

**A Total Environment:  
Re-Activating the Rural Town and Landscape**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Architecture

at

Dalhousie University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
March 2024

Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kmaq'i,  
the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.  
We are all Treaty people.

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this work is to help rural Canada retain its relevance in an increasingly urban world by developing an analysis and design strategy for growing established (static) settlements into the kinds of places that attract new people, businesses, and opportunities. Using Haliburton, Ontario as a test site, this thesis aims to identify and define a place's landscape element(s) which inform its built environment, so that new growth will remain of the place, enriching its form, rather than diluting it. Understanding Haliburton's landscape, and the inherited rules that come with it, will inform an approach to creating a new kind of settlement center that orients future settlement, connects existing centers, and introduces new-old ideas about dense and diverse rural living: a center where all of life's complex and distracting programs can exist together (living, working, playing) in harmony, rather than competition.



# Acknowledgements

Thank you to my supervisor Niall Savage for pushing the depth of this thesis, and to my advisor Talbot Sweetapple for brief but inspiring conversations.

Thank you to my friends and family for their continued support throughout all of my academic pursuits. I could not be in this position without them. Thank you to everyone that listened to my nonsensical ideas for months as I tried to make this thing make sense; you know who you are.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Personal Basis of Inquiry

### The Good

I grew up in a small town called Schomberg, Ontario and left home at 17 to pursue a higher education in Halifax, where I learned how to get along with people and figured out how to do things on my own. During a recent work term I stayed in rural Haliburton, Ontario for eight months (a place I knew from childhood but had never lived). Coming from a city, I'd forgotten what its like to be a part of something small. In Haliburton, I was shocked at how much of an impact I had on the community in such a short time. I joined the workforce, became a member of recreational clubs and teams, did a small amount of volunteering, and was genuinely interested in the place and people of the town I lived in. For the first time in my life, I felt like my seemingly insignificant contribution, was making a noticeable difference. People remembered the little things that you did for them, their faces lit up when you bump into them at the hardware store, and they help each other out. It was a really good place to call home. I got to thinking about how understated of an opportunity there is for people like me and probably you, to play a significant role in rural communities.

### The Bad

Unfortunately, it wasn't all hunky-dory. I got a glimpse of the kinds of realities rural places are facing, quickly noticing that there weren't a whole lot of people my age (22 at the time) trying to make a life for themselves in this small town. I started to see that unless you were in construction, health care, retail, or accommodation, there wasn't much of a life

to make. Haliburton had established its niche and didn't seem to have plans to tap into other industries, officially categorizing itself as a seasonal destination. Tourism spurs all of the commerce, as less than half of the county's dwellings are occupied on a consistent basis and the usual residents are largely among the lower end of the spectrum of incomes. Rarely are they in a position to be supporting high end shops and restaurants, or shopping for boats, and certainly not making costly renovations to their humble homes. Haliburton has become dependant on outsiders, and it gives me an uneasy feeling.



The Bonnie View Inn 'Boatel', during the 1960's. Established in 1924, this resort has been a part of Haliburton's tourism industry for 100 years (Rural Routes Ontario n.d.).

## The Ugly

Rural communities have always felt the pain of their youth leaving home to conquer the next chapter of their lives. Small towns lose a significant chunk of their potential human capital to urban centers, and struggle to entice the outmigrants to return. The ugly part is I don't blame them. In many cases outmigrants don't see a life for themselves in towns like the ones they grew up in. They find the static state

of rural economies and the ageing population unattractive. People want to see their lifestyle and goals represented in the culture of a place, and if rural towns can't appeal to generations with changing lifestyles and goals, they might struggle to stay relevant in an increasingly urban world.

## Thesis Description

This thesis sets out to better understand from an economic and cultural perspective why rural places are struggling to attract new kinds of people. The resulting design work will attempt to architecturally suggest how rural settlements can grow into places that attract talent. Using the Haliburton Highlands as a test site to put the architectural methodology to work, the project will unfold into an analysis of the place, its built and unbuilt history, and a design proposal that adheres to the rules of the place, while introducing new-old ideas about rural settlement.



Seventeenth century reconstructed pilgrim village in Plymouth, Massachusetts with overlaid thesis design vision of live-work housing, where villagers are brought together through work.

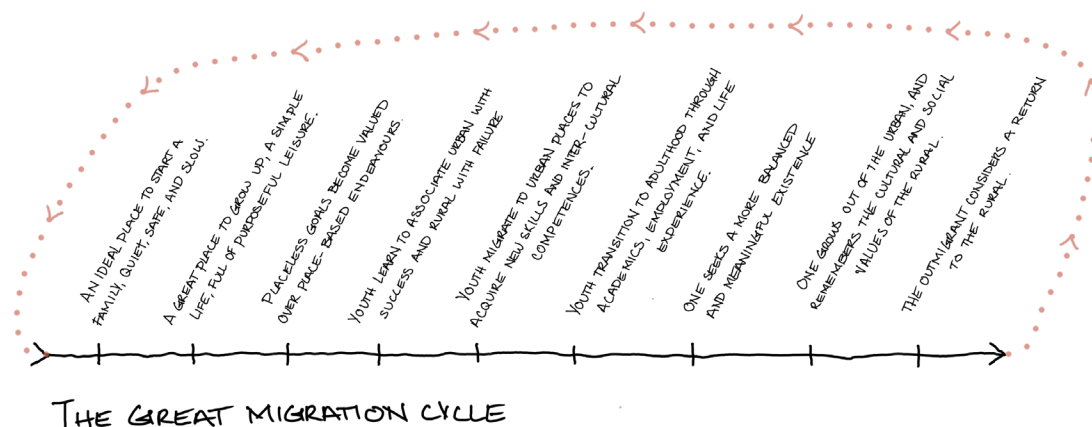
## Chapter 2: Rural Dilemma

### Losing to the Urban

Rural towns across Canada are subject to significant rates of youth outmigration, where the young look to the urban in search of new skills and intercultural competencies (Cairns 2017, 415). Rural youth throughout their schooling are taught to associate success with urban and often perceive staying rural, as a failed launch into adulthood (Corbett 2006, 289). Many young people wind up discouraged from pursuing training, or a career in the kind of livelihoods that shape their local landscape. At a larger scale, there is a widely accepted perception that rural employment is generally lesser in quantity and quality, and it is the perception that matters most to young people (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson 2006), making it difficult for them to visualize a fulfilling life in a rural place.

However, outmigration is not inherently bad, and in many cases is a cycle that poses huge potential for rural growth (a necessary evil, you might say). Return migrants account for roughly 30% of rural immigration and have been characterized as the 'best and brightest', with the potential to stretch local economies upward (Petrin, Schafft and Meece 2014, 298). By focusing on the outmigrants who have experienced the urban and are looking for a change, (Foster 2018, 49), rural communities can flip outmigration into an advantage.

Though return-migrants have the necessary skills to contribute to economic growth, they often establish themselves in "traditional enterprises", and lack support to "facilitate the process of starting and building a business



Rural - Urban migration cycle identifying stages of a migrants life, and they're coinciding decisions to leave home, and in many cases, return to places *like* home.

in the region” and create employment variation (Stockdale 2006, 354). But what about the other 70%, what is deterring them, and others from choosing to live in rural places?

### A Singular Demographic

Talent looks for places with low barriers to entry, they want to see that the town and its people are diverse or that there is a general acceptance of diversity (Florida 2005, 129). A place with little diversity may not be approachable and can deter talented people from joining the community. In rural Canada, the most noticeable demographic shift is age, where 23% of the population is now 65 years of older, compared to 19% in 2016, and 16% in 2010 (Statistics Canada 2022).

An ageing population makes for a smaller working population, and on the extremes has resulted in rural places being unofficially characterized as retirement communities (a great example of a singular demographic). When you hear ‘retirement community’, do you think ‘land of opportunity’? Me neither.



## **A Singular Economy**

Talent looks for evidence of a close association between human capital and regional economic growth. They seek opportunistic economies that are in the process of stretching outwards and upwards, however, a lot of rural Canada is doing the opposite. Many places have 'put all of their eggs in one basket' so to speak and doubled down on the industries that have brought them success. There are many examples of niche towns well known for specific qualities (travel destinations for instance), and are quite lucrative, so long as the traveller continues to spend. They've put themselves in a difficult position. On the one hand, they've created a rich cultural experience, where the whole town contributes to a shared goal, and on the other, they've completely destabilized their local economy by becoming solely dependant on the disposable income of others. No different than investing in the stock market (which I am no expert), a diverse economy is like the S&P 500, and a singular economy, well you can do that math. Its great, until it isn't. Then you're stuck. Its risky, and it accelerates the formation of a singular demographic. The problem has gone full circle, rural Canada is unfortunately on a path to becoming monotonous and unattractive.

It is time for these places to stop believing that their cultural richness depends on them deferring sophisticated action, if they want to stand the test of time, they may have to reshape their attitude towards growth and focus on attracting talented knowledge workers. Places that attract people, attract companies, and generate new innovations, and this leads to a virtuous circle of economic growth (Florida 2003, 138).

Haliburton County, ON		
Population 2021: 20,571		
Industry Sectors - 25% sample data	8,405	percent
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	150	1.8%
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	10	0.1%
Utilities	130	1.5%
Construction	1,415	16.8%
Manufacturing	360	4.3%
Wholesale trade	190	2.3%
Retail trade	1,255	14.9%
Transportation and warehousing	255	3.0%
Information and cultural industries	210	2.5%
Finance and insurance	200	2.4%
Real estate and rental and leasing	220	2.6%
Professional, scientific and technical services	530	6.3%
Management of companies and enterprises	10	0.1%
Administrative, support, and waste management	440	5.2%
Educational services	480	5.7%
Health care and social assistance	1,115	13.3%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	195	2.3%
Accommodation and food services	535	6.4%
Other services (except public administration)	305	3.6%
Public administration	390	4.6%

East Gwillimbury, ON			difference
Population 2021: 34,637			
18,475	percent		
300	1.6%		0.2%
35	0.2%		-0.1%
205	1.1%		0.4%
2,215	12.0%		4.8%
1,525	8.3%		-4.0%
645	3.5%		-1.2%
1,950	10.6%		4.4%
710	3.8%		-0.8%
400	2.2%		0.3%
1,205	6.5%		-4.1%
575	3.1%		-0.5%
1,665	9.0%		-2.7%
90	0.5%		-0.4%
930	5.0%		0.2%
1,460	7.9%		-2.2%
1,680	9.1%		4.2%
320	1.7%		0.6%
785	4.2%		2.1%
715	3.9%		-0.2%
1,070	5.8%		-1.2%

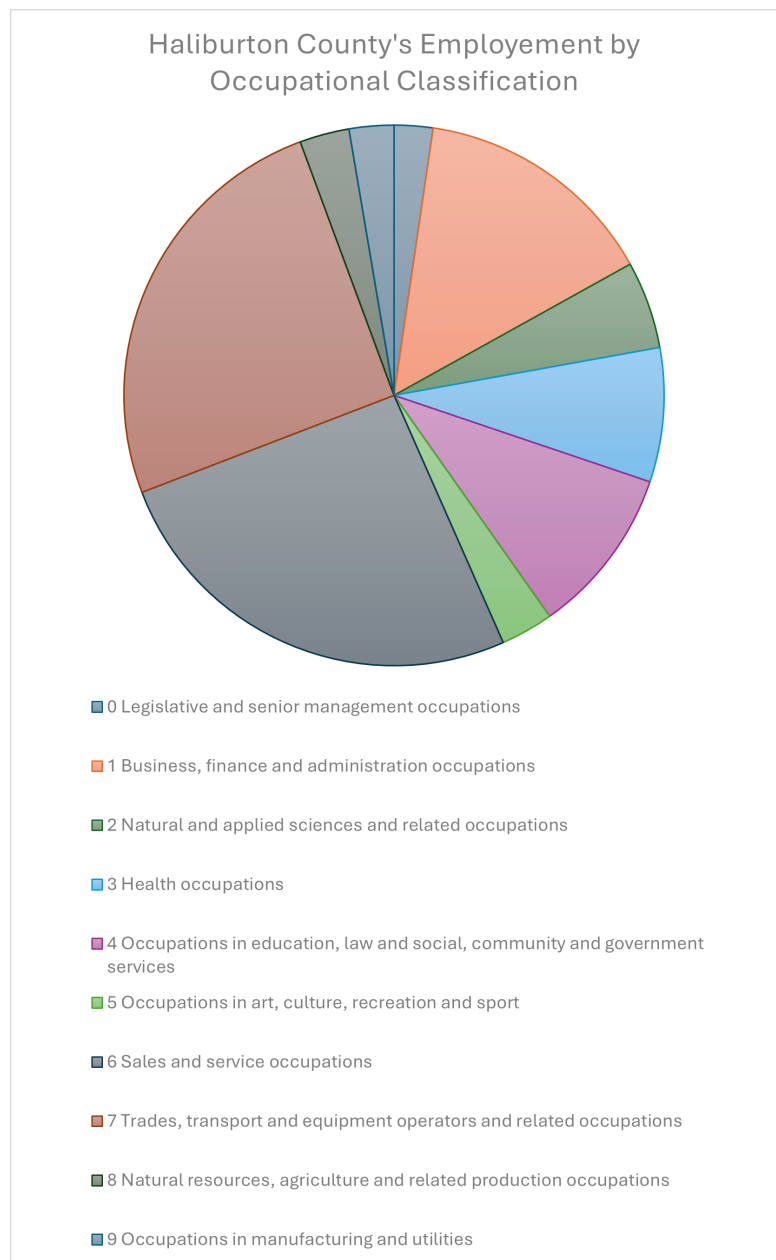
New Tecumseth, ON			difference
Population 2021: 43,948			
22,870	percent		
350	1.5%		0.3%
20	0.1%		0.0%
130	0.6%		1.0%
3,180	13.9%		2.9%
3,765	16.5%		-12.2%
885	3.9%		-1.6%
2,485	10.9%		4.1%
1,395	6.1%		-3.1%
300	1.3%		1.2%
630	2.8%		-0.4%
435	1.9%		0.7%
1,190	5.2%		1.1%
85	0.4%		-0.3%
1,130	4.9%		0.3%
1,520	6.6%		-0.9%
1,940	8.5%		4.8%
355	1.6%		0.8%
1,100	4.8%		1.6%
960	4.2%		-0.6%
1,015	4.4%		0.2%

Milton, ON			difference
Population 2021: 124,579			
65,995	percent		
185	0.3%		1.5%
170	0.3%		-0.1%
425	0.6%		0.9%
3,740	5.7%		11.2%
5,620	8.5%		-4.2%
3,780	5.7%		-3.5%
7,670	11.6%		3.3%
4,330	6.6%		-3.5%
1,705	2.6%		-0.1%
5,380	8.2%		-5.8%
1,275	1.9%		0.7%
7,700	11.7%		-5.4%
460	0.7%		-0.6%
2,260	3.4%		1.8%
4,790	7.3%		-1.5%
6,330	9.6%		3.7%
870	1.3%		1.0%
2,740	4.2%		2.2%
2,055	3.1%		0.5%
2,565	3.9%		0.8%

average
percent
0.6%
-0.1%
0.8%
6.3%
-6.8%
-2.1%
3.9%
-2.5%
0.5%
-3.4%
0.3%
-2.3%
-0.4%
0.8%
-1.6%
4.2%
0.8%
2.0%
-0.1%
-0.1%

Analysis of Haliburton's industry sector representation, making a comparison between Ontario's three fastest growing 'rural' places. Strongly represented industry sectors are identified in green, while under-represented industry sectors are identified in orange (Statistics Canada 2021).





