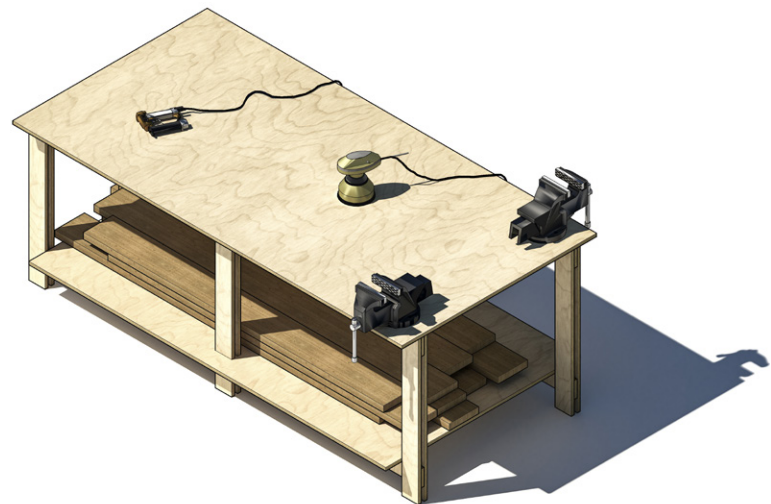
O.N.E. Table - 4 Tables

From the urban yard scale to the table, the table represents the inhabitation scale. I designed a modular plywood table assembly that could serve the 4 different yard functions. The reward of building something by hand embeds as sense of ownership and respect for the built environment. The process of building these tables would be a way of introducing members of the community to the woodshop and the different tools available to them. The design is adaptable and can be amalgamated to serve different functions. The Market Table would be used for pop up market stalls, the Live Table would be the kitchen island where much of modern familial life is focused, the Work Table would provide spaces for fabricating and finishing, and the Grow Table would allow for raised planter beds.


