

THIRD PLACES

Building the
Soft

Infrastructure

ODETTE GIORGEES

THIRD-PLACES BUILDING THE SOFT INFRASTRUCTURE
Public Space Strategies that Soften the Built Environment

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Wladek Fuchs

ABSTRACT

A fruitful city is one layered with a set of three urban fabrics: the primary layer and the secondary layer create the hard infrastructure of a city. These two layers encompass the first place (home, shelter) and the second place (work, school), respectively. The tertiary layer constructs the soft infrastructure, which constitutes the third place. Third places are the in-between spaces of the city that allow for social encounters to occur. Healthy encounters that turn into friendships strengthen a city's soft infrastructure, which American Sociologist Eric Klingenberg defines as the social systems and networks that support and sustain a community. This tertiary layer can be thought of as the third leg which supports and stabilizes a table. Klingenberg argues that most cities are planned to support the hard infrastructure that contributes to the physical attributes of a place, however often times it is the soft infrastructure (the social infrastructure) that enables a city's sustainability and longevity (Klingenberg, 2018). North American suburbs lack the essential third layer needed to sustain life. This thesis investigates the suburbs of Hamilton, Ontario to understand the deficiency of the suburban city. Through methods of on-site observations, community engagements, and urban analysis it is evident that Hamilton, Ontario lacks the soft infrastructure that is much needed for its longevity. This research proposes an intervention framework and public placemaking strategies that allow cities to implement third places at the appropriate scale, density, and use per context. This third-place framework will enable and encourage deficient cities to develop the soft infrastructure of the tertiary layer.

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INTRODUCTION

North American suburbs lack public spaces that promote encounters that turn into meaningful relationships and build the soft infrastructure of a city.

This thesis investigates the role of third places as a strategy for activating public life in the privatized grids of single-use zoned suburbs.

By conducting a case study in the suburbs of Hamilton-Mountain Ontario using a diverse methodology; new understandings of third-place implementation strategies begin to emerge. The aim of this research is to identify urban forms at the appropriate scale and density per context that frame places of civic gathering to attract people.

This thesis is conceptually framed by previous literature on placemaking, public spaces, third place, encounters, and soft infrastructure. The research draws upon the work of the Gehl People Institute on public space and placemaking, including the “Inclusive Healthy Places framework” (Gehl Institute) and David Sim’s “Soft City” (forwarded by Jan Gehl). The Gehl Institute’s body of research focuses on inclusive design processes and architectural forms that support public activity. Additionally, the research utilizes the “What Makes a Great Place framework” developed by the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) to measure the social and programmatic qualities of spaces.

Jan Gehl, in his book “Life Between Buildings,” critiques suburbia for its lack of public places, specifically the absence of third places. He argues that suburban environments prioritize private spaces and personal automobiles, resulting in a disconnected and isolated community. Gehl observes that public life in suburbs is limited to the spaces between buildings, such as streets and parking lots, which are designed primarily for cars rather than pedestrians. This creates a hostile environment for human

interaction and chance encounters, leading to social isolation and loneliness.

Third places, such as cafes, parks, and community centers, are essential in creating a sense of community and promoting social interactions. These places encourage spontaneous social encounters and provide opportunities for people to engage with each other and form social bonds. By incorporating social third places into suburban design, communities can create more vibrant and livable environments, where people can connect with each other and enjoy a sense of belonging.

Eric Klingenberg’s “Palaces for the People” explores the importance of a city’s soft infrastructure in comparison to its hard infrastructure and emphasizes the role of third places as catalysts for building a city’s soft (social) infrastructure. According to Klingenberg, “soft infrastructure refers to the social networks, institutions, and norms that support a community’s collective life” (Klingenberg).

Ray Oldenburg’s “The Great Good Place” (1989) coins the term “third place” and defines it as social surroundings that separate the first place (home) and second place (work). Oldenburg mentions coffee shops and other gathering places as examples of third places, however, in this thesis, the third place is further defined by its ability to bring people together, its architectural form within a built environment, its level of activity, and its level of commercialism.

Urban theorists including Jane Jacobs’ “Eyes on the Street” and Hardt & Negri’s “Commonwealth” also contribute to the understanding of encounters as a means to increase tolerance towards alterity and strengthen social infrastructure.

Questions explored in this thesis include understanding what steps can be taken to incorporate third places in suburban areas with single-use zoning, and what

specific architectural and environmental features define the ideal third place? It is important to consider these questions in order to create built environments that foster a sense of community and promote social connections. By understanding the key components of an ideal third place, urban planners, architects, and community leaders can work together to create spaces that gather people and enhance the overall livability of suburban areas.

Residential districts need to include third-place zones in order to enhance the social and public life of the community. There is a need for increased implementation of third places in both new and existing suburban residential developments. The architectural design of these third places should facilitate gathering in a flexible manner within the existing context, where public activity is not being driven primarily through commercial and consumption purposes, but rather a balanced ratio of completely non-commercialized public spaces and commercialized spaces. Third places should also provide necessary amenities for social activity, including an indoor-outdoor program.