Occupational classification demonstrates the imbalance/lack of diversity in Haliburton's economy. Over half of the county's livelihood is based on two of nine classifications.

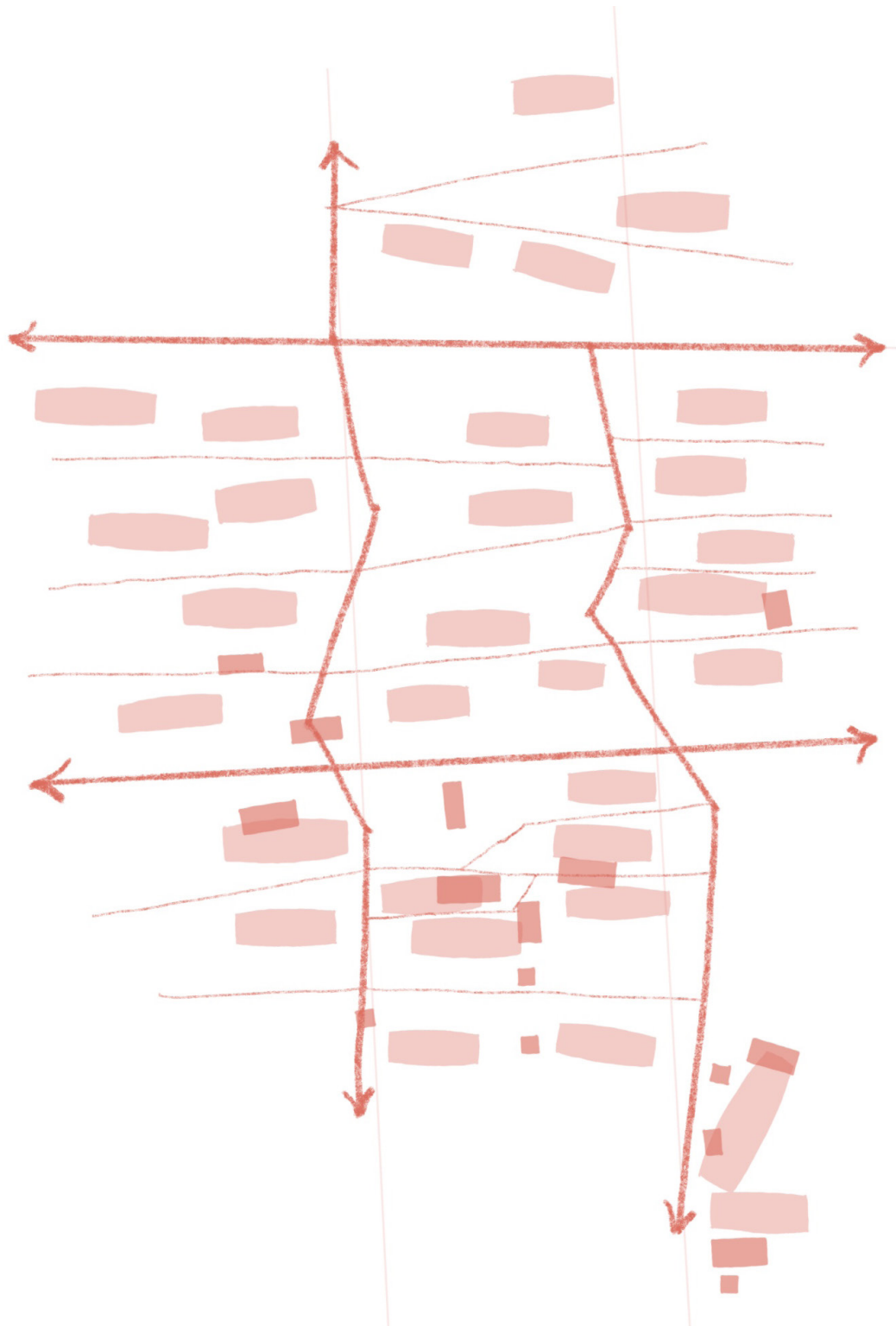
## Chapter 3: New-Old Ideas

### Analyzing the Archetype

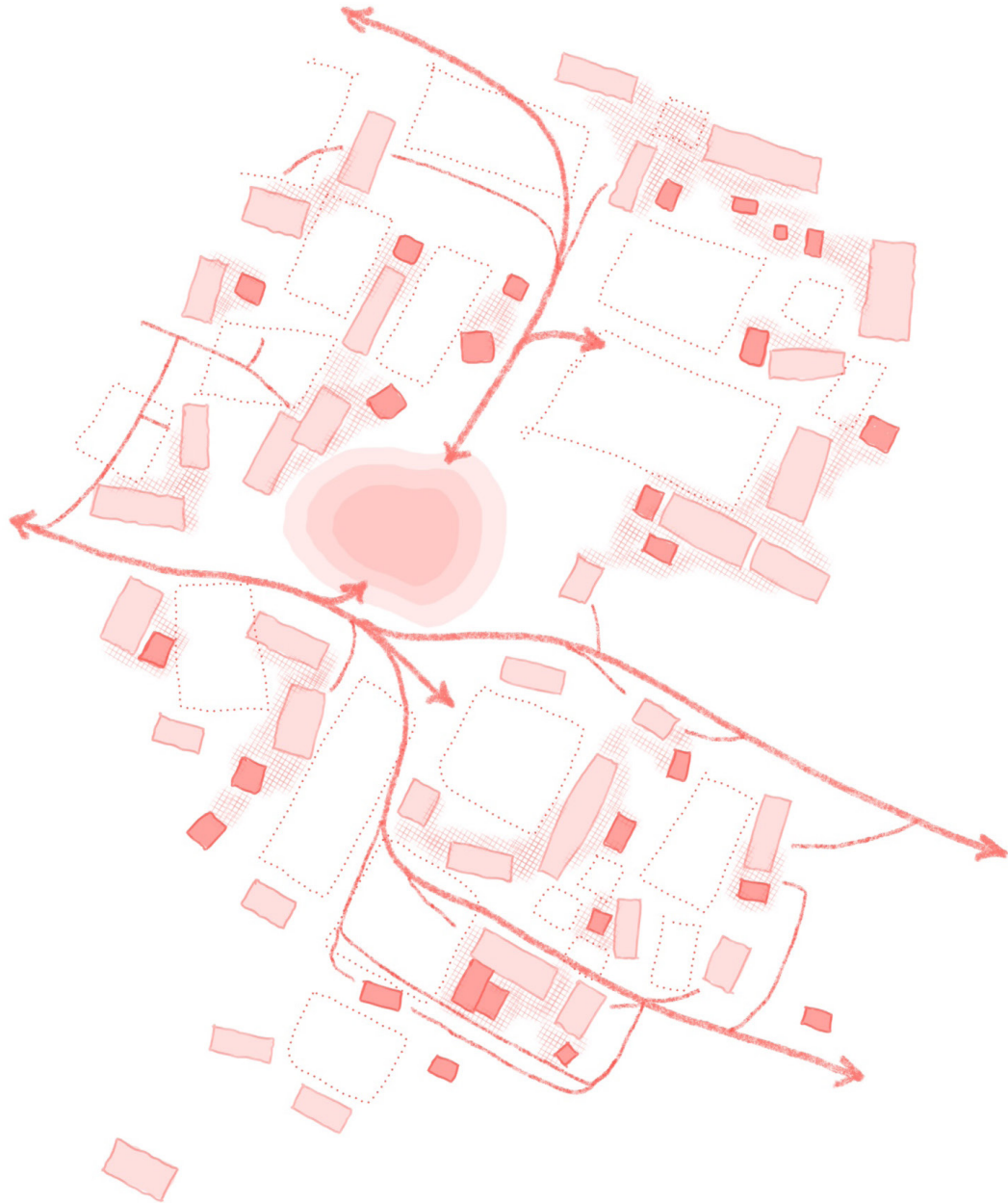
To better understand how rural communities can become more resilient (and attractive), my research turns to an important archetype, during a time when decisions were made out of necessity, rather than novelty; the village farm of the middle ages. By analysing Western European settlement excavations through diagram, searching for visible and invisible patterns, we can extract a set of principles that may have contributed to their centuries of survival. The primary goal of this analysis is to uncover ideas about how living and working spaces related to one another, and to look for patterns that begin to explain how a settlement's form might come to be.



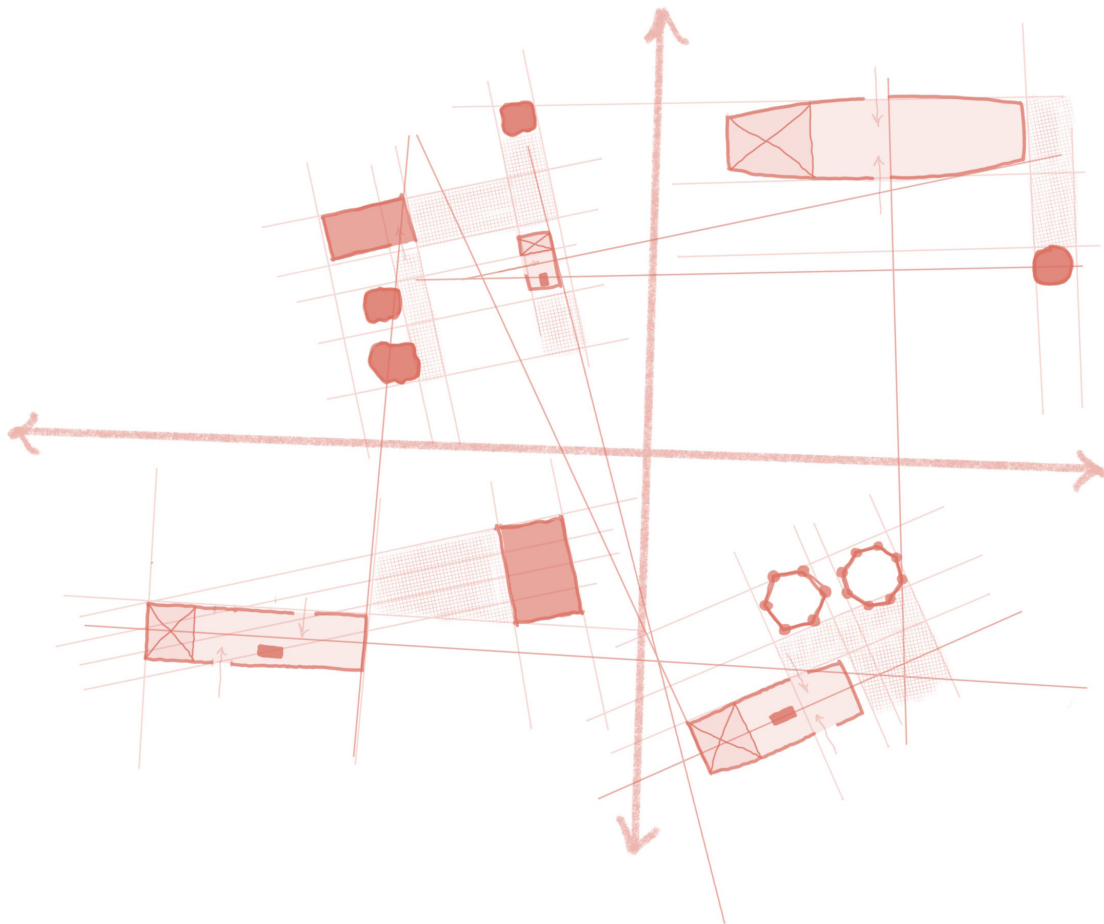
My research begins with an interest in the level of resilience and independence these civilizations had 1800 years ago. Optimistic that some remanence of their socioeconomic form can be seen in the remains of their built settlements (Bach 2012).