Market Table
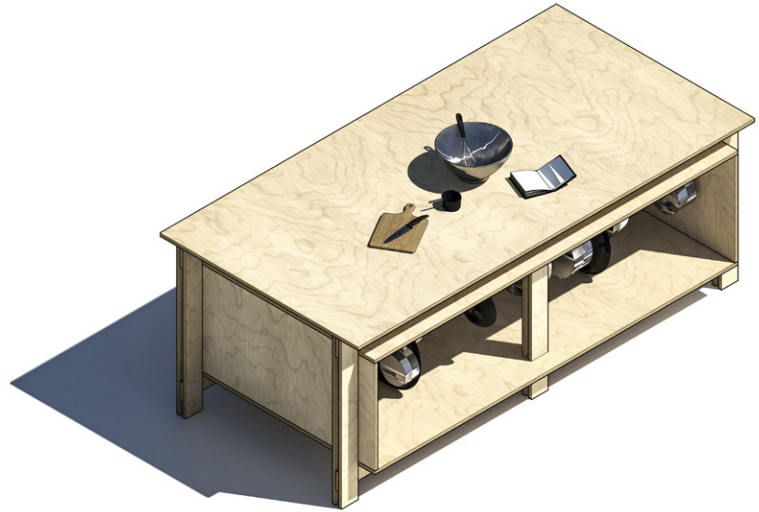
Live Table

Work Table

Grow Table

O.N.E. Table - 4' x 18" x 32" - 1:1 Scale

Formal Articulation

Any interventions on the original building are intended to be clear and well articulated. Responding to different site conditions, each intervention attempts to reconnect the building to the community. On the site model, the interventions on the original building are highlighted by using frosted acrylic massing.
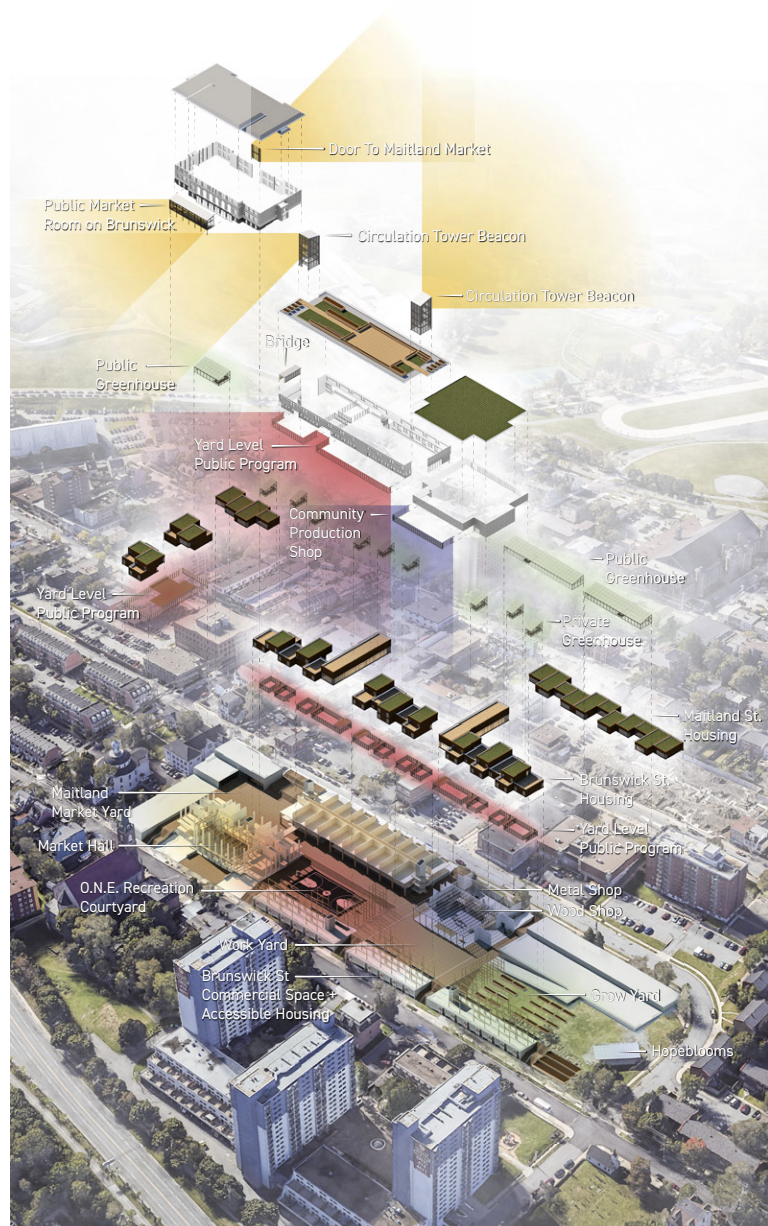

Program and Formal Organization Exploded Axo.
(Google Earth 2018)

Site Model

The primary representation tool for this thesis is a 2' x 4' site model split in to 6 sectional parts. Made entirely by hand, the base and context buildings are made out of 3/8" Baltic Birch plywood, the O.N.E. Yard buidlings are made out of Birch and Sapelle wood, and frosted Acryllic. The 4 yards, and two framing context sections each separate and slide along stainless steel tubes. The section to the south of the site contains a few of the historic buildings (St. George's Round Church and the Cornwallis Street Baptist Church) that have been previously referenced, dating back to the Colonial development of Halifax. Whereas, the section to the north of the site contains Uniacke Square, referencing the period of Urban Renewal.