Community engagement research conducted in Hamilton-mountain Ontario concluded that communities living in the residential districts of Hamilton-Mountain suburbs are in need of spaces that support their social life and community gatherings. There simply are not enough public spaces. Existing public spaces within these suburbs do not support and foster social activity to their fullest extent.

According to a study by the National Library of Medicine, people who live in more socially connected communities experience greater well-being and happiness (Jessica Martino et al., 2015). Third places such as cafes, libraries, and parks provide opportunities for people to interact and connect with their neighbors, leading to stronger social bonds and increased feelings of belonging (Oldenburg, 1989).

Furthermore, a lack of third places in suburbs has been linked to increased social isolation and loneliness. According to a study by Cigna, loneliness has become a public health epidemic, with nearly half of Americans reporting feeling alone or left out (Cigna, 2018). Third places can provide a solution by creating opportunities for people to connect and form meaningful relationships.

Research also suggests that third places can have a positive impact on local economies. According to Gensler research public spaces can increase property values and attract new businesses, leading to economic growth and job creation (J.T. Theeuwes, 2021).

The evidence suggests that North American suburbs can benefit greatly from the incorporation of more third places. These spaces can lead to greater well-being, social connection, and economic growth.

Though one can argue that incorporating social third places in the suburbs will increase traffic congestion. While it is true that social third places such as cafes, parks, and community centers can attract people and lead to increased traffic, this can be mitigated through smart urban planning. By incorporating pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and public transit options, people can be encouraged to use alternative modes of transportation. Additionally, the creation of mixed-use developments, where residential and commercial areas coexist, can reduce the need for people to travel long distances for their daily needs.

Others might oppose that suburban residents do not need social third places because they can socialize within their homes. Suburban residents may have space for socializing within their homes, however, social third places can provide unique benefits that cannot be replicated at home. Social third places provide a sense of community, facilitate intergenerational and cross-cultural interactions, and can serve

as a neutral ground for meeting new people. Additionally, social third places can offer amenities such as public Wi-Fi, meeting rooms, and performance spaces that may not be available within people's homes. Nonetheless many suburban residents utilize their first place (home) as a third place by default due to lack of third places.

Developers with differing perspectives may argue that developing third places in the suburbs is too expensive. While creating third places may require investment, the benefits far outweigh the costs. Third places can increase property values, attract new businesses, and create jobs. Additionally, third places can reduce the need for costly public services such as policing and emergency response, as they can serve as informal community hubs where people can self-regulate neighborhoods.

Third places can assist in decreasing crime by increasing visibility and social cohesion, creating well-lit and well-maintained public spaces, and involving local residents in the planning and management of third places, communities can ensure that they are safe and welcoming for everyone. Additionally, research has shown that third places can have a positive impact on mental health, reducing the incidence of stress-related illnesses and substance abuse.

The limitations of this study and framework is when applied to a specific context, the inter-subjective realities of a place must be accounted for according to each individual site. Other potential limitations to consider may include issues with sample size and representativeness, the potential for researcher bias, the generalizability of findings to other contexts, and the limitations of the research methods used.

In the future, research can build upon the gaps and limitations of this thesis by validating the strategies developed in this thesis through the development of third places in multiple contexts.

Key findings in this research include tactical strategies to increase public life in the privatized grids of suburbia. Understanding third places as an architectural typology (form) and understanding third places as a zoning requirement (function).

This thesis research on promoting third places to build social infrastructure in suburbia is primarily of great relevance to the current field of architecture and urban planning. As cities and suburbs continue to undergo growth and transformation, professionals in these fields play a vital role in shaping the built environment to meet the changing needs of communities. Recently there has been a growing interest in social infrastructure as a means of enhancing community resilience, social cohesion, and overall well-being.

This thesis advances the larger body of existing literature by addressing a crucial gap, namely the lack of attention given to the importance of third places in suburbia. By demonstrating the benefits of these spaces and offering practical solutions for integrating them into existing suburban layouts. Through case studies, this research aims to inform and inspire future planning efforts. The work also contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable developments, livability, and community-building, all of which are pressing concerns for architects and urban planners in the 21st century. By advancing this area of research, the thesis has the potential to foster more thoughtful and inclusive urban environments that promote social connection and well-being.

Parts of the findings in this thesis are completed in collaboration with Madison Nelson as her thesis focuses on urban form and missing middle-housing typologies. Though our research and sites remained independent the collaboration allowed us to exchange findings on urban planning strategies to create a cohesive framework and intervention proposal.

The term “third place” was first coined by sociologist Ray Oldenburg in his book *The Great Good Place*, which was published in 1989. In the book, Oldenburg discusses the importance of third places in building community and fostering social interaction. According to Oldenburg, third places are public spaces that are neither home (the first place) nor work (the second place), but are still important for social interaction and community building. Examples of third places include coffee shops, libraries, parks, and community centers. These spaces can offer a sense of identity and place attachment, which can help to foster a sense of pride and ownership in the community. This sense of belonging and attachment is essential for building social cohesion and a sense of community. Oldenburg discusses building the social infrastructure through the promotion of flexible third-place types.