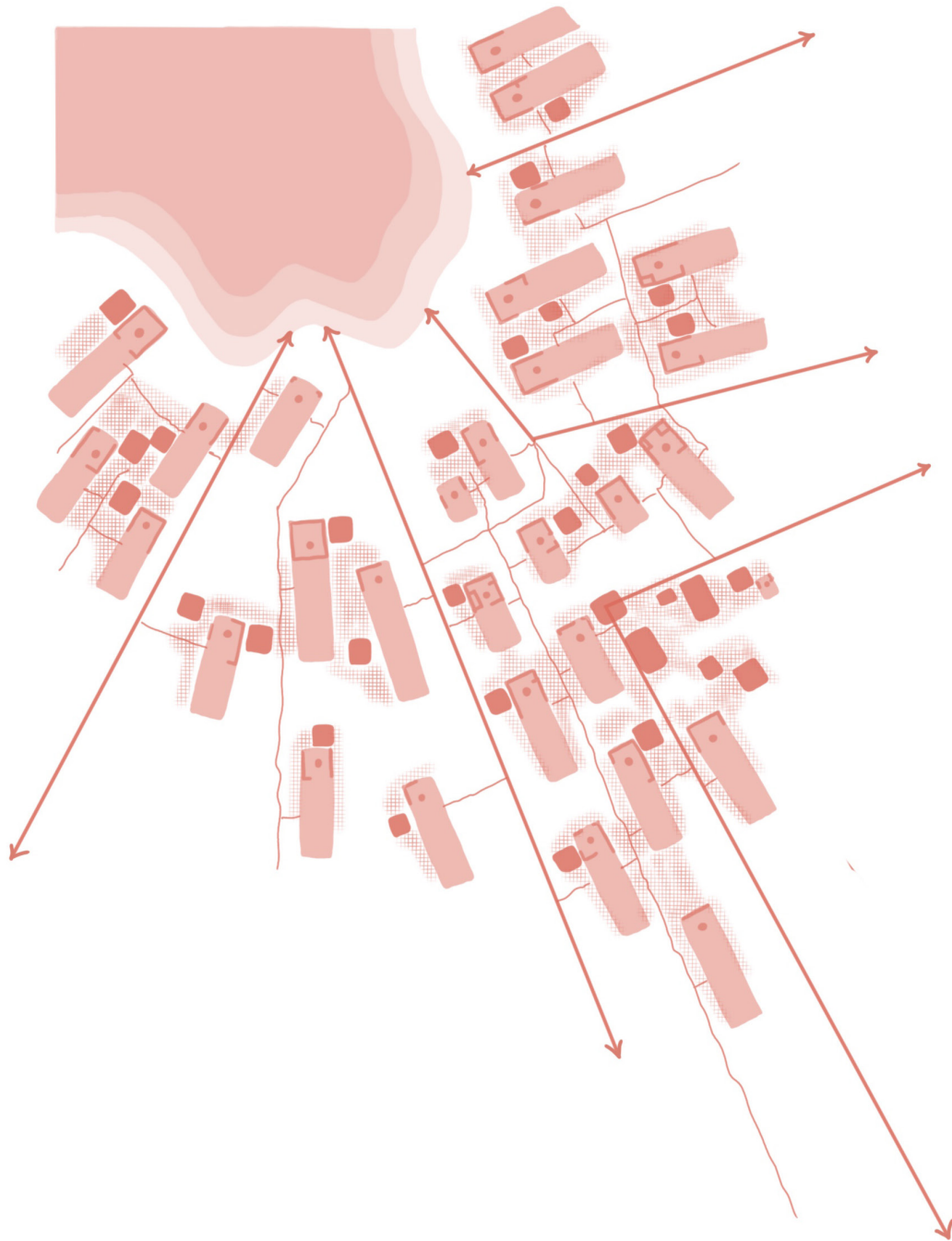
KOOTWIJK - Berneveld, Netherlands (8th century). Identifying primary and secondary routes, dwelling spaces and service spaces.



CATHOLME - Staffordshire, England (6th century). Identifying primary and secondary routes, dwelling spaces and service spaces, and looking for outdoor 'rooms' created by the placement of structures.



WARENDORF - Westphalia, Germany (7th century). Identifying primary and secondary routes, dwelling spaces and service spaces, and looking for outdoor 'rooms' created by the placement of structures. Looking to understand the program of these outdoor rooms based on their adjacent structures.



FEDDERSEN WIERDE - Cuxhaven, Germany (3rd century). Identifying primary and secondary routes, dwelling spaces and service spaces, and looking for outdoor 'rooms' created by the placement of structures. Looking to understand the program of these outdoor rooms based on their adjacent structures. Starting to see the relationship between settlement and natural resource.

## **Total Environment**

### **Density**

The first principle evident in the case studies, is density. Of the four settlement excavations examined in depth, though farms would have existed with great distance between one another, the settlements themselves were very dense. On average, one acre of land was home to 14 families. In many cases, settlements cluster around resources and form a sort of radial plan to optimize their proximity to these natural elements. Density (or proximity) seems to respond to a need for efficiency within the working order of the village, as much as it does safety from exterior forces. Neighbours were steps away, making practices like trade and celebration, safe and efficient, under the watchful eye of the village. Proximity also meant that the labour of transporting tools and materials was minimized.

Living quarters were tight, and privacy was a novelty farmers typically could not afford. However, settlement density meant that a community acted as a joint unit bonded together, and not as individual components coming together for specific functions.

### **Diversity**

The second reoccurring principle is diversity. Within the village there are no apparent 'boundaries' between programmatic structures. Longhouses and work barns existed side by side, and in many cases, living and working overlapped. Harsh winters would force farmers to bring livestock into the longhouse, as they were dependant on each other's warmth and offerings for survival. Settlements were often made up of diverse skill sets, some were farmers,



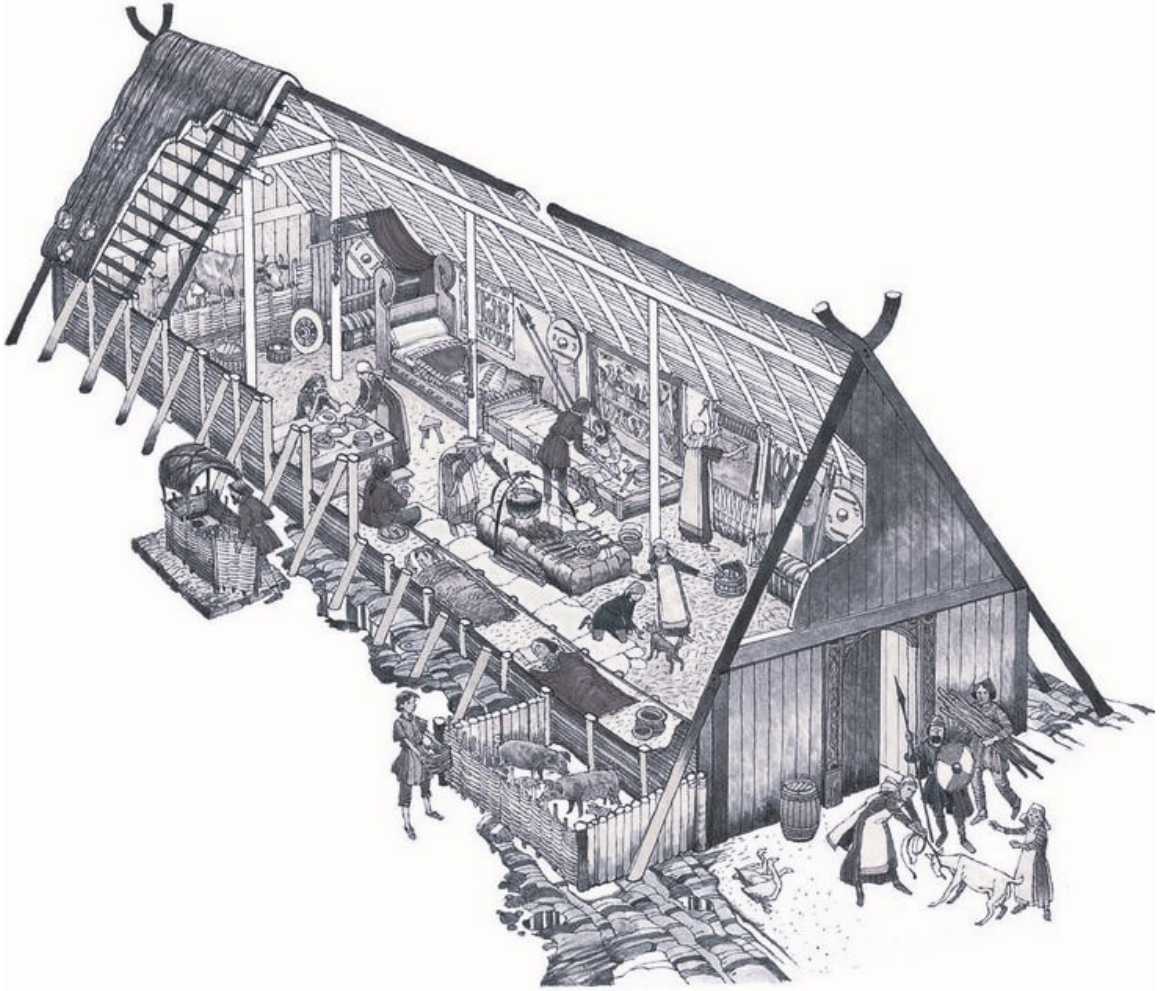


'Reeve and Serfs' painting depicts the diversity of work taking place in a middle ages settlement (Morgenstern 1794).

some were blacksmiths, some were carpenters etc., and they all worked in harmony to sustain each other's way of life. When farms were physically separated by great distances, people relied on the skills and resources they had locally available, there was no global market where they could easily exchange goods/services. The resulting communities were self-sustaining and well rounded.

When density and diversity exist together, they create a multi-program, total environment that is both efficient and contained. A place where everything is happening all at once, with minimal boundaries leaving program competing for the user's attention and focus. Could rural communities of the 21st century learn a thing or two from this fascinating time in history? Definitely, but they cannot be applied at face value without first considering that we may not be living under the same circumstances as those middle ages farmers, and so this approach may need to be tailor-made





Peeled back axonometric longhouse drawing displays the chaotic overlapping of life happening all under one roof. The original total environment, host of all things human (Wood Central 2024).

to suit a contemporary 'total environment'. Consideration for the fact that our lives have become far more complex. Survival has seemingly become a human right, and not a privilege, meaning we don't have to fight for it like those farmers would have, and instead we spend our times fighting for novelties like fulfillment and happiness.

# Chapter 4: Fit for a New Age

## Common Ground

Up until the 19th century, living and working were homogeneous activities, taking place in a total environment, but as Canada evolved from a rural and resource-based economy into an urban and industrialized one, residences became largely distinct from workplaces (Khoury 2016). That was until we experienced a global health crisis in 2019, during which time the number of Canadians working from home jumped from 3.6% to 37% in just two years and has since settled to roughly 25% (5.3 million Canadians). An

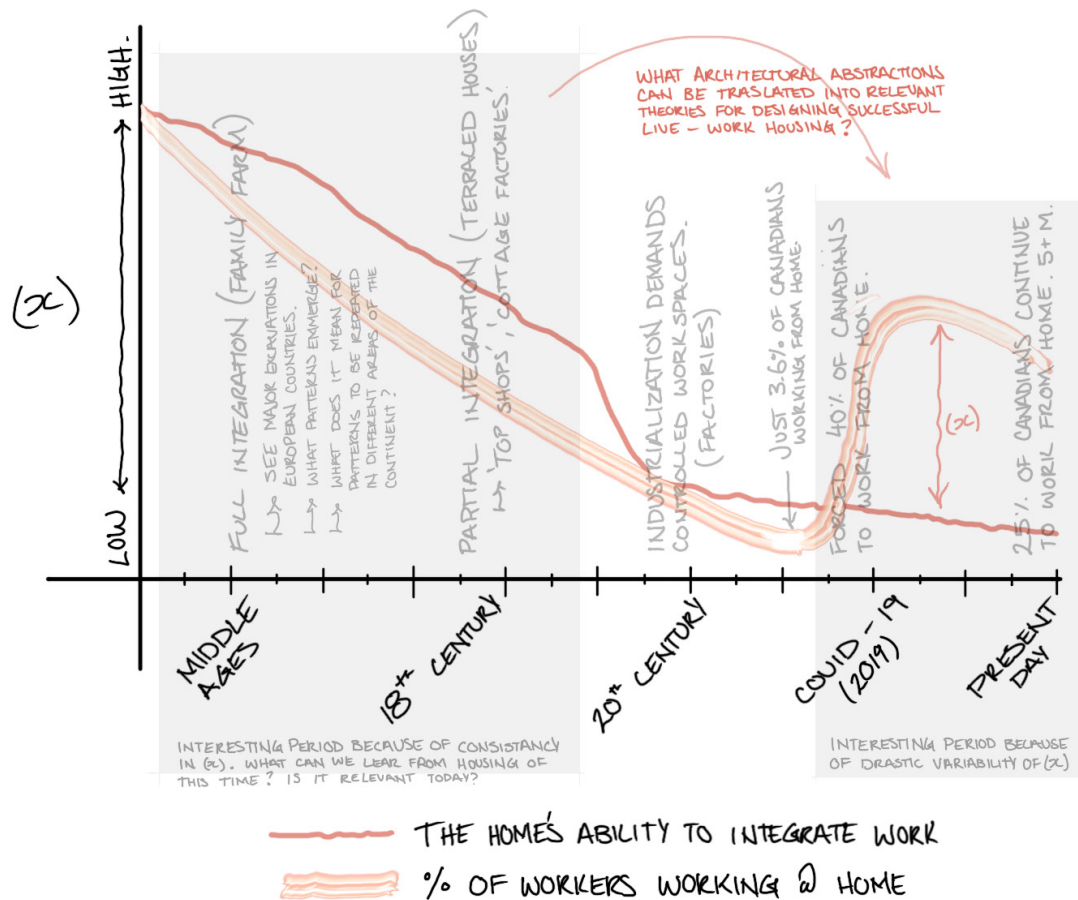


Diagram of the home's decreasing ability to support additional program, compared to the increasing live-work trends of the modern day.



An example of the kinds of unsupported 'total environments' that started to infiltrate our lives. This image should make you cringe (Paragon Kitchens n.d.).

unfortunate, but fascinating test period forced a substantial portion of the working population to live a short term total environment life. This contemporary circumstance can act as a case study to determine what kinds of risks exist when a total environment is imposed upon a population without any intervention to support the imposition.

Covid-19's rapid onset, revealed and maybe amplified some of the major issues of contemporary total environments, where we quickly learned that these conditions could create isolating, and imbalanced lifestyles. Lifestyles that demand intentional design interventions to become realistic long-term strategies. Without adequate support for hosting a total environment, the opportunity for rural communities to attract new kinds of productive, working age residents, could be missed.

### **Isolation**

The benefits of live-work are undeniable; 'Zero Commute' living, and flexibility of working hours afford you more time to spend how you see fit, whether that's honing in on a hobby, traveling, or anything in between. However, a total environment has the potential to consume the inhabitant, as they find themselves without the need to interact with the world beyond their all-encompassing dwelling. Take this into a low density rural application, and isolation among residents becomes inevitable.

### **Imbalance**

When dwelling spaces and service spaces exist together, they run the risk of polluting each other, rendering them both inadequate. Like zoning bylaws that we're familiar with in cities, when zones are separate, they create specific

and predictable circumstances. When mixed-use zoning became the contemporary city planner's life's mission, our public spaces became more dynamic and as a result, require more discipline from the user. As curious and distracted beings, we require discipline even in our own homes, the question is, how can architecture contribute to this behavioral discipline and allow the two most significant programs of human life to exist in harmony rather than competition?

### **An Architectural Approach**

I turn my focus to the yard as a tool for addressing isolation and imbalance within a total environment. Defined by its perimeter, the yard is to the rural what the town square is to the urban. To understand the function of a yard (whether intended or not) we must understand the surrounding degree of publicness. For ease of categorization, this thesis resorts to only two types of spaces (or degrees of publicness), dwelling spaces and service spaces, anything that lies between them may be yard. The yard can be a neutral space, waiting for the user to impose their needs upon it, but often it is a space loaded with intent. Consider the yard as threshold, the yard as link and the yard as organizer.