Model Process Photo
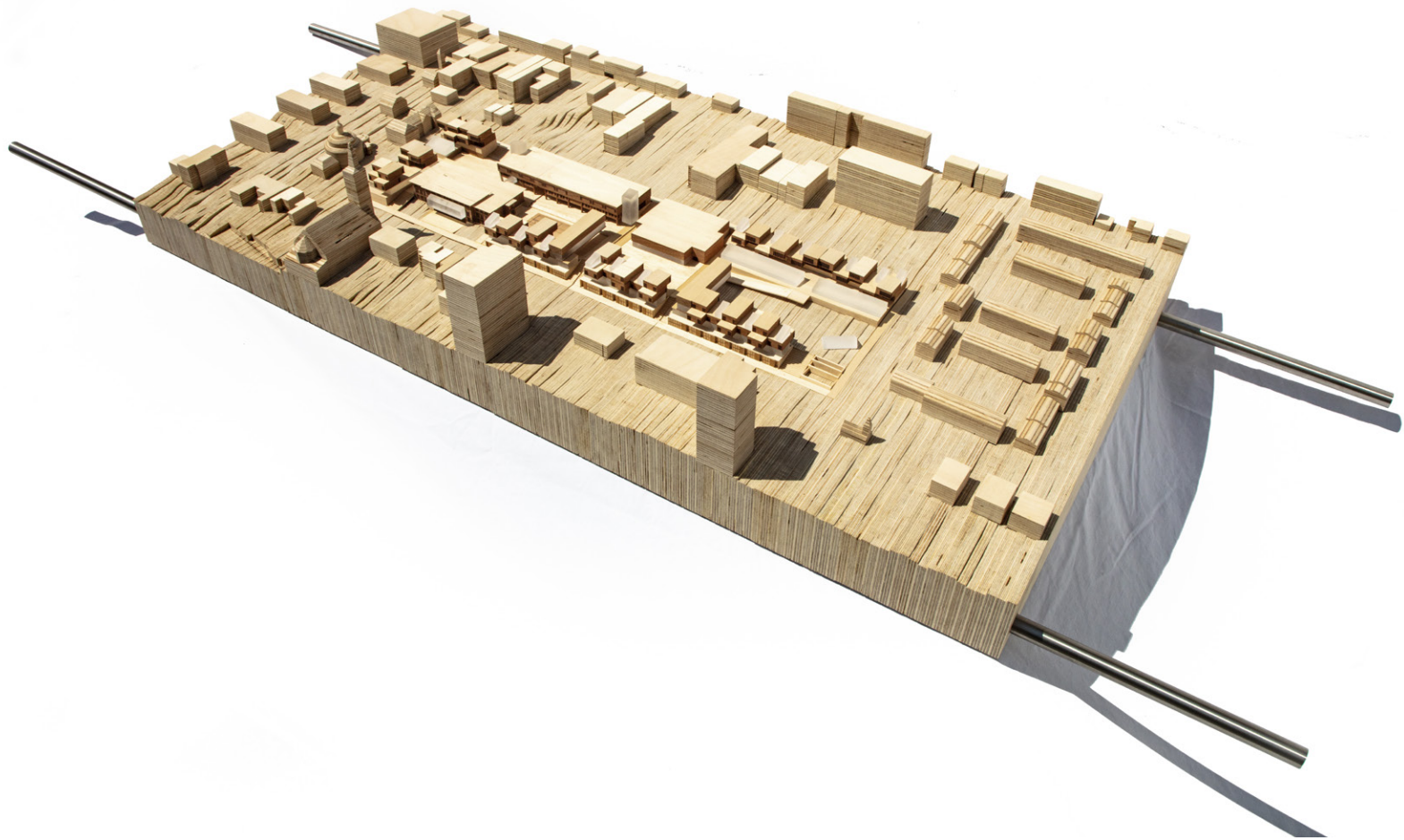
Site Model - 1:400 Scale