Oldenburg’s principles of the third place:

Neutral — ground public

Leveling place — open to all demographics

Conversation — usually the main activity, however not the only activity

Open, accessible — long opening hours, accommodating the occupants’ needs

Reservoir of regulars — set the tone of the place and welcome newbies

Plain, homely, non-pretentious — making people comfortable

Playful — lots of laughter and banter (Dave Gray, 2018)

According to Klinenberg, third places play a crucial role in building the soft (social) infrastructure of a community by providing opportunities for social interaction and connection. In today’s increasingly individualized and digital society, third places provide a physical space where people can come together and interact face-to-face. This social interaction is essential for building trust, solidarity, and community resilience.

Third places are important for building a sense of community and social cohesion. They provide individuals with an opportunity to interact with others outside of their immediate social circle, fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness. This is particularly important in urban areas, where individuals may feel isolated and disconnected from others.

Third places are important for promoting social diversity and inclusivity. They provide a space for individuals from different backgrounds and cultures to interact and engage with one another. This helps to break down social barriers and promote understanding and tolerance between different groups.



Urban sprawl refers to the expansion of urban areas into surrounding rural or undeveloped land. This phenomenon has become increasingly prevalent in recent years, as cities have grown and spread outwards. One of the major drivers of urban sprawl is single-use zoning, which restricts the use of land to a single purpose, such as residential or commercial. In this essay, I will explore the ways in which single-use zoning leads to urban sprawl.

Single-use zoning is a common approach to land use regulation in many cities. It involves dividing the city into zones, each of which is designated for a specific use, such as residential, commercial, or industrial. While this approach can be effective in some cases, it often leads to the development of isolated, car-dependent neighborhoods, which in turn contributes to urban sprawl.

One of the main ways in which single-use zoning leads to urban sprawl is by separating residential areas from commercial and industrial areas. This separation often leads to longer commutes and increased reliance on cars, as people must travel further to access the services and amenities they need. This increased reliance on cars

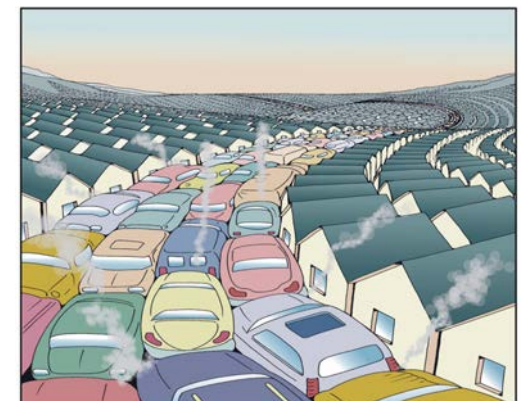
also contributes to traffic congestion and air pollution, which can have negative impacts on public health and the environment. Another way in which single-use zoning leads to urban sprawl is by encouraging the development of large, low-density subdivisions on the outskirts of cities. These subdivisions often consist of large, single-family homes on large lots, which require extensive hard infrastructure and services to support. This type of development can be expensive for municipalities to provide, and can also lead to the loss of agricultural or natural lands.

In addition to these negative impacts, urban sprawl can also have social and economic consequences. Sprawling cities can be more expensive to maintain and can be less efficient than compact, walkable cities. They can also be more socially isolated, as people are less likely to interact with their neighbors and more likely to rely on cars to access services and amenities.

To address the issues of urban sprawl, cities must adopt more holistic approaches to land use regulation, such as mixed-use zoning and transit-oriented development, which promote compact, walkable neighborhoods that are accessible to a variety of services and amenities.



(Fig. 1.1) Source: Strong Towns



(Fig. 1.2) Source: John Pritchett

URBAN SPRAWL

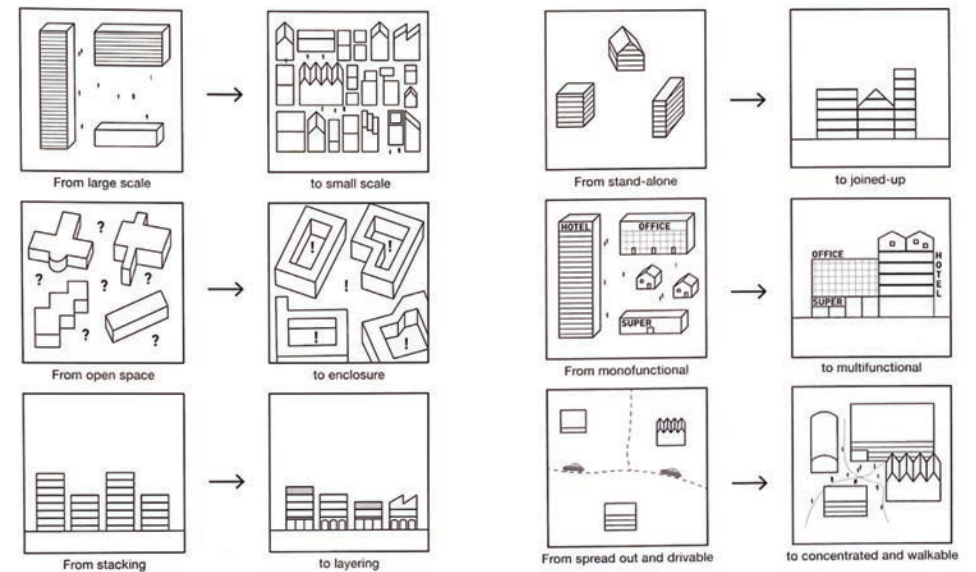
Soft cities are characterized by a degree of density and layering, which allows for a mix of uses, activities, and social interactions.