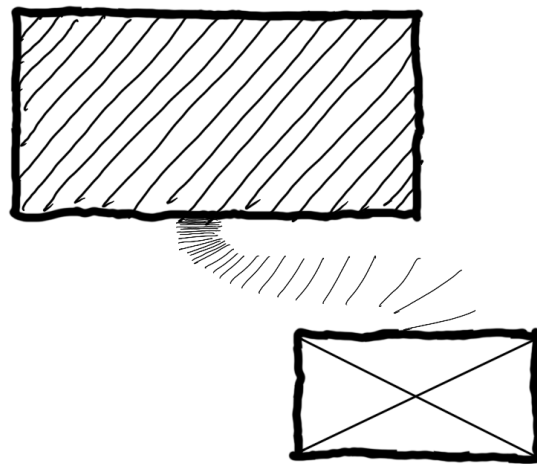
### **Yard as Threshold – To Battle Imbalance**

Yard as threshold exists between a public place, and a less public place. Creating a transition between two distinct programs. A yard as threshold helps the user remove themselves from adjacent environments and contributes to their ability to distinguish dwelling from service spaces. Without this threshold, all the onus is on the user to have the discipline to change their mindset without changing

their environment, something that is much easier said than done. This type of yard can be used to create a hierarchal distinction between street and home, or to choreograph an important commute between the home and studio for example. The yard as threshold is not limited to outdoor spaces, it also exists within the walls of the structures we inhabit; acting as the space that purposefully lies between dwelling (ex. Bedroom), and service (ex. kitchen).



Yard as threshold (Bai n.d.).



### **Yard as Link – To Battle Isolation**

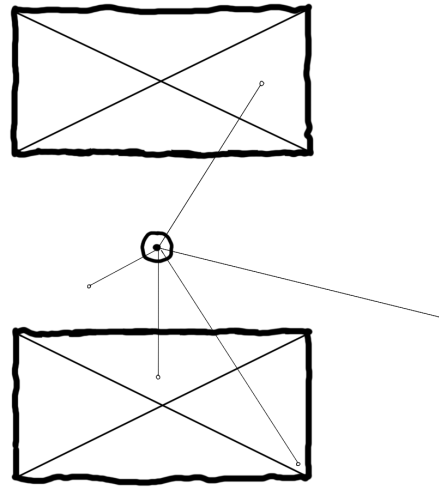
Yard as link exists between two places of equal publicness. Creating a space for people and program to spill out beyond their designed container. The link within a community is what will encourage interaction, spark collaboration and inspiration for personal and for professional endeavors. At the neighbourhood scale, this type of yard extends dwelling or service spaces into commons, where neighbours are prompted to congregate around a shared interest (or shared adjacency). Within a domestic setting, yard as link pulls the living room out onto the patio, and the dining room into the



garden, similarly, it expands the studio into the courtyard, and the garage onto the driveway (or 'dooryard' as the New Brunswickers would call it).



Yard as link (Fesser 2016).



### Yard as Organizer – To Activate

Like the Middle Ages settlements above, many rural places established in the 19th and 20th century have element(s) that govern their form. Settlers typically establish villages relative to the natural resource they've set out to harvest. For some this means along the ocean's edge, to set out for lobster at sunrise, for others this means around the quarry, to simplify transportation of heavy materials to the railroad.

I like to think of this governed form as an adherence to the order of a place. Its what creates unique settlement patterns that are a response to the landscape they occupy. An example of a settlement pattern that does not adhere to its order might be San Francisco's grid imposed upon some serious topography.

Careful consideration of a place's landscape will allow a seemingly urban, total environment intervention to be 'of the place'. Enriching its form and function, rather than diluting it. The landscape brings with it a set of inherited rules, which the use of threshold and link then follow. Like a gameboard, waiting for the user to appropriately place their game pieces.



Yard as activator, informing the placement of structures relative to the local landscape (Lancaster 2012) and (Hind 1920).

## Chapter 5: Haliburton Highlands

### Landscape as Order

The Haliburton Village, established in the late 1800's attracted prospective farmers from around the province, who quickly realized the soil was less than ideal for agriculture. There was a swift shift to logging that caught the attention of men as far as Quebec for contracted winter work that supplemented their summer agricultural harvests. When the railway reached the county, the logging boom really began, as it made possible the transportation of larger, heavy components to build sawmills, which meant loggers could process their harvests into more manageable forms before sending them south.

Haliburton County is home to over 1000 freshwater lakes, many of which connect through rivers, allowing loggers to float harvests (or pull them across the ice) to their sawmills and into town, rather than spend time, money and energy



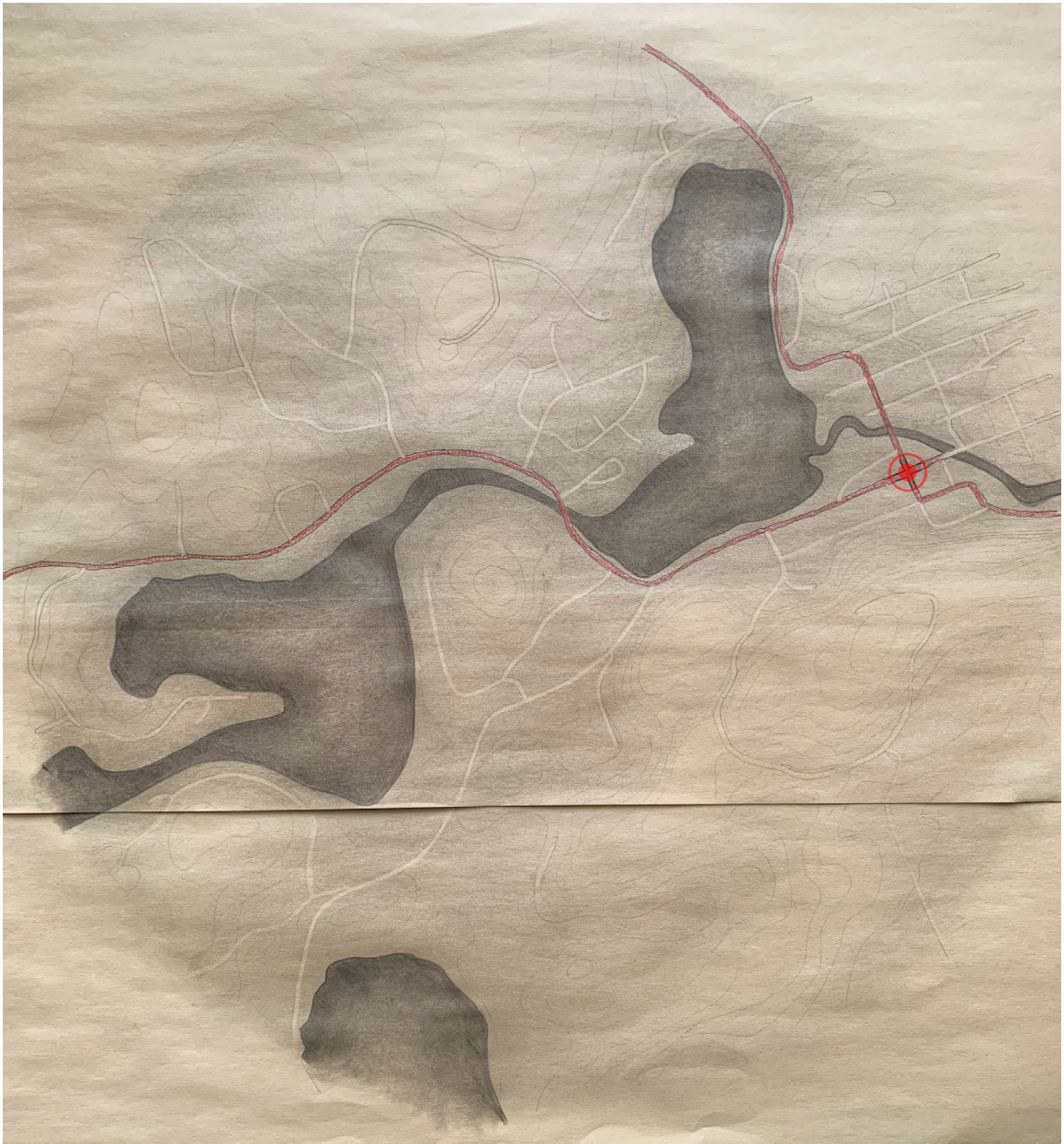
The Drag River being used to float harvests through the land (Mackenzie 2017).





A very frozen Drag River being used to pull logs into town. A two horsepower sleigh slides what looks like 50+ logs, each 12" round or so, roughly 15' long, likely a photo taken during the softwood logging era of the Highlands, each log coming in around 400 lbs, that load would be upwards of 20,000 lbs. I'd say they had some confidence in the ice... (Haliburton Highlands Museum 1901).

building roads. However, when Haliburton's transportation network did start popping up, it happened in a specific way. Roads for transporting milled lumber from sawmills to the railway most often followed the waters edge (as did the sawmills). The aggressive grade in the Haliburton Highlands paired with harsh winters, made for some tricky trucking. Avoiding the 'highlands' was best practice for many reasons, the resultant roadways mainly occupied the 'lowlands', informing the village's original form and location.



Tonal map used to understand the relationship between Haliburton's topography and the network of roads built throughout the landscape. Diagram of converging paths forming an informal nucleus.



## Learning the Rules

### Scale vs. Traverse

Surveyors go to great lengths to find the most efficient routes through challenging landscapes. In Haliburton, the harsh topography would inform their every move as they look for opportunity in the lowlands, and carefully calculate any necessary engagement with the highlands. A quick study of Haliburton's built environment as it relates to terrain reveals different ways to think about paths, and how path types could help us develop a method based approach to planning the new center.

To scale the hill, and work against the contours of a slope is an intensive task. In Haliburton it often marks a transition between two spaces. While to traverse the hill, working with the contours of a slope is economic and informal, behaving more like a link than a threshold.

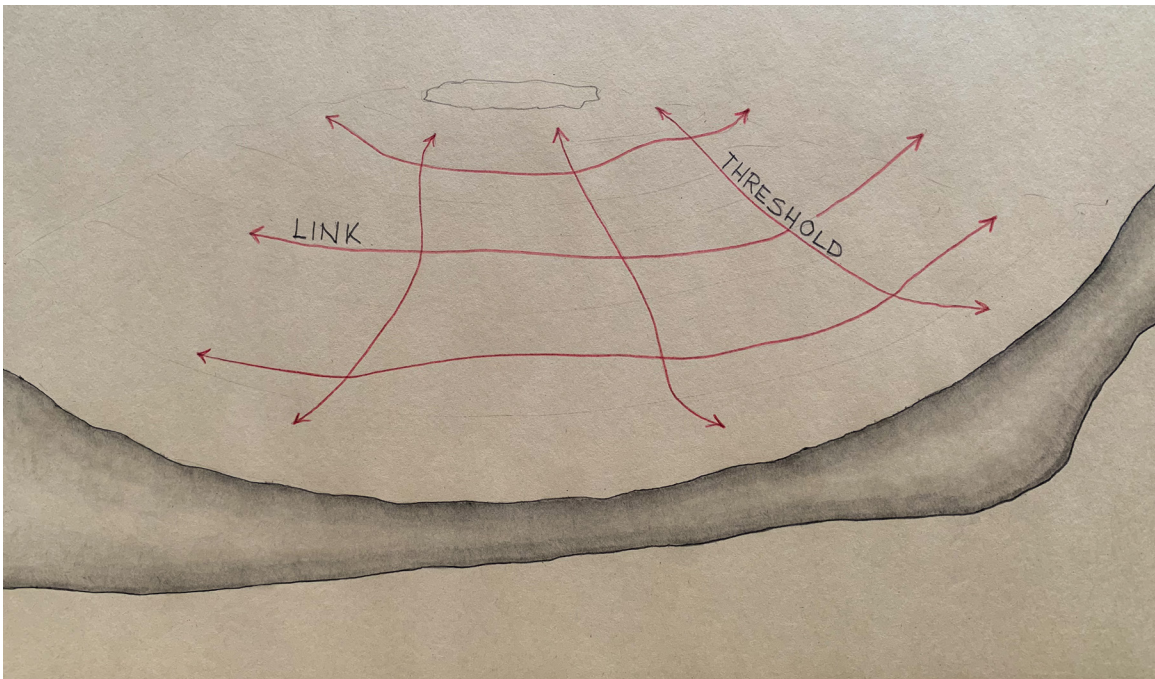


Diagram of the landscape's inherent rules, informing the use of the yard as link, and the yard as threshold in this particular place.



Diagram demonstrating the treatment of highlands vs. lowlands as places for settlement.

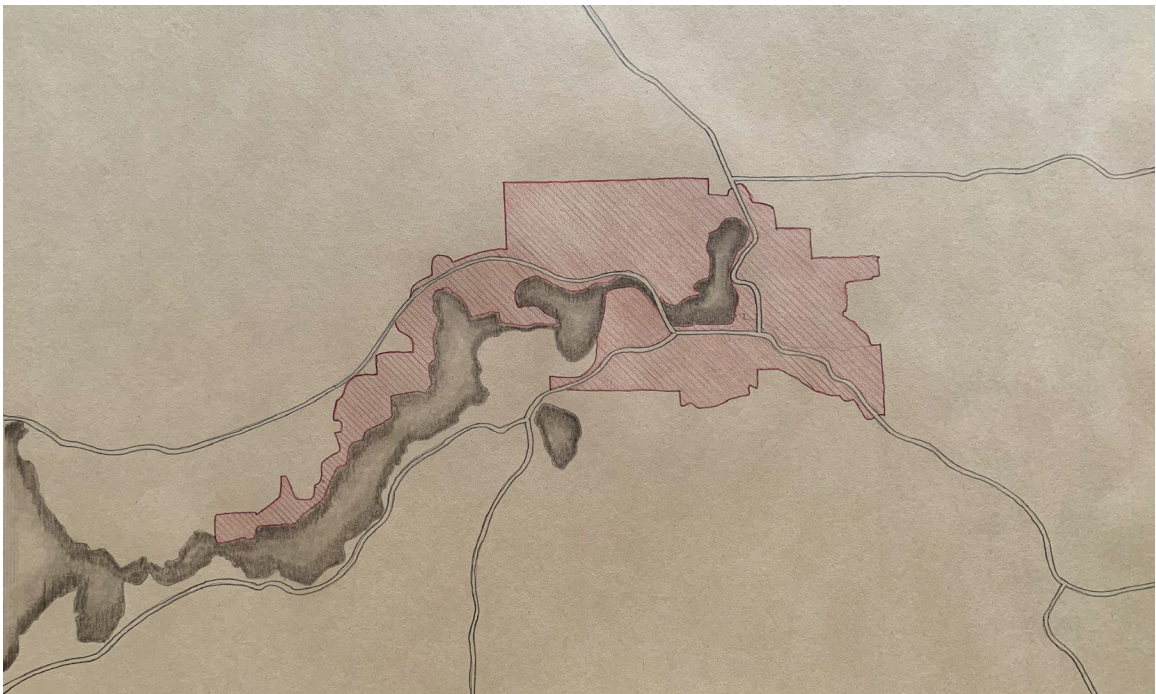
### **Settling High vs. Settling Low**

In this new center, ideas about publicness and density as they relate to landscape can be derived from Haliburton's existing built environment. Prominent cottage culture (seasonal residential), has dominated the shorelines since heavy industry burnt out. As a result, Haliburton's lowlands (lakefront) are often privately owned single family homes (low density, high privacy). This leaves the highlands relatively uninhabited, and with a smaller price tag attached to them. There could be opportunity in engaging with the topography, because many areas in Haliburton have the ability to quickly densify by building away from the water.