Site Model - 1:400 Scale

Exploded Sections Site Model - 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Market Yard 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Live Yard 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Work Yard 1:400 Scale
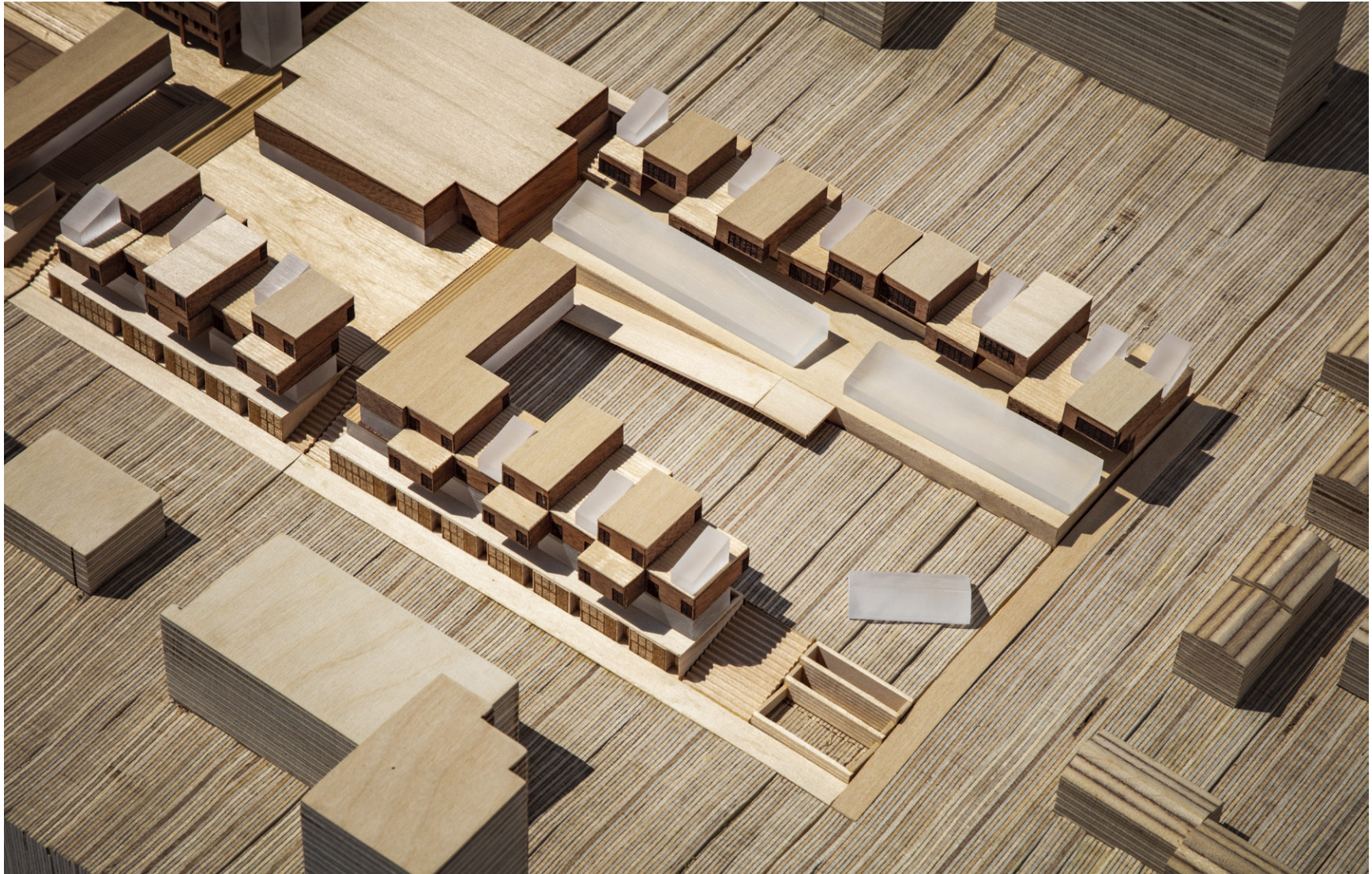
Site Model - Grow Yard 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Work Shop 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Brunswick Street Entrance 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Connecting Bridge 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Maitland Market 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Maitland Tower Beacon 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Maitland Entrance 1:400 Scale

Siite Model - Looking Back 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Maitland Housing Elevation 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Brunswick Street Housing Elevation 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Brunswick Street Housing Elevation 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Grow Yard Housing Elevation 1:400 Scale

Site Model - O.N.E. Rec Center 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Plan 1:400 Scale

Site Model 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Exploded Sections 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Historical Context Section 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Market Yard Section 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Live Yard Section 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Work Yard Section 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Grow Yard Section 1:400 Scale