Density refers to the concentration of people, buildings, and activities in a given area. High density is often associated with urban areas, while low density is more commonly found in suburban or rural areas. Density is a critical factor in creating sustainable and livable cities. High-density cities are more energy-efficient, as they require less energy to heat, cool, and light buildings. They are also more walkable, as residents have access to a wide range of amenities and services within a short distance. High-density cities are also more socially vibrant, as they encourage social interactions and a sense of community.

Layering refers to the arrangement of buildings, spaces, and activities in a vertical hierarchy. In a layered city, different activities are placed on different levels, creating a complex and dynamic urban environment. Layering allows for a mix of uses, such as residential, commercial, and cultural activities, to occur in the same area.

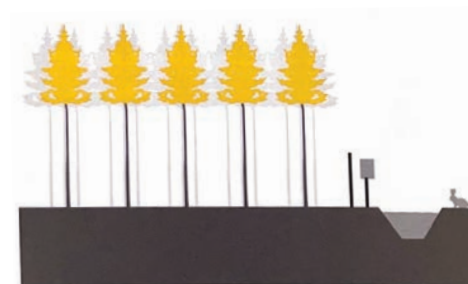
Sim argues that density and layering are essential for creating soft cities that are adaptable and responsive to the needs of their residents. Soft cities are not static or fixed, but rather dynamic and evolving. They are able to respond to changing social, economic, and environmental conditions.

By embracing density and layering, urban planners can create soft cities that are truly livable and sustainable.



DENSITY + LAYERING

(Fig. 1.3) Source: Soft City. David Sim



Plantation

The whole = Sum of parts

(Fig. 1.4) Source: Soft City. David Sim



Natural forest

The whole > Sum of parts

(Co-location of different elements)

The PPS framework “What Makes a Great Public Space?” addresses the concept of placemaking and sense of place by outlining the key characteristics and qualities that make a public space successful and vibrant. These characteristics and qualities, such as accessibility, comfort, and social engagement, help to create a sense of place and contribute to the overall livability and quality of life of a community.

The Inclusive Healthy Places Framework developed by the Jan Gehl Institute provides a comprehensive approach to designing urban spaces that are inclusive, healthy, and sustainable. This framework addresses placemaking in several ways.

The framework is based on a human-centered approach to design that prioritizes the needs and preferences of people. By placing people at the center of the design process, the framework ensures that the resulting urban spaces are designed to meet the needs of the community they serve. This approach also emphasizes the importance of engaging with the community throughout the design process to ensure that their needs are understood and incorporated into the final design.

The framework provides guidelines for creating walkable, bikeable, and transit-friendly spaces, as well as guidelines for creating public spaces that are safe, comfortable, and accessible to all.

The framework recognizes that urban spaces must be sustainable, both environmentally and socially. Creating spaces that are designed to reduce carbon emissions and promote environmental sustainability, while also ensuring that they are socially sustainable by promoting social cohesion, equity, and inclusivity.



(Fig. 1.5) Source: What Makes a Great Public Space Framework. PPS



(Fig. 1.6) Source: The Inclusive Healthy Places Framework. The Jan Gehl Institute

Social encounters within a city are a crucial aspect of urban life. These encounters occur when individuals gather in public spaces, such as parks, piazzas, and streets, and engage with one another in a variety of ways. These encounters can be spontaneous or planned, and can range from casual conversations to organized events.

Jane Jacobs' book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, argues that vibrant, diverse, and dense cities are essential for fostering social interactions and creating a sense of community. Jacobs believed that cities should be designed to promote walkability, with a mix of residential and commercial buildings, to encourage people to spend time outside and engage with one another. Jacobs saw cities as organic, living systems that relied on the interactions of individuals to thrive.

One of the key ideas in Jacobs' theory is the concept of the "sidewalk ballet." This refers to the constant movement and activity that occurs on sidewalks, with people going about their daily lives, interacting with one another, and forming informal social connections. Jacobs believed that the sidewalk ballet was a crucial aspect of city life, providing opportunities for encounters and fostering a sense of social trust and cohesion.

Another significant urban theory related to social encounters is that of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, as presented in their book, *Empire*. Hardt and Negri argue that the city is a site of resistance against global capitalist forces, and that social encounters are a key part of this resistance. They see the city as a space where individuals can come together and challenge dominant power structures through collective action and organization. Hardt and Negri's theory emphasizes the importance of creating spaces where people can gather and interact freely.

Public spaces, such as parks and plazas, are crucial for fostering social encounters, as they provide a forum for individuals to express their opinions and engage in dialogue with one another. They also stress the importance of creating spaces that are open and accessible to everyone, regardless of social or economic status.

The design of public spaces, streetscapes, and buildings can influence the types of social encounters that occur within a city and how they contribute to the city's soft infrastructure.