## Critique of Urban Strategy

### From the Beginning

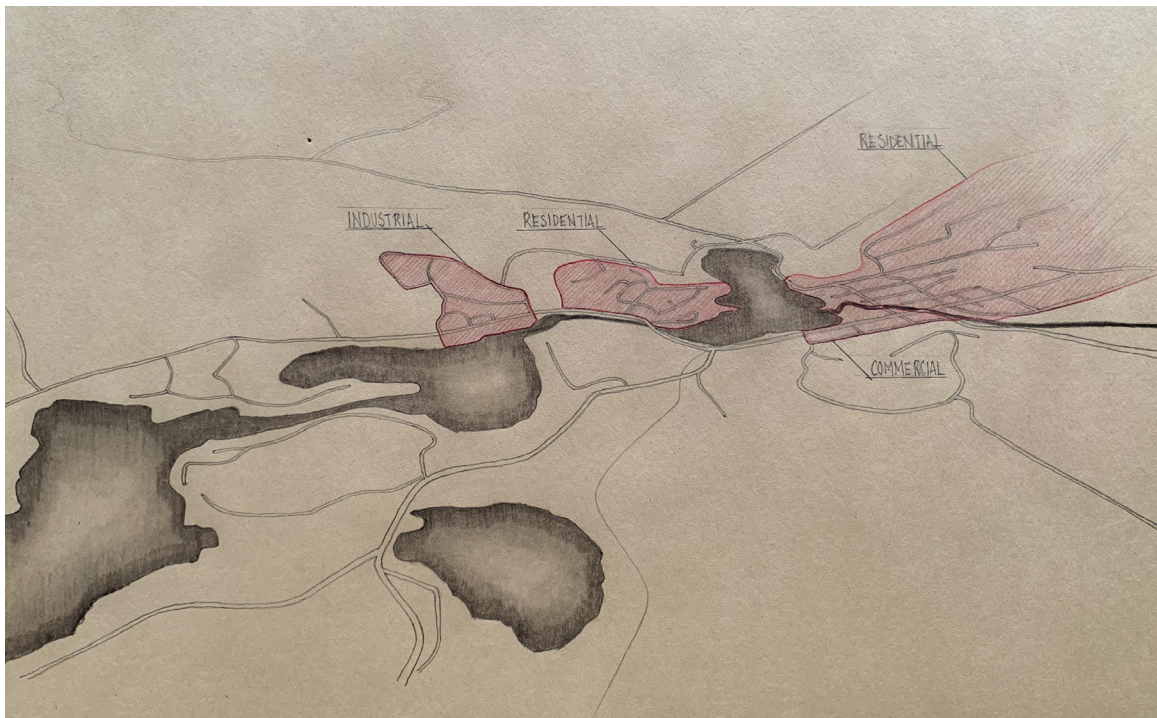
Haliburton likely began by establishing primary routes throughout the lowlands of the landscape, where the coinciding settling occurred linearly. At some point or another, two primary routes converged (Highway 118 and County Road 21) and created a (relatively) high traffic intersection, where settlement would begin to nucleate. This kind of informal beginnings to a 'town center' is common in rural places and can be effective. However, towns often grow beyond their anticipated capacity and the increasing complexity of their settlement demands more sophisticated organizing.



Map of Haliburton's existing urban designated area (in red).



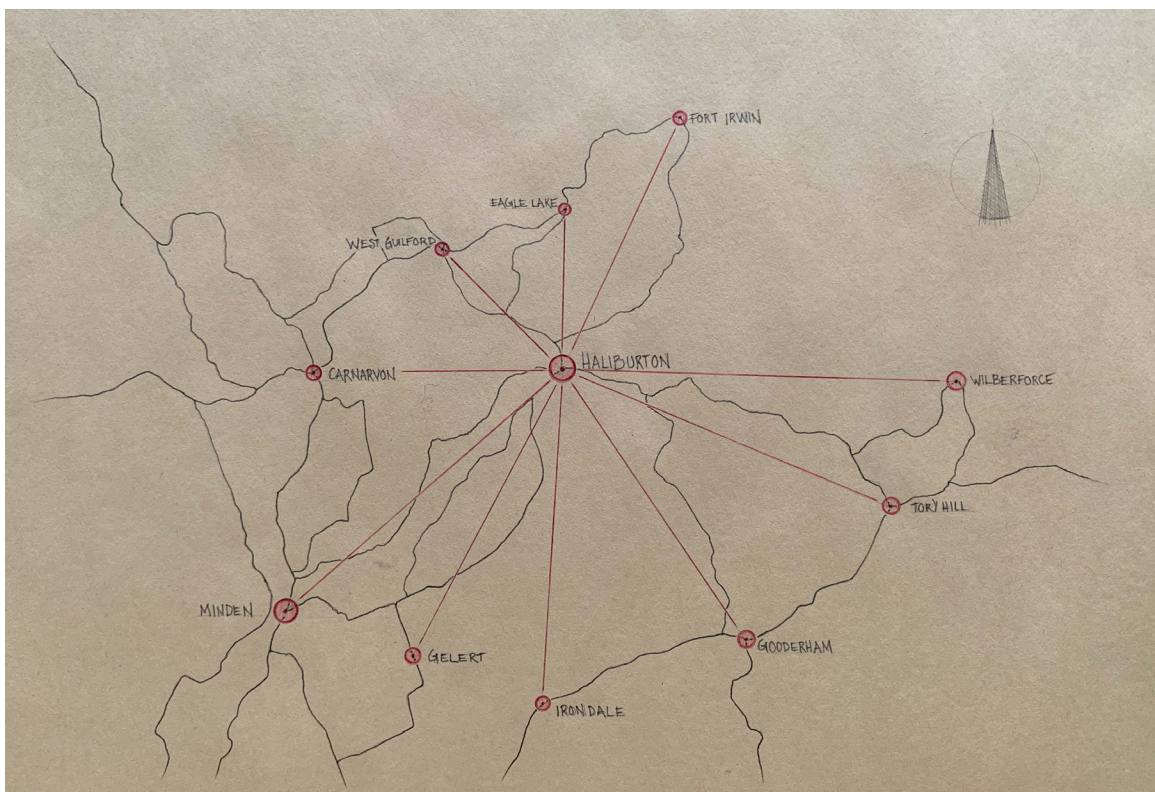
Haliburton's current 'urban' planning strategy is a linear settlement type stretching nine kilometres along a primary artery, County Road 21. The industrial, residential, and commercial centers are dispersed along the road, disconnected from one another, and with no apparent center. Haliburton's growing population is testing the limits of their municipal planning strategy, and it has me wondering if the existing town center has been outgrown. As a settlement nucleus, Haliburton's outward growth around this convergence is severely limited, governed by steep hills and surrounding watercourses.



Map of Haliburton's linearly dispersed 'urban components'.

Haliburton county is now home to over 20,000 residents, and the village acts as a hub for a series of smaller communities that surround it. Haliburton *is* a center, and it's time they started acting like it.

Enter; A new kind of center... To orient future settlement, to connect existing centers, and to introduce urban ideas, in the key or rural. A place that attracts new kinds of people and industries. A place that introduces the urban characteristics people cant live without, while maintaining the connection to nature that they didn't know they needed.

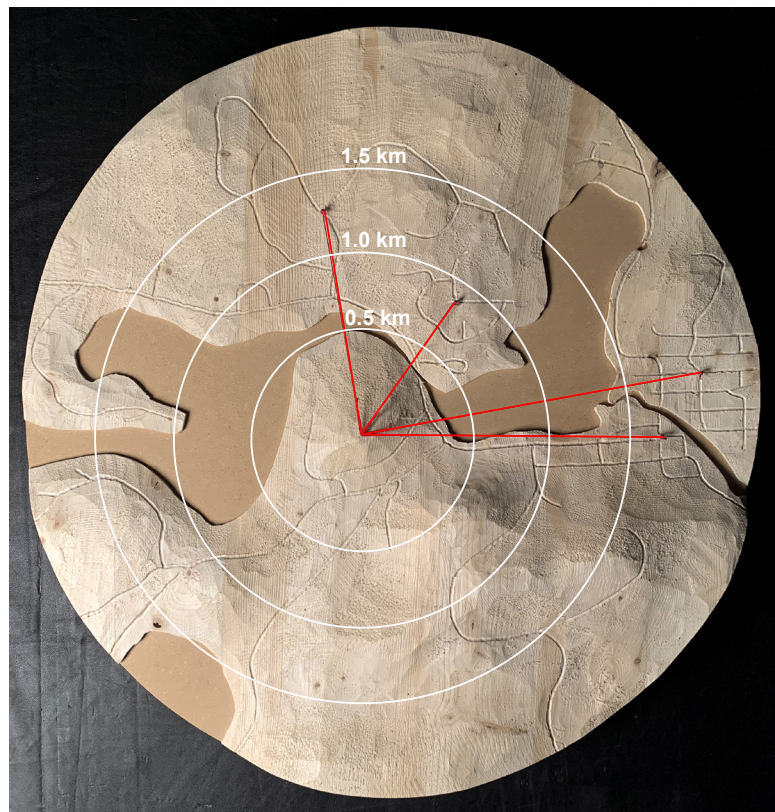


Haliburton itself as a nucleus, warrants a more urban, urban strategy.

## Chapter 6: The Urban Countryside

### A Site that Says it All

The design project begins with finding a site, one suitable for this profound role of 'a new kind of center'. A site that has the potential to be exemplary in its use of Haliburton's unique landscape, and the resulting organization that it prescribes. We're looking for a site that has the ability to reach out to Haliburton's stock of existing urban components, and bring them into orbit around this new center, making them an extension of the center, rather than zones that surround it.



Peninsula demonstrating its ability to be an effective center.

A centrally located peninsula caught my attention early on for its size, proximity to Head lake and Grass lake, and its relativity to the main street. Not only is in ample position



to connect existing development, it is in ample position to orient future growth around this new center.

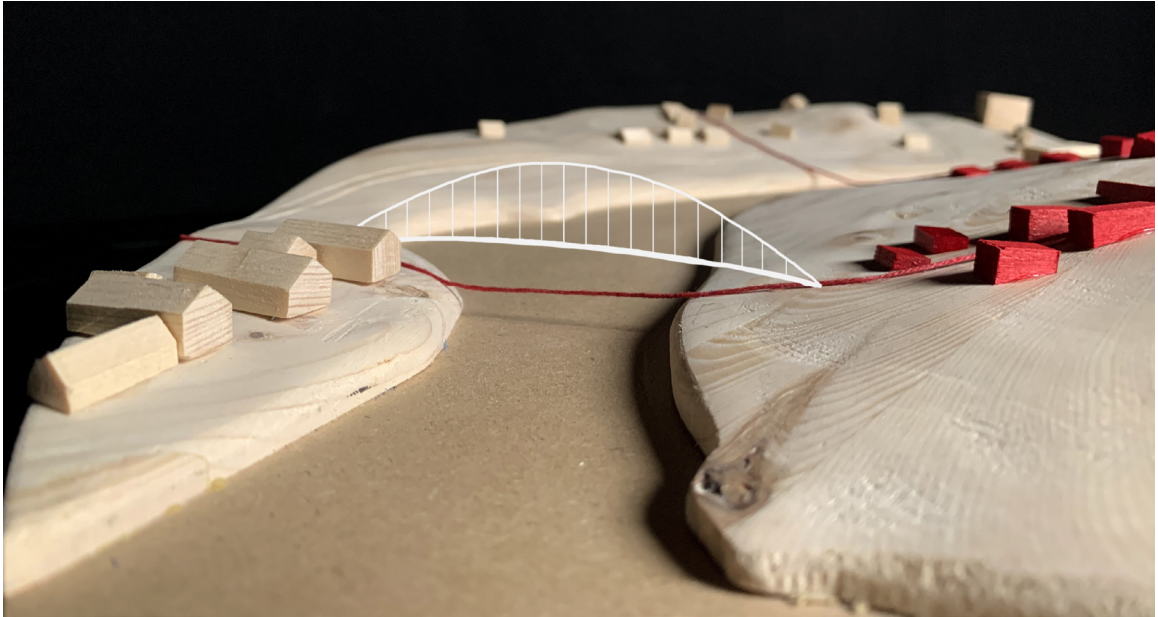
But what really caught my interest were the three public schools and the county hospital. I began to think about how those old villages settled around the resource most precious to them and thought it fitting that today, Haliburton's most precious resource is its people, more specifically their youth. What would it mean to bring education and health care to the center of the town? Perhaps, it would mark a shift in priorities, towards self-growth.



Site strategy depicted on 1:2000 site model. Step one: inhabiting the threshold.

On site, taking the idea of reaching out to various parts of the community quite literally, a series of radial lines stem from the center of the peninsula and are the first built move towards inhabiting the center. The lines, or paths, make

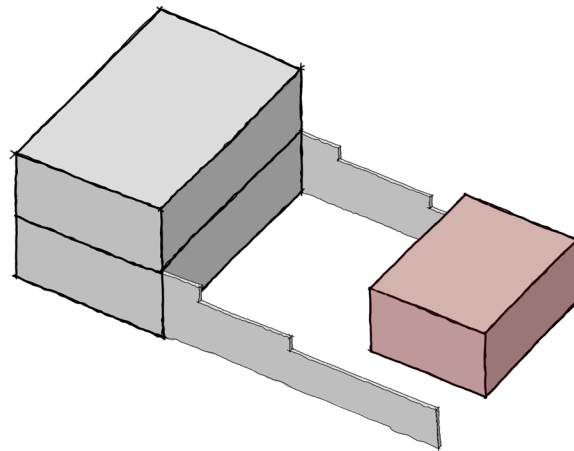
contact with the surroundings in various ways. Roads might extend towards the industrial area as the primary vehicle link, while a pedway invites the pedestrians of the residential area to explore the center on foot. Other touch points might reach a different user group, like a public dock that invites boaters and snowmobilers to tie up and head into town.