Site Model -Uniacke Square Section 1:400 Scale

Site Model 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Uniacke Square Section 1:400 Scale
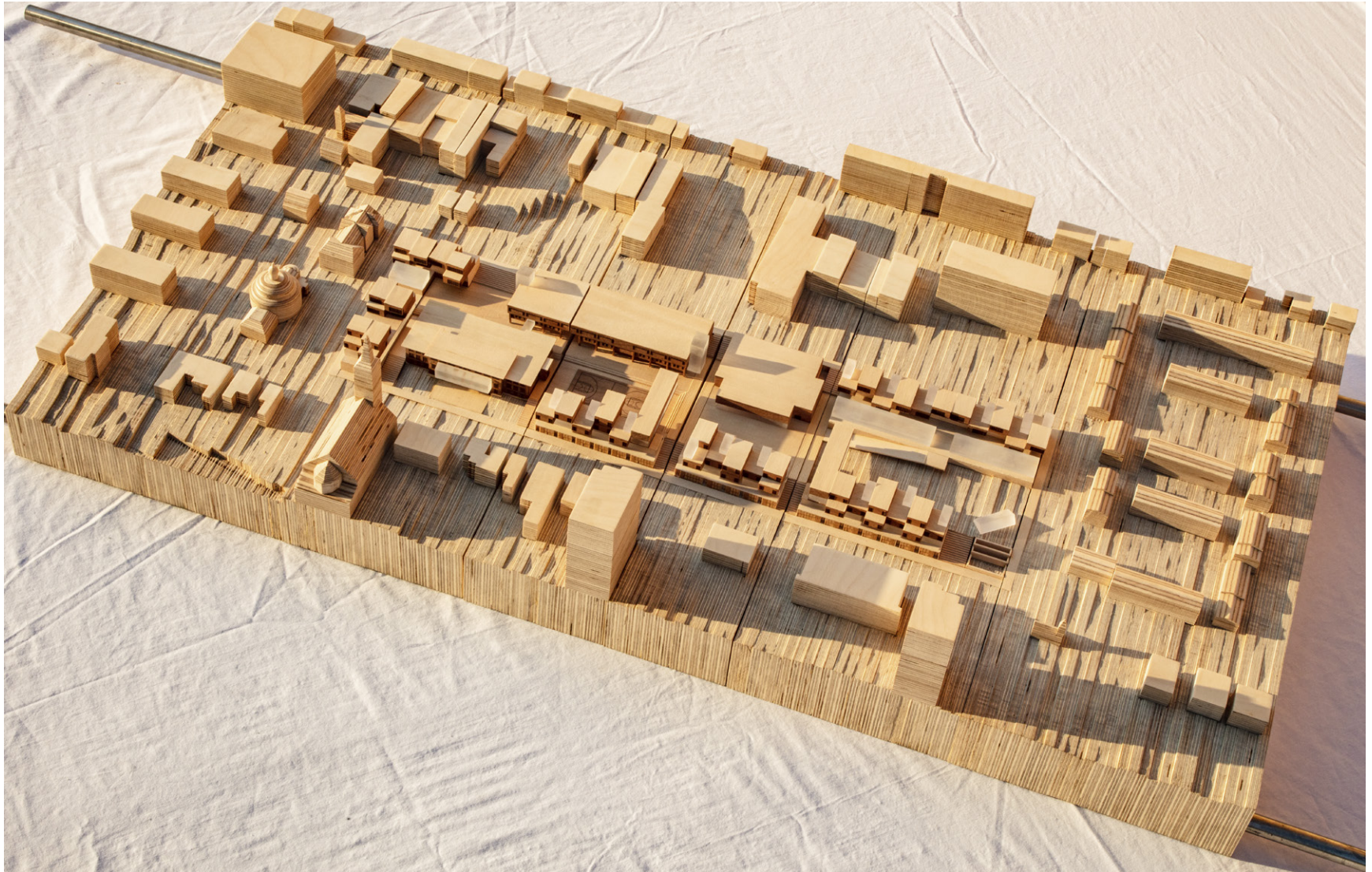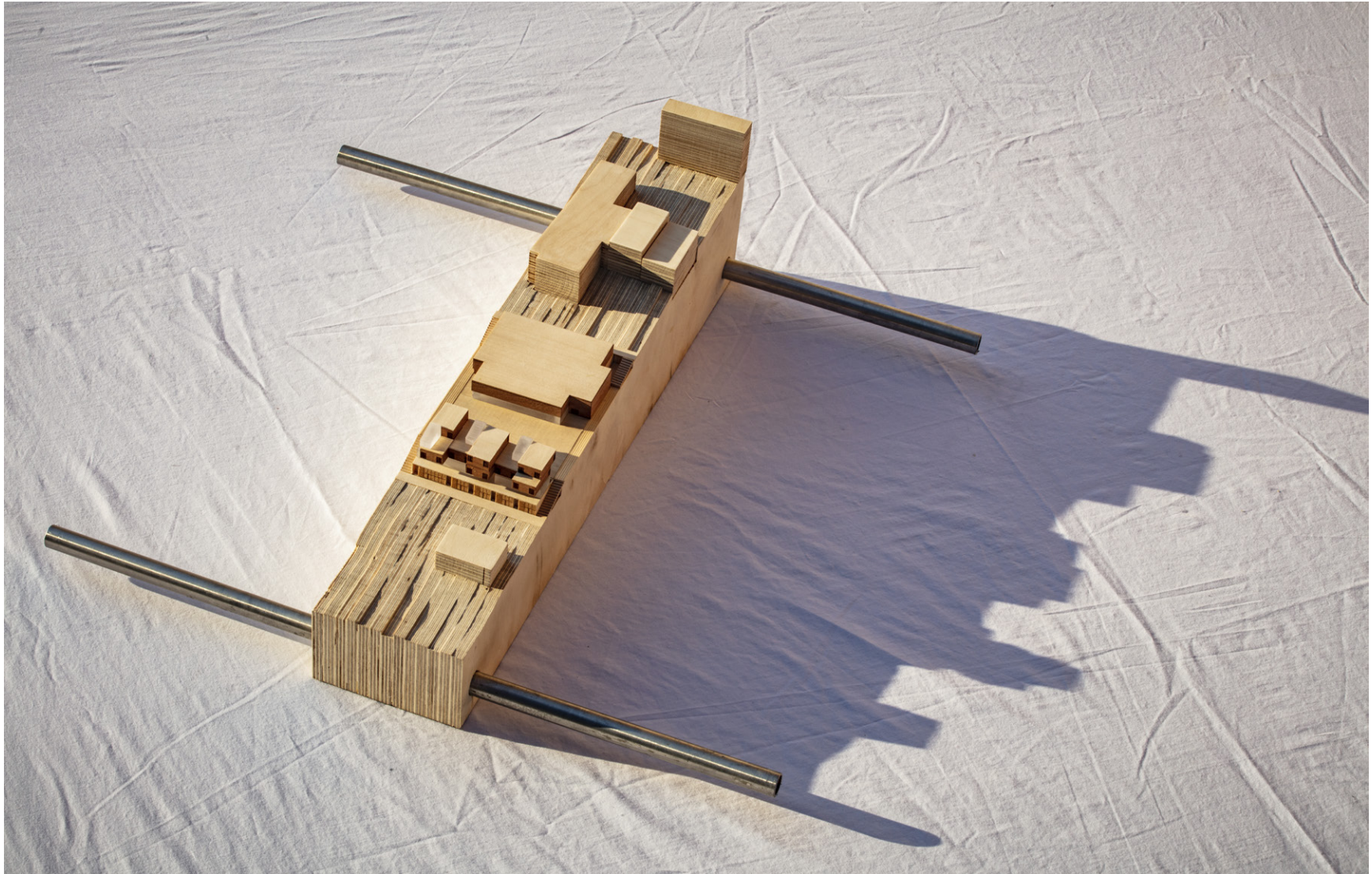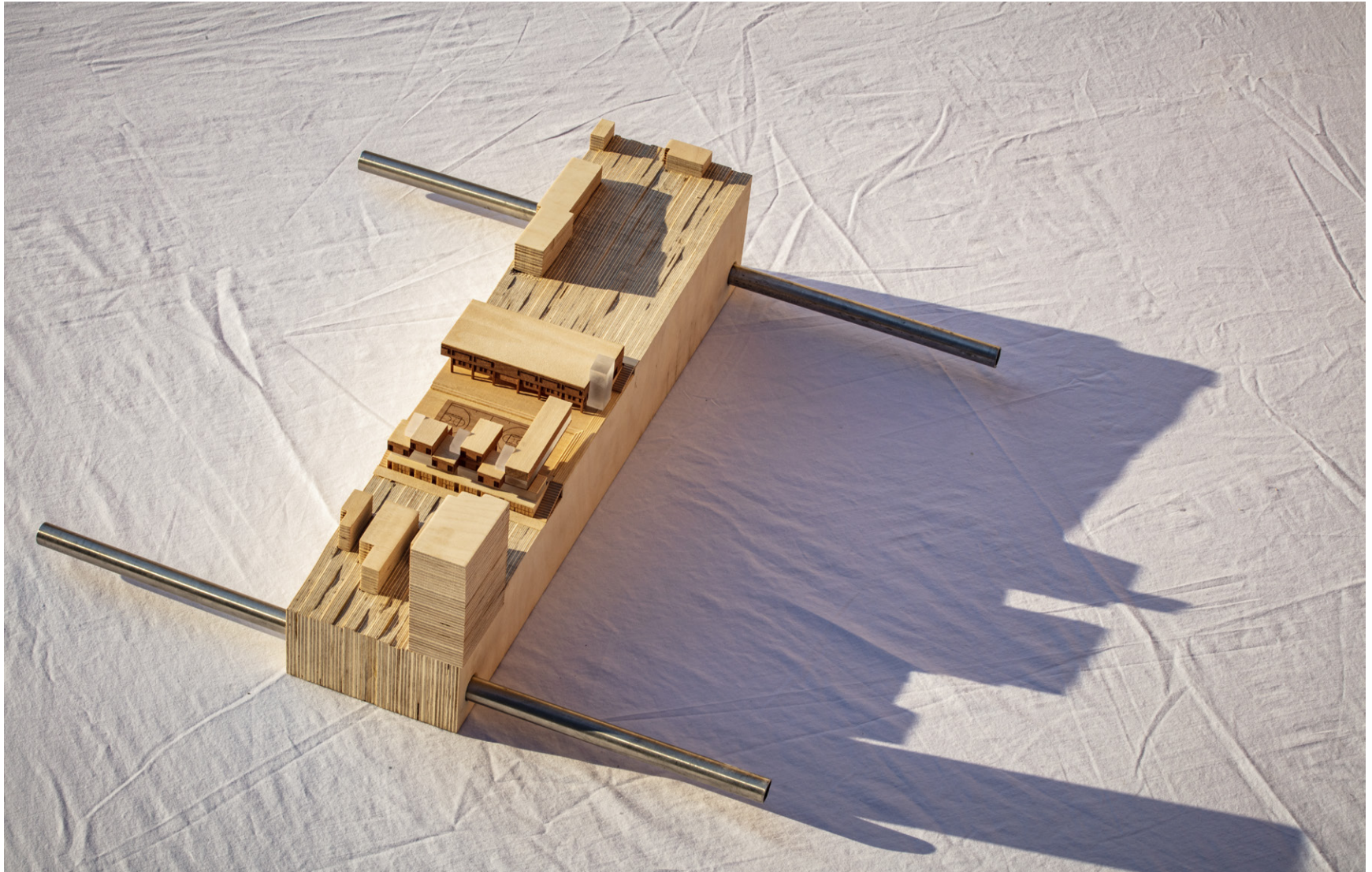
Site Model - Grow Yard Section 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Work Yard Section 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Live Yard Section 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Market Yard Section 1:400 Scale

Site Model - Historical Context Section 1:400 Scale

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

Role As Architect

Learning about the history of Halifax's development and the ways architects and urban planners have contributed to systemic racism has profoundly impacted my perception of the city. In conclusion we must reassess our roles and try to find more ways to act as allies in the conversation around urban development in the future. As relatively powerless architects may be in the larger forces at work, we must learn to listen sensitively to those of which we are working with and for, and consider how we design and provide agency to those who may not have a voice. We are agents of change, whether for the better or worse, and must consider how we shape our collective futures. Public spaces where people feel welcomed, and empowered should be a baseline goal for all architects and planners.

Role As Citizen

Having been fortunate to have grown up in the North End of Halifax, I now feel more informed as a member of this community and the role I play as a citizen in a gentrifying neighbourhood. I will continue to reflect and re-evaluate my role, and the role of my family, in the development of this great community. This thesis has brought on profound self-reflection that will take time to fully understand. I will continue to be an ally and agent in future conversations, and hope to be further rooted to this place I call home, and to this community.

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