Social encounters within the built environment can take many forms. They can range from casual interactions with strangers on the street to more structured events and gatherings in public spaces. Some common forms of social encounters include:

Informal encounters: These are casual interactions that occur spontaneously between individuals on the street or in public spaces. They can include conversations with strangers, interactions with street vendors, or chance encounters with acquaintances.

Planned encounters: These are more structured events that are organized in public spaces or other venues. They can include concerts, festivals, street fairs, and other events that bring people together for a shared experience.

Collaborative encounters: These are interactions that occur when individuals come together to work on a shared project or initiative. They can include community clean-up efforts, neighborhood associations, and other forms of collective action.

Educational encounters: These are interactions that occur within educational institutions, such as schools, universities, and museums. They can include lectures, workshops, and other educational events that provide opportunities for

individuals to learn from one another.

Cultural encounters: These are interactions that occur within cultural institutions, such as theaters, art galleries, and museums. They can include performances, exhibitions, and other cultural events that provide opportunities for individuals to engage with different cultures and perspectives.

Each of these forms of social encounters has the potential to contribute to the soft infrastructure of a city in different ways. Informal encounters, for example, can help to create a sense of social trust and cohesion, as individuals develop relationships with one another over time. Planned encounters, on the other hand, can help to build a sense of community identity and pride, as residents come together to celebrate shared traditions and experiences.

Collaborative encounters can also help to build social capital within a city, as individuals work together to address common challenges and improve their neighborhoods. Educational encounters and cultural encounters, meanwhile, can help to foster a sense of diversity and inclusivity within a city, as individuals learn from and engage with different perspectives and cultures.

To strengthen the soft infrastructure of a city through social encounters, it is important to design public spaces, streetscapes, and buildings that are conducive to these interactions. This can include designing streets that prioritize pedestrian activity and creating public spaces that are accessible and inviting to all members of the community.

It is also important to support community organizations and initiatives that promote social encounters within the built environment. This can include providing funding for cultural and educational institutions, supporting neighborhood associations and community

gardens, and creating programs that encourage residents to collaborate on neighborhood improvement projects.

Social encounters within the built environment are a crucial aspect of a city's soft infrastructure. By creating opportunities for informal and planned encounters, supporting collaborative initiatives, and fostering educational and cultural exchanges, we can build more resilient and socially connected cities. Through intentional design and community support, we can create public spaces, streetscapes, and buildings that encourage social encounters and contribute to the social fabric of our cities.

The current forms of social encounters that exist in North American suburbs vary widely depending on the specific community and its characteristics. In general, however, suburban social encounters tend to be more private and informal than those in urban areas. This is due in part to the larger lot sizes and lower population densities of suburbs, which create more physical distance between neighbors.

Potential forms of social encounter that may occur in suburban areas is the informal gathering, such as impromptu block parties or neighborhood barbecues. These events are typically organized by residents themselves, rather than by formal neighborhood associations or community organizations. While they can be effective at bringing people together, they may not be accessible to everyone in the community, particularly those who are new to the area or who may not have established social networks.

Another form of potential social encounter in suburban areas is the planned community event, such as a farmers market, concert series, or holiday festival. These events are often organized by local governments or community organizations, and are designed to bring people together around a common interest or theme. While they can be effective at fostering a sense

of community, they may be limited in their reach, as they typically require residents to travel to a specific location or event.

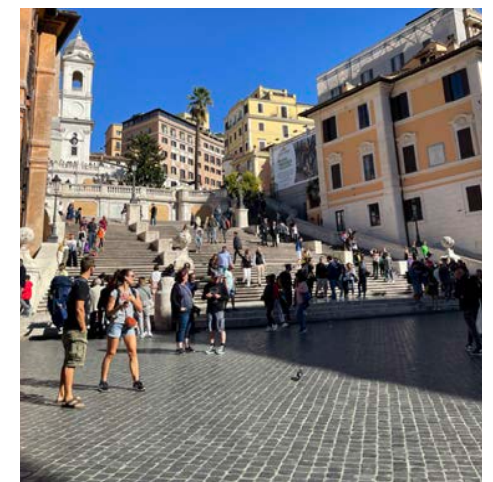
A third potential form of social encounter in suburban areas is the formal community organization, such as a neighborhood association or homeowners' association. These organizations are typically run by elected or appointed volunteers, and are responsible for organizing events, communicating with residents, and advocating for the community's interests. While they can be effective at building community, they may also be exclusive or limited in their reach, as they may only represent a subset of the community or require dues or fees to participate.

To increase social encounters when planning North American suburbs, there are several strategies that can be employed. One approach is to design communities with more public spaces, such as parks, plazas, and community gardens. These spaces can serve as gathering places for residents, and can encourage spontaneous social encounters.

Another strategy is to create more mixed-use developments that combine residential, commercial, and community spaces in a single location. This can help to create a sense of place and identity, and can encourage residents to walk or bike rather than drive. By reducing car traffic and encouraging pedestrian activity, mixed-use developments can also create more opportunities for social encounters.