Hybrid sketches demonstrate how each extension of the center might make contact with a variety of user groups, through a variety of landing points (vehicle bridge, pedway, dock...).

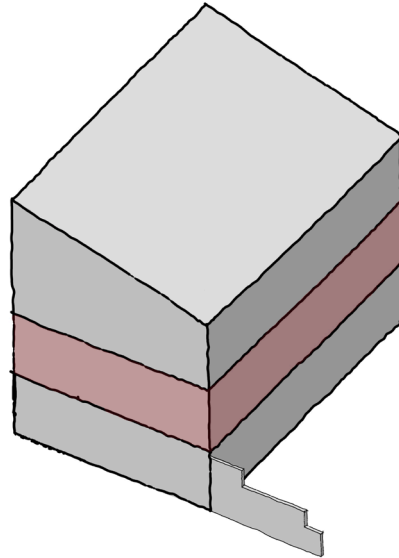
## The Pieces

Before getting into the site strategy, we introduce *the pieces* as extracted types, they will then come together in context, on the peninsula. With ideas about publicness and density as they relate to the landscape, we look at three housing models to convey these qualities in an urban setting, and to describe a series of anticipated user groups.



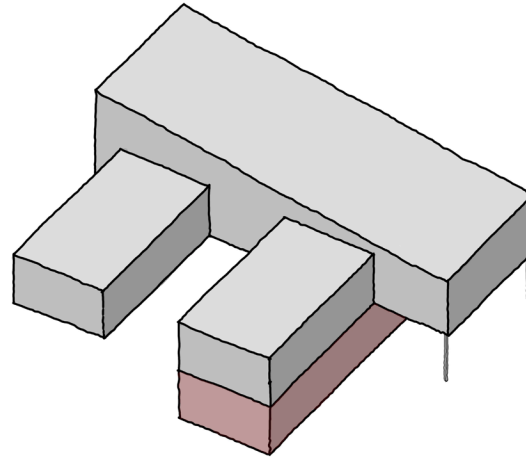
### The Courtyard House – Live Behind

Low density, high privacy, the courtyard house combines dwelling and service, separated by a private yard. Here, work from the studio might spill into the yard when it becomes unmanageable within the walls of its container, similarly, programs like dining or lounging might make their way into the garden when the working day is done. This housing model would be ideal for more established families, ones running a home-based business or sporting a serious hobby. The courtyard is quite dynamic, being that important commute from home to studio, but also pulling the user into the space to use leisurely. The yard exists as both threshold and link in this case because of factors like ownership and privacy, awarding the user complete control over its perceived use.



### **The Rowhouse – Live Above**

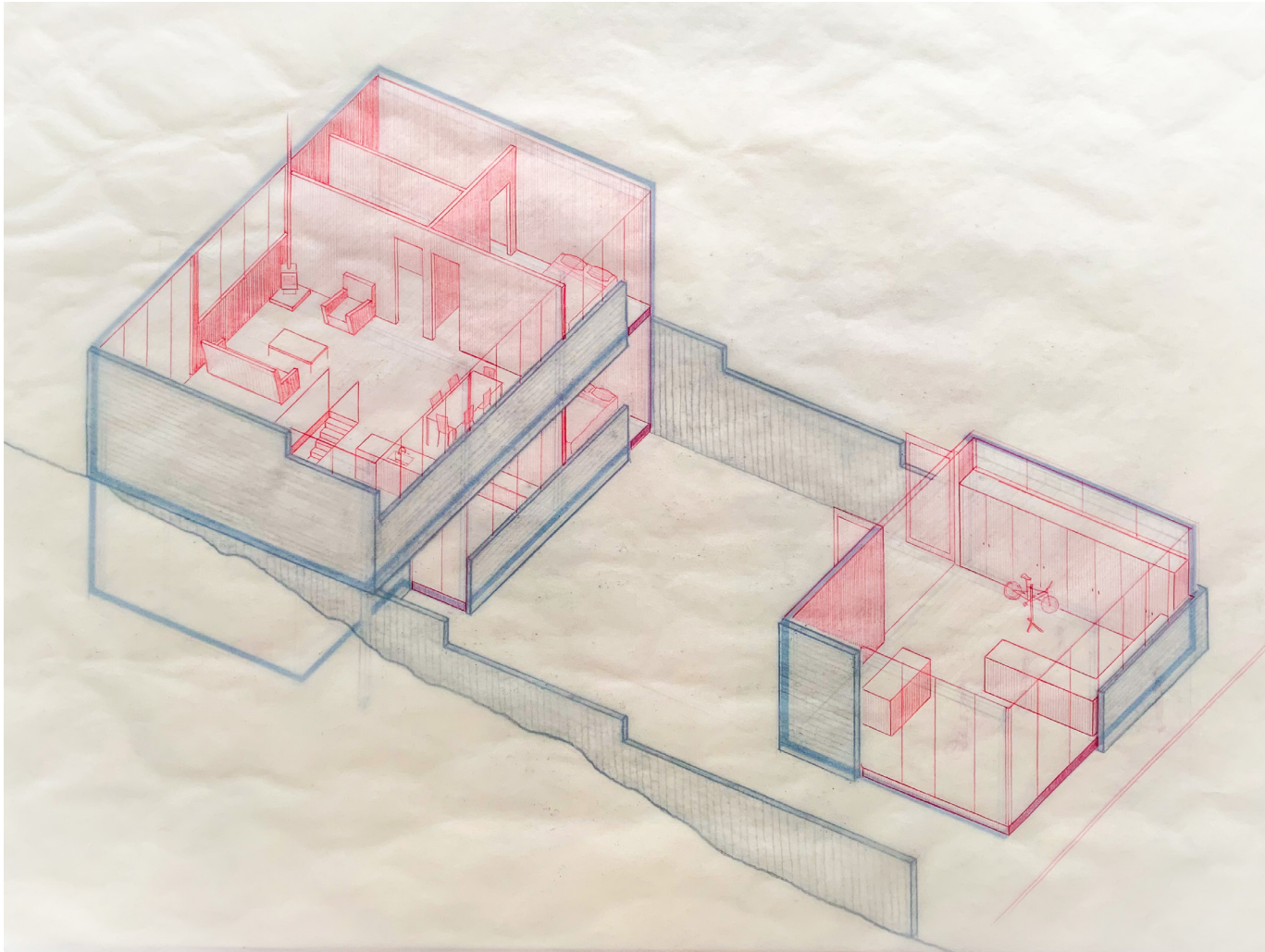
Medium density, and relatively private, the rowhouse uses its height to introduce service spaces under the same roof as dwelling spaces. Staircases become the threshold that helps the user remove themselves from the distinct programs that appear so intertwined. This model would appeal to a smaller family, providing them with the opportunity to supplement their income with a rentable unit, or better yet, use a secondary apartment to create a multi-generational living arrangement. A primary workspace or shopfront might address the street, while the dwelling spaces might be removed from the visual intrusiveness of a busy public lane.



### **The Urban Campus – Live Nearby**

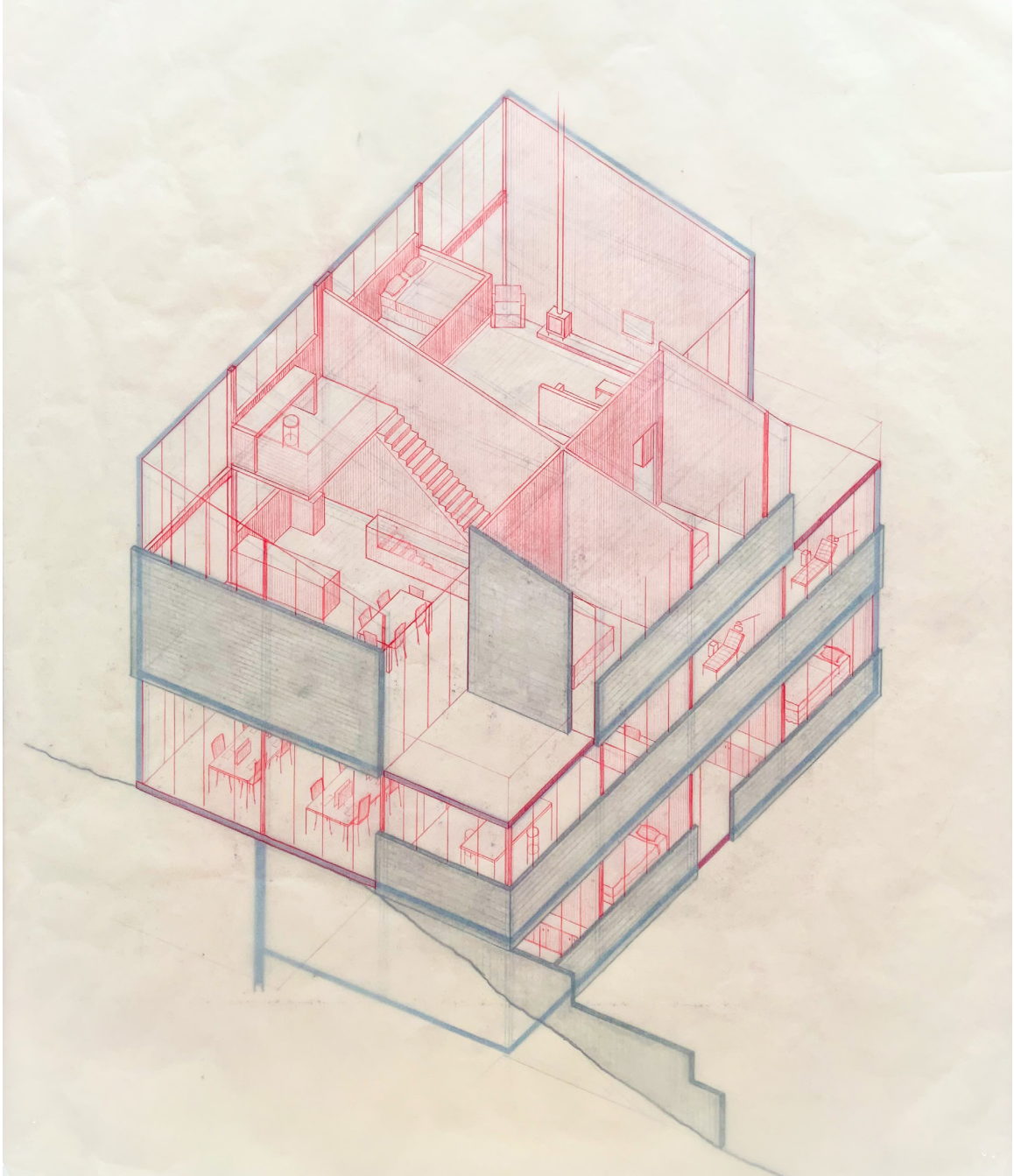
High density, and most public, the urban campus invites young people from beyond the limits of Haliburton to come live a rural life, within its 'urban' center. Like the company towns that used to employ, house, feed, and service its inhabitants, a post-secondary school is in itself a total environment. The street becomes an important threshold that separates the dwelling from service spaces (residences from institutional facilities). The school would ideally inspire people to be more open-minded about rural living through exposure to thriving, re-activated rural communities. It would serve a new type of visitor, but also be a significant contribution to serving the community that exists already. By extending its recreational facilities, learning centers, and event spaces to the community, it becomes a public amenity, that can help to increase exposure to new definitions of success to local youth.



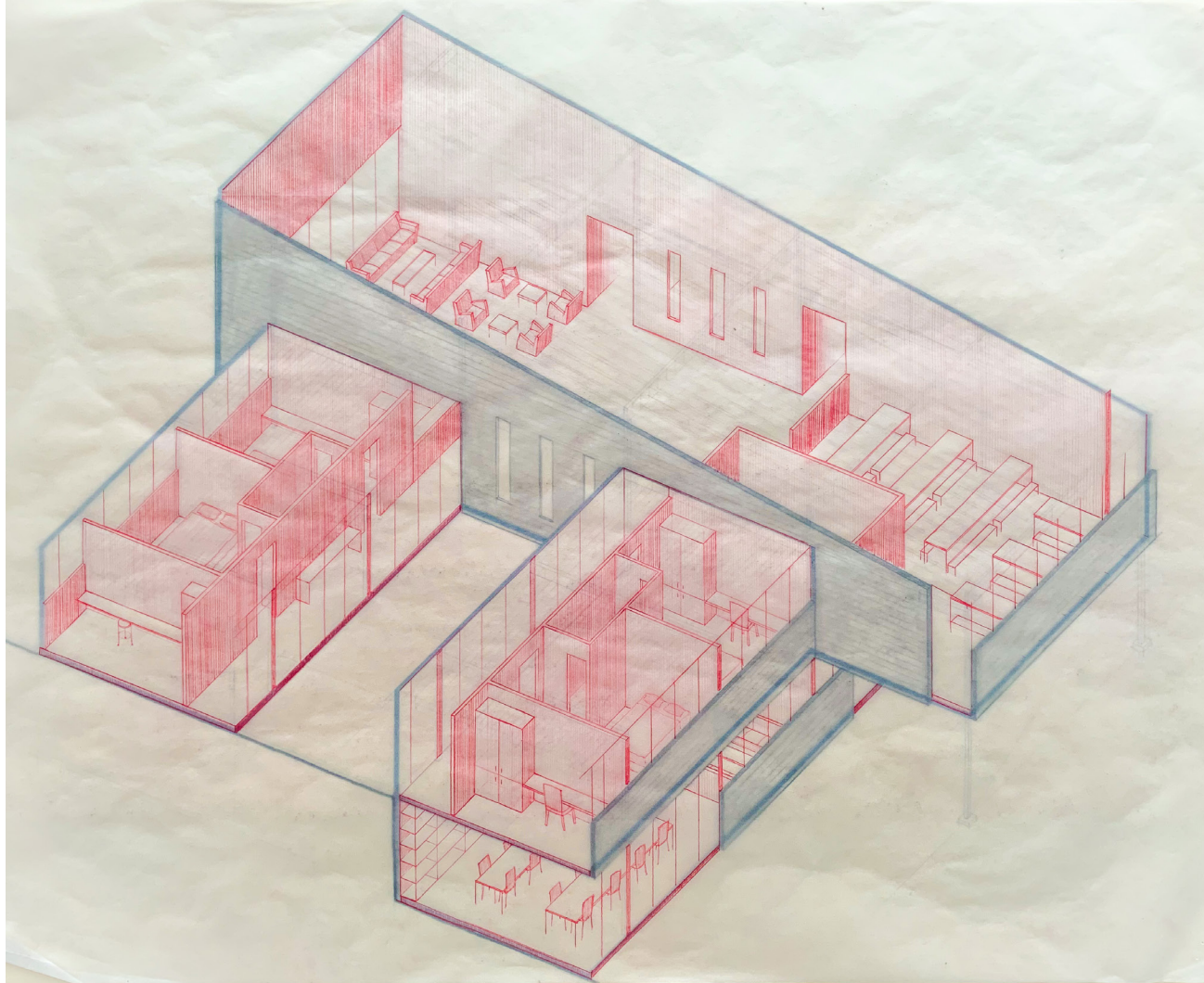


The courtyard house, live-behind model.





The row house, live-above model.



The urban campus, live-nearby model.

## Assembling the Pieces

We use our understanding of publicness and density as they relate to the landscape to shape the architecture's scale and program as a way of very generally laying out the site.

However, we go against the grain in some cases, bending the rules of the place and suggesting alternative approaches to land use or settlement. For example; we take the entire shoreline, typically privatized, and turn it into a greenbelt extending the existing main street walking path onto the peninsula and making the water's edge a public amenity.

Similarly, we crown the top of the hill on the site the civic center, instead of discounting its significance to the settlement, as has been done previous. It becomes a space with the potential to facilitate the most dense and public programs, such as farmers markets and concerts, but in its day to day form, remains inclusive to all (locals, visitors, students...). Without program, the civic center is a piece of rather raw landscape, with few architectural impositions, it becomes a trail head for a nearby rail trail, and a look-off to the valleys below and to the lakes adjacent. The center's only formal definition may be as simple and lighthearted as a low masonry belt that makes up its perimeter.

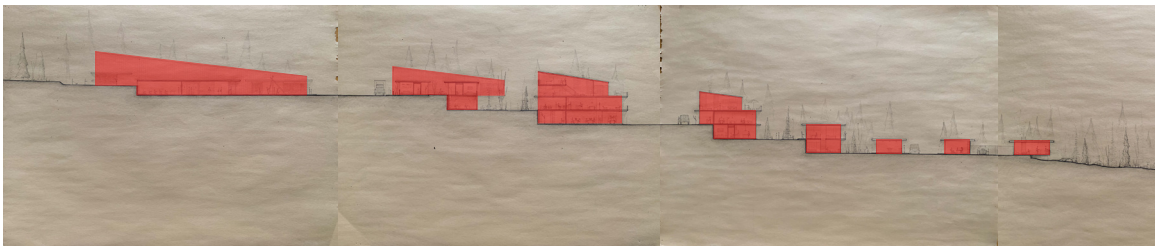
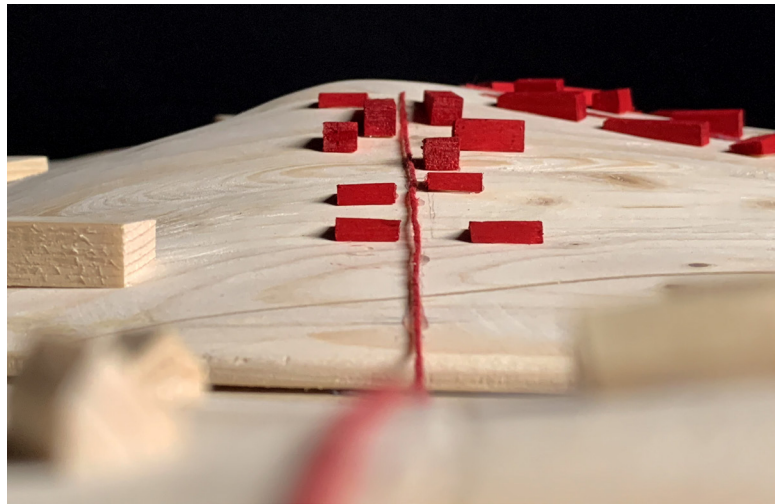


Diagram demonstrating the gradient of scale (and publicness) as one moves up and down the site. From single family homes, to the urban campus residence, this drawing uses examples of live-work housing types to inhabit the radial lines, and demonstrate the order of the place.

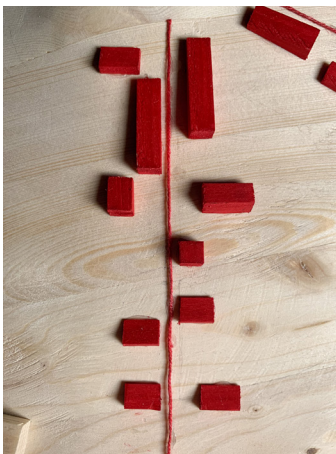


Using the hill as threshold, the user ascends the site towards the civic center, or 'town yard', and towards public institutions, shops and facilities. The radial lines around the site give the user a clear view of the center's organizational order, where one can read the gradients of scale and publicness, allowing them to navigate the center with some understanding of what to expect when they move uphill, downhill, and across the hill.



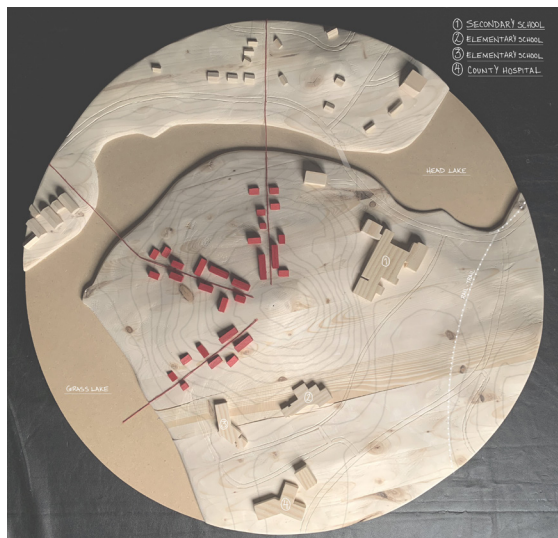
The radial lines almost 'cut' through the landscape, and act as a visual guide to help the user navigate the center.

Along the radial line, irregular placement of structures helps to frame pockets of pedestrian program prompting the user to explore the center on foot.

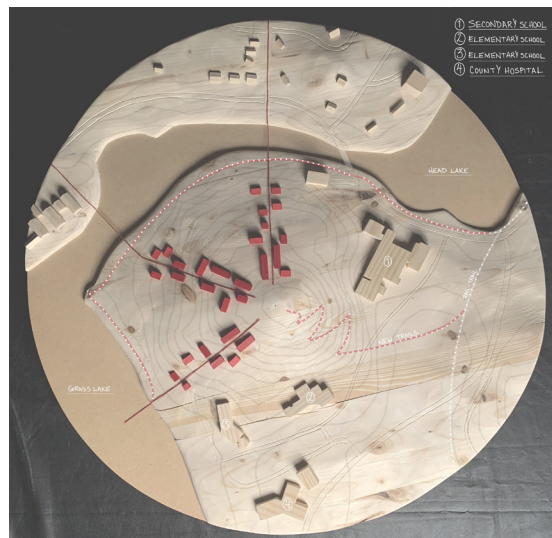


Inhabiting the threshold.

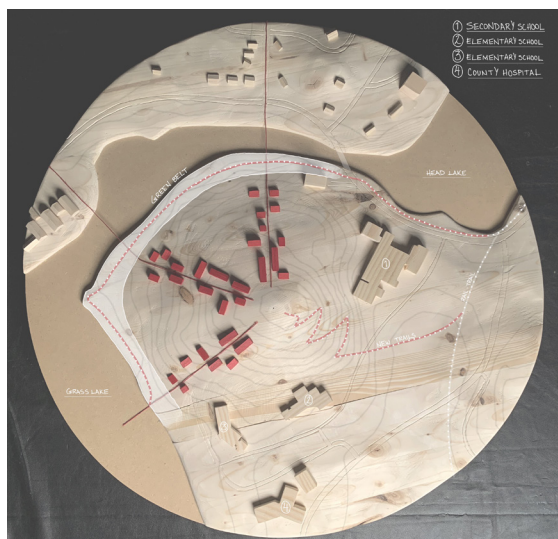
Consider the radial lines as a framework, that are interpreted by a user, and at some point inhabited by the user. If stage one of re-activating Haliburton's town and landscape is building these physical connections to surrounding urban components through the use of radial arteries and inhabiting these arteries as a way of conveying the rules of the site, stage two then would be to populate the proposed framework (building between the radial arteries) by following the site's contours and creating informal traversal links.



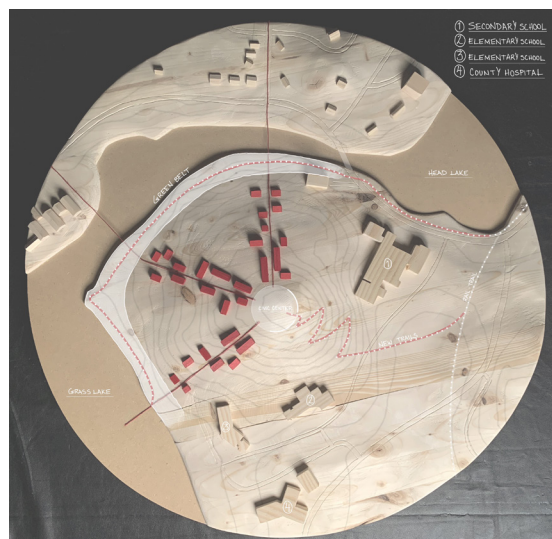
Context.



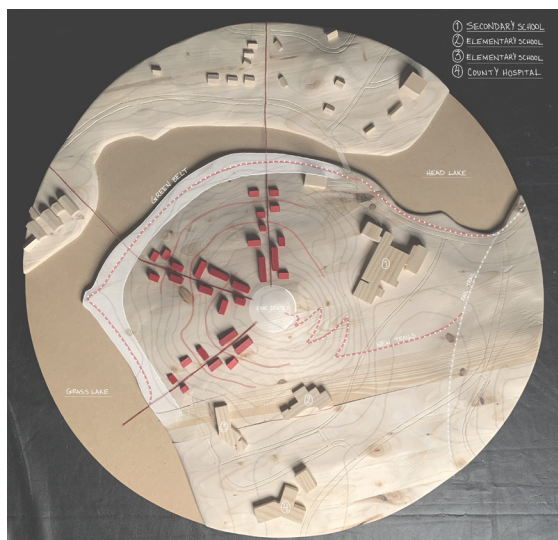
New trails.



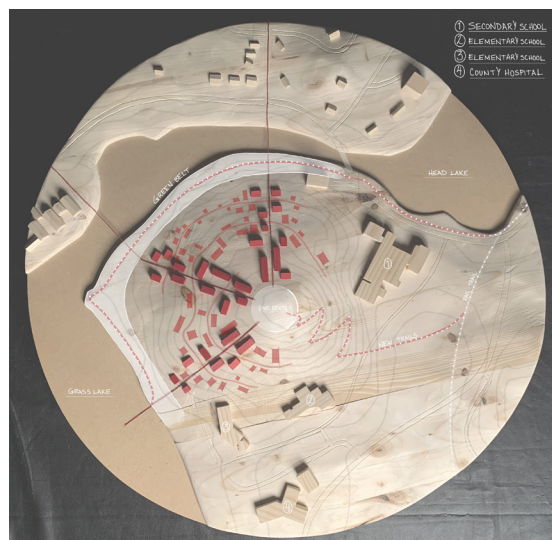
Greenbelt.



Civic center.

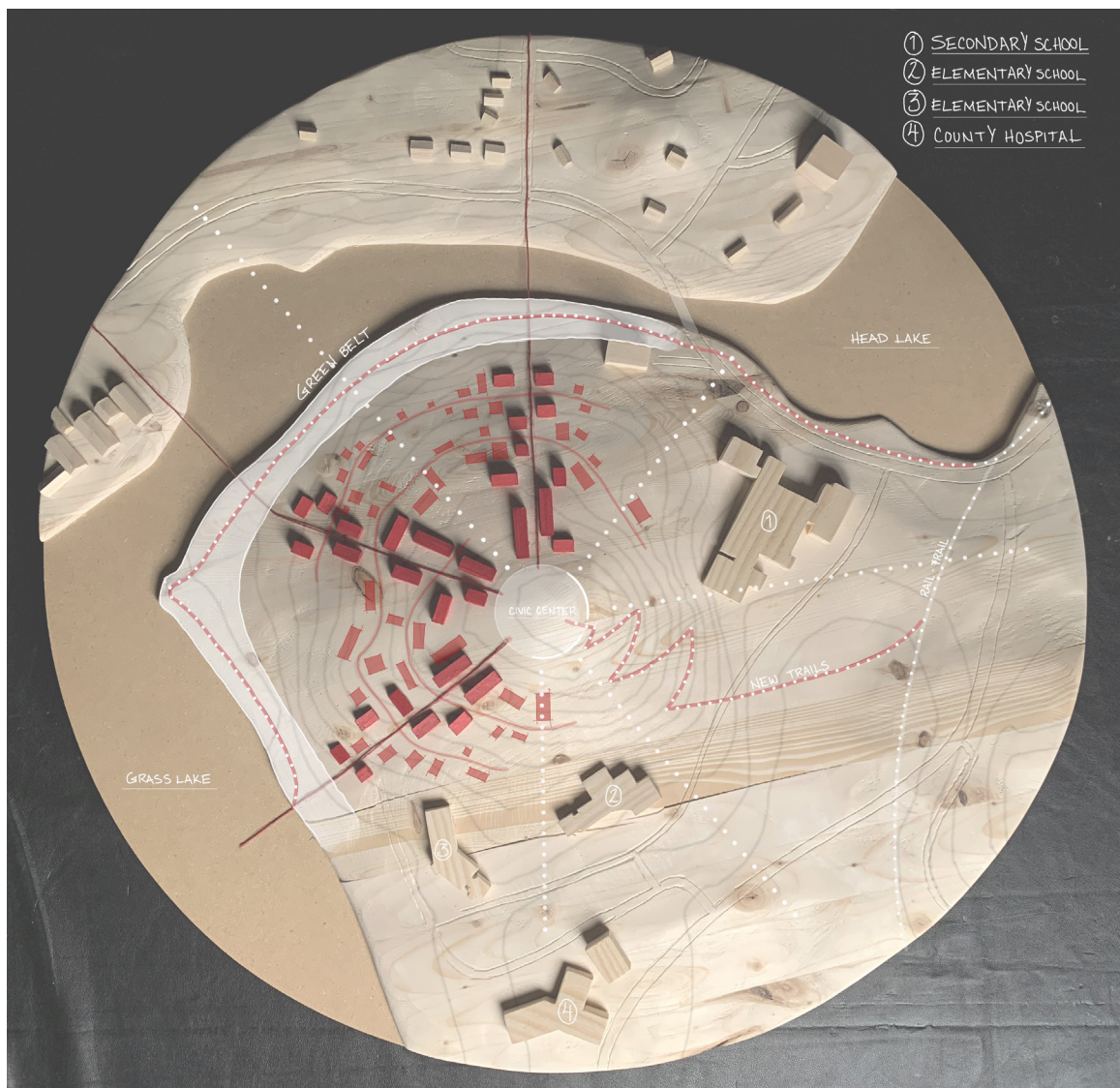


Traversal paths.