A third strategy is to create more formal community organizations that are accessible and inclusive to all residents. This can be achieved by ensuring that leadership positions are open to all residents, regardless of their social status or financial means. It can also be achieved by providing resources and support to help residents organize and manage their own events and activities.

The current forms of social encounters in North American suburbs tend to be more private and informal than those in urban areas. By fostering a sense of community and connection, suburban areas can become more sustainable, and enjoyable places to live.



Vernacular architecture, which refers to the traditional, local building styles and techniques developed by communities over time, can play a significant role in contributing to a sense of place identity.

Reflecting local culture and history, vernacular architecture is often closely tied to the cultural and historical traditions of a community, and can therefore serve as a visual representation of a community's identity. For example, Mar Mattai Monastery (Fig 1.7) utilizes the landscape to form its architecture. The UNESCO World Heritage Site is built into the side of a mountain, with many of its structures carved directly into the rock. This technique allows the monastery to blend seamlessly into the surrounding environment

Through its use of local building materials. Much of the building is constructed from local stone, which is not only abundant in the area material. The use of local materials creates a sense of continuity and familiarity with the surrounding landscape. Vernacular architecture is often based on tried-and-true building techniques that have been used in a

region for generations. As a result, buildings constructed in the local vernacular style can create a sense of continuity and familiarity that contributes to a community's sense of identity.

Mar Mattai Monastery uses vernacular architecture to create a functional and efficient living space for its inhabitants. The monastery is made up of a series of interconnected buildings, including living quarters, churches, and other communal spaces, all designed to meet the specific needs of the monks who lived there. The buildings are arranged in a way that maximizes natural light and ventilation, while also providing privacy and security.

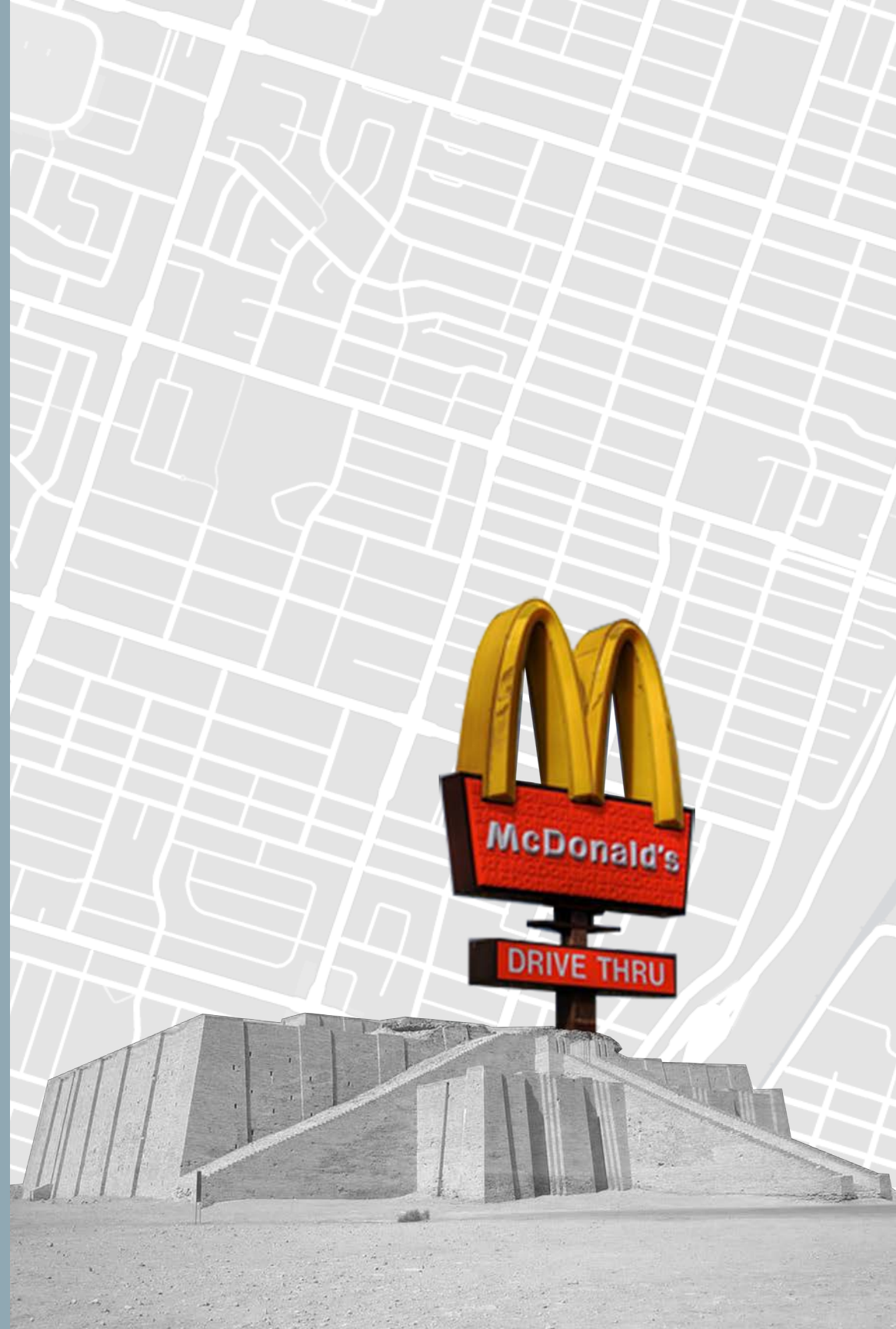
Vernacular architecture can help to define a sense of place by creating a physical environment that reflects the unique characteristics of a region or community.