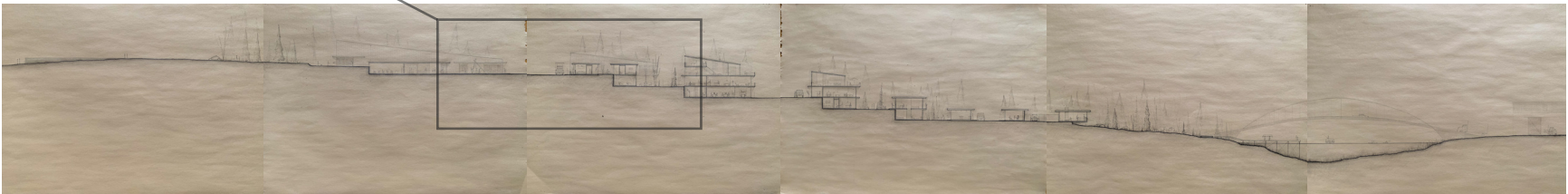
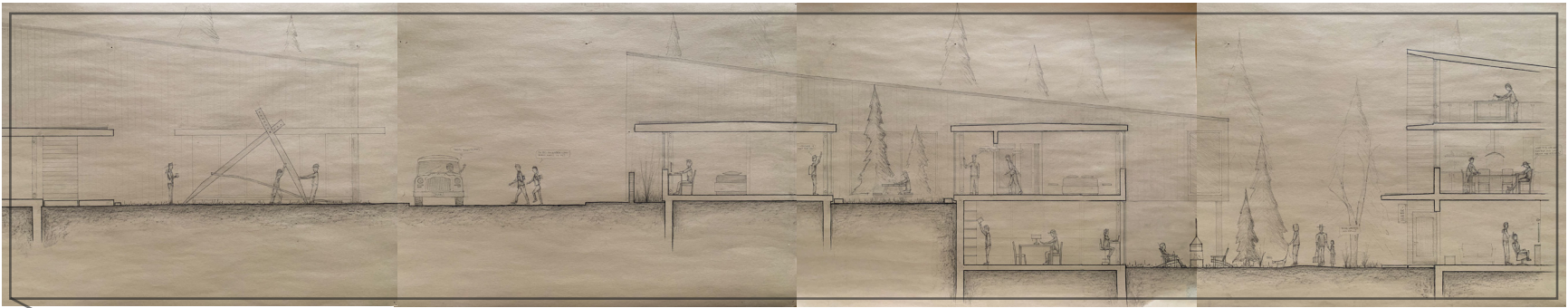


Inhabited paths, linking radial lines.





Hybrid master plan drawing over site model depicts the new center's connection to existing routes, and projects stages of development beyond the scope of this thesis.



Stitched together section of the three site nodes (a,b & c) called out on the site model. Demonstrating the varying degrees of density and publicness as one scales the site. (Keep in mind this drawing is 12 feet long in person).



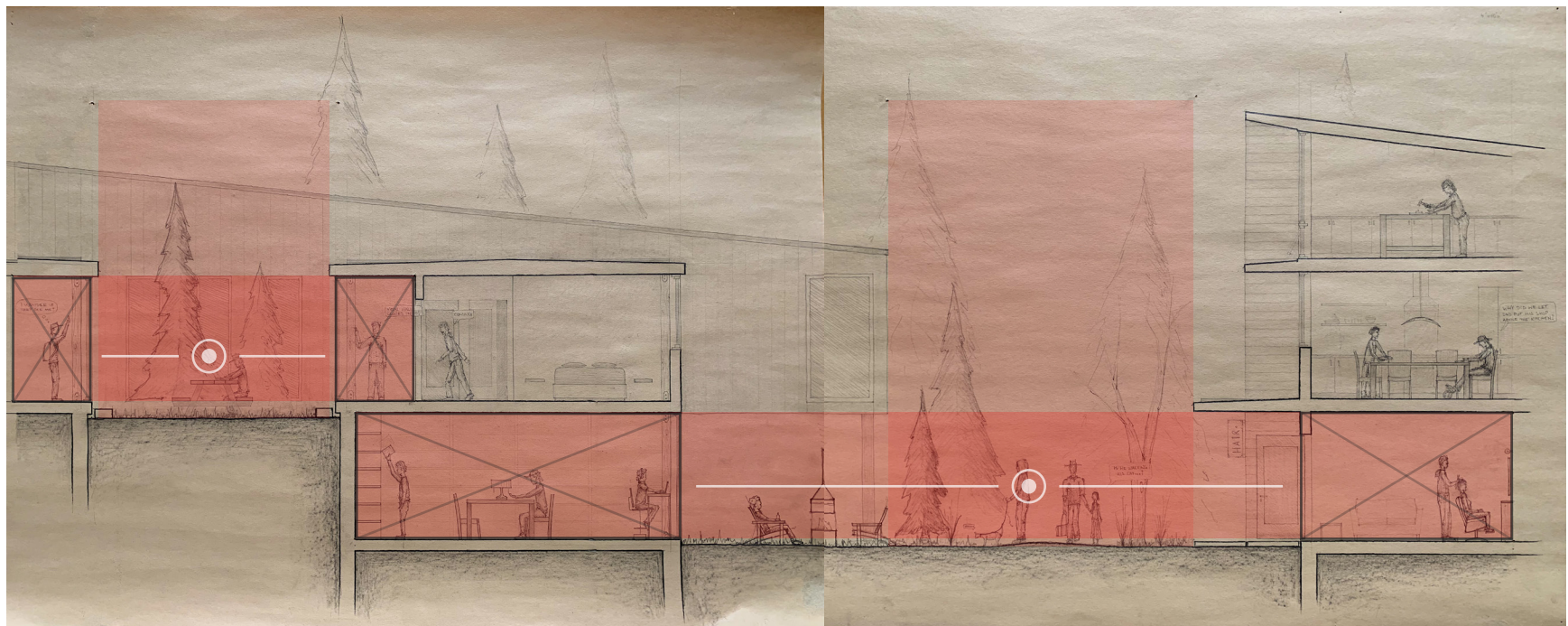
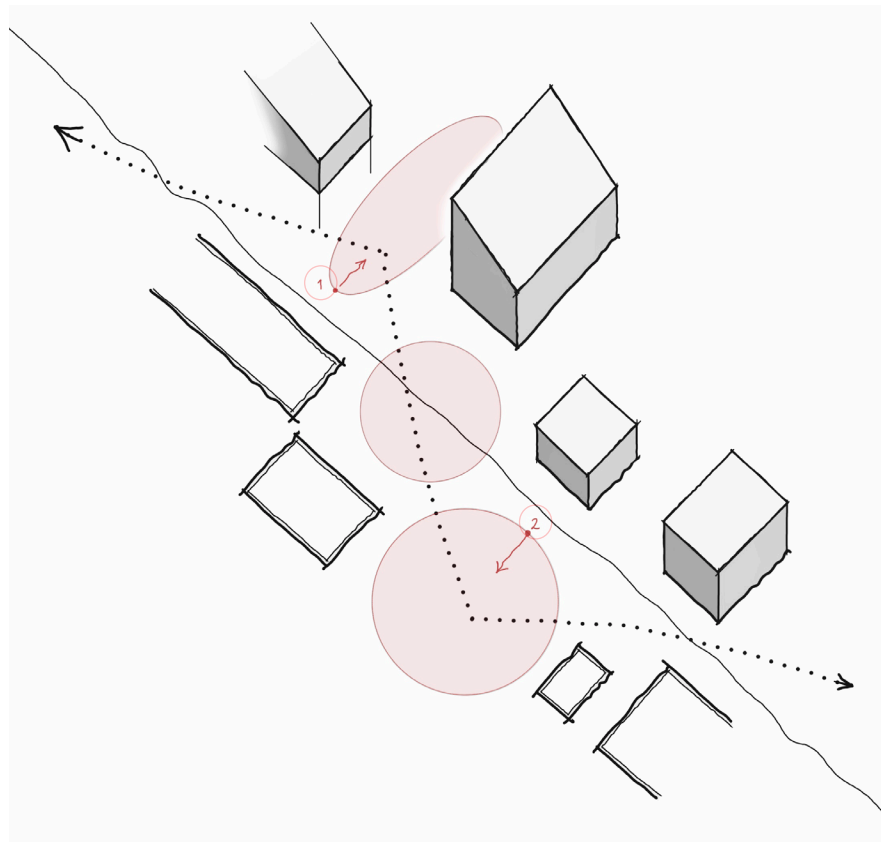


Diagram depicts two different yards, in this particular section, each acting as a link between two programs of similar publicness. On the right, a study commons for students and a small business (shown as hairdresser) are connected by a rather public pedestrian corridor, existing between to service spaces. On the left, a courtyard connects two sections of dorm style dwelling spaces, drawing the user into a relatively private commons.

## Conditions of the Center

Program adjacencies are the architectural characteristics that sparked my theoretical understanding of the yard, but as we move into more human scaled design thinking, we must consider additional architectural characteristics that inform a yard's perceived use as either link or threshold.

Scale, access and transparency are examples of tangible ideas that impact the user's perception of a yard and the degree of appropriate engagement with adjacent structures. While time of day and shelter from elements are examples of intangible ideas that can change the user's perception of a yard and the degree of appropriate engagement with adjacent structures.



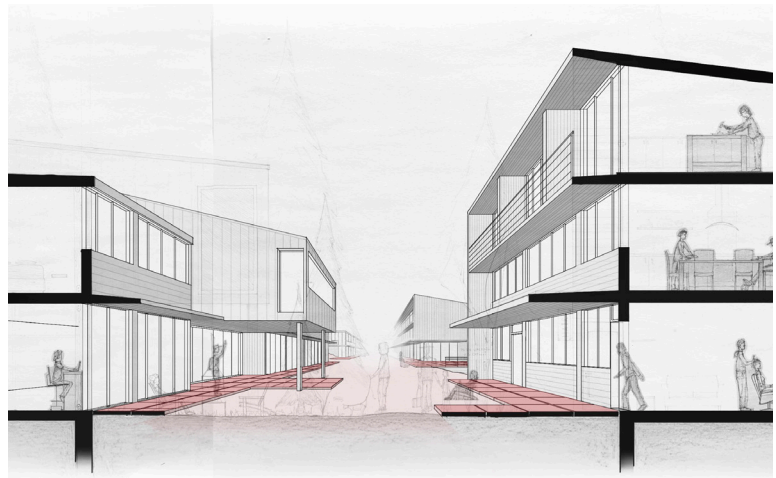
Diagrams of pedestrian pockets or 'yards' framed by structures, identifying location of viewpoints for following drawings.

1

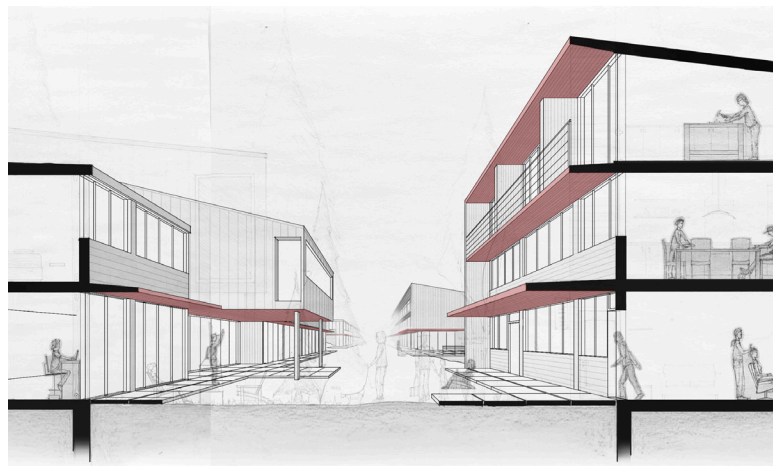
## THE PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR



Transparency - Implies a degree of publicness. Program is visible and an important part of activating the yard.



Access - Pavers invite the pedestrian to engage with the structures along its entire frontage, enabling the user's curiosity.



Scale - Cantilevers quite literally frame the yard, and help to humanize the rather tall structures by breaking the facade up into digestible portions.





The yard, as pedestrian corridor.

2

## THE WORKING STREET



In a Canadian climate, shelter from snow, rain and even sun, is a must. Mapping shelter helps to understand how much more intimate the space/user relationship becomes in foul weather.



At night, the glow of lights on the working street become a beacon to neighbours that you're burning the midnight oil. A dark street would imply a lower level of engagement from the public, and communicate an expectation of privacy



The yard, as working street.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

This thesis began with a desire to design better housing options for those looking to escape the city and settle in rural areas with the booming opportunities in remote work and home based business. However, after some time we came to the realization that a housing type would not be enough to draw people into rural communities. The problem, and the solution, was much larger than housing.

It's important to remember that this thesis is not a 'solution' to the rural dilemma, it is simply *my take*, architecturally representing ideas about how rural places could think differently about the way they grow. About what might happen if rural growth encapsulates all aspects of a place - economy, culture, landscape... And about how this approach might help towns evolve without losing the form that makes them special.

Because of the constant zooming out, and jumping of scale that happened along the way, I fear that this thesis lacks critical research in the urban planning and settlement strategy department. To take this idea about 're-settling' further, I would dive deeper into understanding how (relatively) modern rural settlements established themselves. The more I read about the *what* and *why* of initial establishment, the richer the conversation about 'centers' becomes. For instance, Haliburton's initial pop-up looked for a location with ample access to some obvious criteria (which this thesis addresses), and some less obvious criteria (which this thesis overlooks). Perhaps a deeper analysis of available technologies for example, would provide an explanation for moves that, at the moment don't make sense to me.



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