Overall, vernacular architecture can contribute to a community's sense of place identity by reflecting local culture and history, creating a sense of continuity and familiarity, and providing a tangible expression of the unique characteristics of a region or community.



(Fig. 1.7) Mar Mattai Monastery Source: Mesopotamian Heritage

EVOLUTION OF CIVIC GATHERING



The evolution of civic gathering in relation to public spaces can be traced back to the cradle of civilization in ancient Mesopotamia, where communal spaces served as a vital element of social and political life. Over time, the evolution of public spaces has been influenced by social, cultural, and economic factors, leading to the development of various public space typologies, from traditional marketplaces and religious centers to contemporary commercialized spaces.

In ancient times, communal spaces such as city squares, open-air markets, and religious centers were the primary gathering places for civic and social events. These spaces played a crucial role in political and social life, as they

were used for public assemblies, religious ceremonies, and cultural events. In Athens, for example, the Agora served as a meeting place for citizens to discuss public issues, exchange ideas, and participate in civic life.

The Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian capitals, from the second half of the second millennium until the fall of Assyria around the mid-first millennium, were founded and built following the models of the previous southern cities. Walls, palaces and temples with a ziggurat characterized Assyrian cities. However, the Assyrian cities had a space that had not existed before: gardened public spaces, different from the palace gardens. These gardens must have been similar, profusely endowed with a large variety of trees, including fruit

trees. The imperial gardens could only be enjoyed by the emperor, in contrast to the public gardens: areas within the urban fabric, at street junction, like today's central squares, which freed spaces opposite some temples. No building spoiled or constrained them. Neither were they residual spaces but rather well planned within an often orthogonal layout in the Neo-Assyrian cities founded. Access to these collective spaces was free. (Azara, 2018)

A symbol of peace and prosperity. The gardens of the Assyrian kings weren't simply beautiful spaces; they demonstrated the ability to maintain peace and prosperity within the Assyrian empire. One scene from a palace relief

shows Assyrian King Ashurbanipal reclining on an elaborate couch in a garden beside his queen. Musicians entertain the royal couple and food is served by attendants. A lush backdrop of pine trees, date palms and grapevines evoke fertility and regeneration. (The British Museum, 2018)

During the Middle Ages, public spaces were dominated by religious centers, with churches and Gothic cathedrals serving as the primary gathering places for communities. However, with the rise of trade and commerce, marketplaces and public squares gained prominence, serving as the hub of social and economic activity.

C. 2000 BC
Assyrian Gardens

C. 600 BC
Athenian Agora

C. 500 BC
Roman Forum

C. 25 BC
Thermae

Ziggurat
C. 2200 BC

Amphitheaters
C. 70 AD



The Renaissance period saw the development of public spaces as works of art, with public squares and fountains designed as visual expressions of civic pride and cultural identity. This trend continued through the 18th and 19th centuries, with the emergence of public parks and gardens as social spaces that promoted relaxation and recreation.

In the 20th century, the development of public spaces was influenced by urbanization and modernization. As cities grew, public spaces became increasingly commercialized, with shopping centers and malls replacing

traditional marketplaces and public squares as the primary gathering places. This trend has continued into the modern era, with the proliferation of commercialized spaces such as shopping malls, theme parks, and entertainment centers.

While commercialized spaces have provided new opportunities for social and cultural gatherings, they have also raised concerns about the loss of public spaces as forums for civic engagement and expression of the zeitgeist.

The commercialization of public spaces has led to the privatization of civic life,

with corporate interests dominating public discourse and civic participation. To address these concerns, some efforts have been made to reclaim public spaces as sites of civic engagement and community building. This has led to the development of community gardens, public art installations, and other initiatives that promote community participation and social interaction.

The evolution of civic gathering in relation to public spaces has been shaped by social, cultural, and economic factors. From the communal spaces of ancient times to the commercialized

spaces of the modern era, public spaces have played a vital role in shaping social and political life. While commercialized spaces have provided new opportunities for social and cultural gatherings, efforts must be made to reclaim public spaces as sites of civic engagement and community building.

While the increasing commercialization of public spaces has raised concerns about the loss of public spaces as forums for civic engagement and political discourse, efforts must be made to reclaim public spaces as sites of civic engagement and community building.



1330
Renaissance Plaza

1784
Shopping Arcades

1950
Local Diners

1971
Starbucks Chains

Grand Bazaar
1455

Shopping Streets
1811

Shopping Malls
1956

This thesis will explore the role of third places in building the soft infrastructure of communities. Soft infrastructure refers to the intangible social and cultural systems that support a community's well-being, including norms, values, and civic engagement.

By examining third places as catalysts for building soft infrastructure, this thesis aims to develop a public space typology that supports civic gathering and expression of the zeitgeist, or the spirit of the times; divert from consumerist based suburban design approaches to public spaces .

Through case studies and various investigations, this thesis will examine spatial opportunities in North American suburbs for implementing third places.

The thesis will also investigate the research question of how third places can create opportunities for diverse groups to interact promoting active citizenship within suburban communities, and foster a sense of belonging and place identity.

Ultimately, this thesis seeks to contribute to the understanding of how third places can shape the soft infrastructure of suburban neighborhoods, and how design and planning can support the development of these vital public spaces.

02

INVESTIGATION

2.0 METHODS INTRODUCTION

To investigate the sensory experiences of third places, this thesis adopts mixed methods research approaches that combine quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. Diverse methods will be used to investigate third places in urban environments including oil painting visual analysis, sound animation analysis, and mapping various spatial realities and opportunities. These methods will provide a comprehensive understanding of the sensory experiences of third places including sound and visual interest and how they contribute to the social fabric of urban communities.

Through the integration of these methods, this thesis aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the importance of third places in urban design and planning.

“ First life, then spaces, then buildings - the other way around never works. ”

- Jan Gehl

Feeling Third Places (Oil Paintings)

This series of impressionist oil paintings captures the essence of a third place.

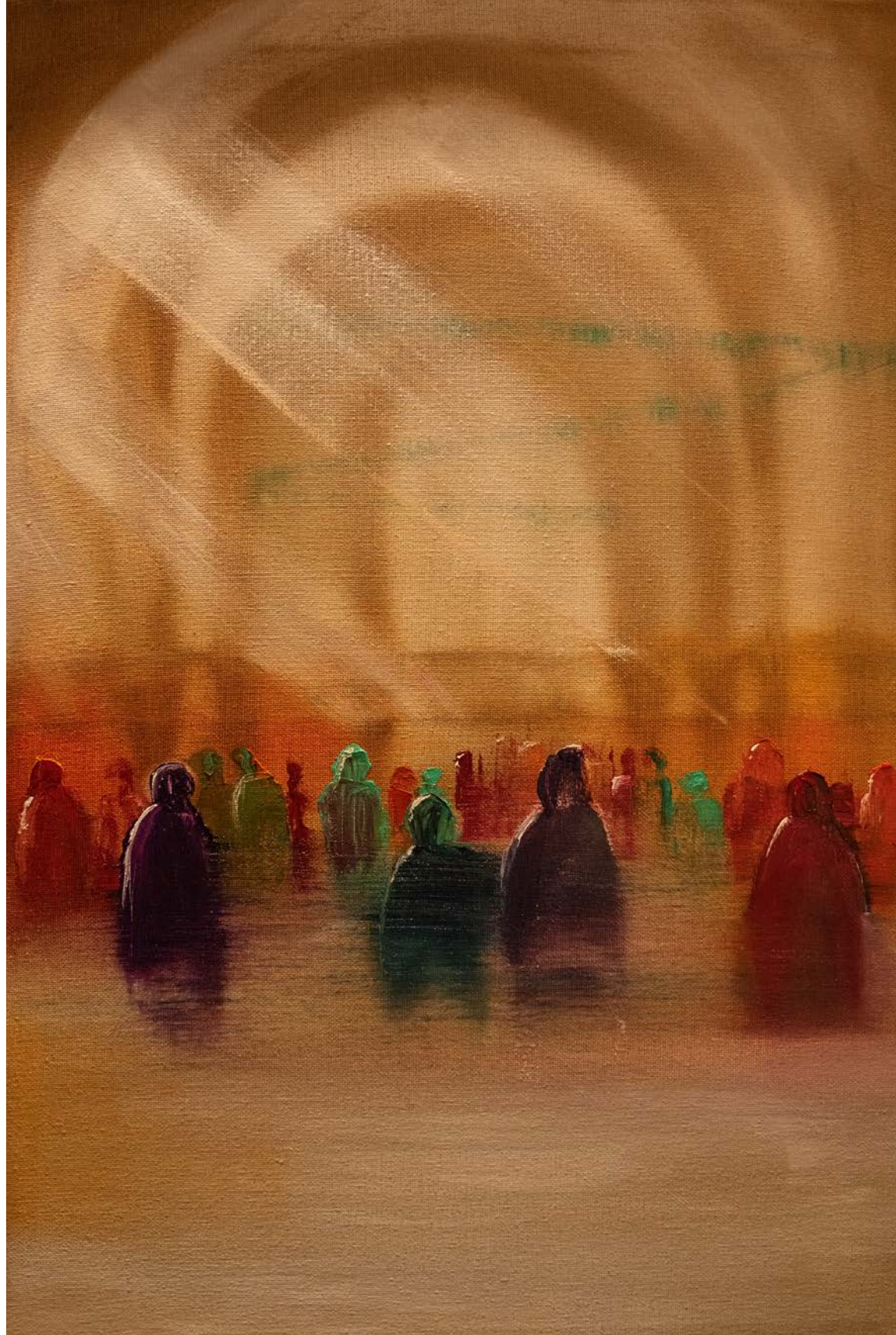
Questions explored throughout the process of the paintings include

what does a third place feel like?

How do people congregate in third places?

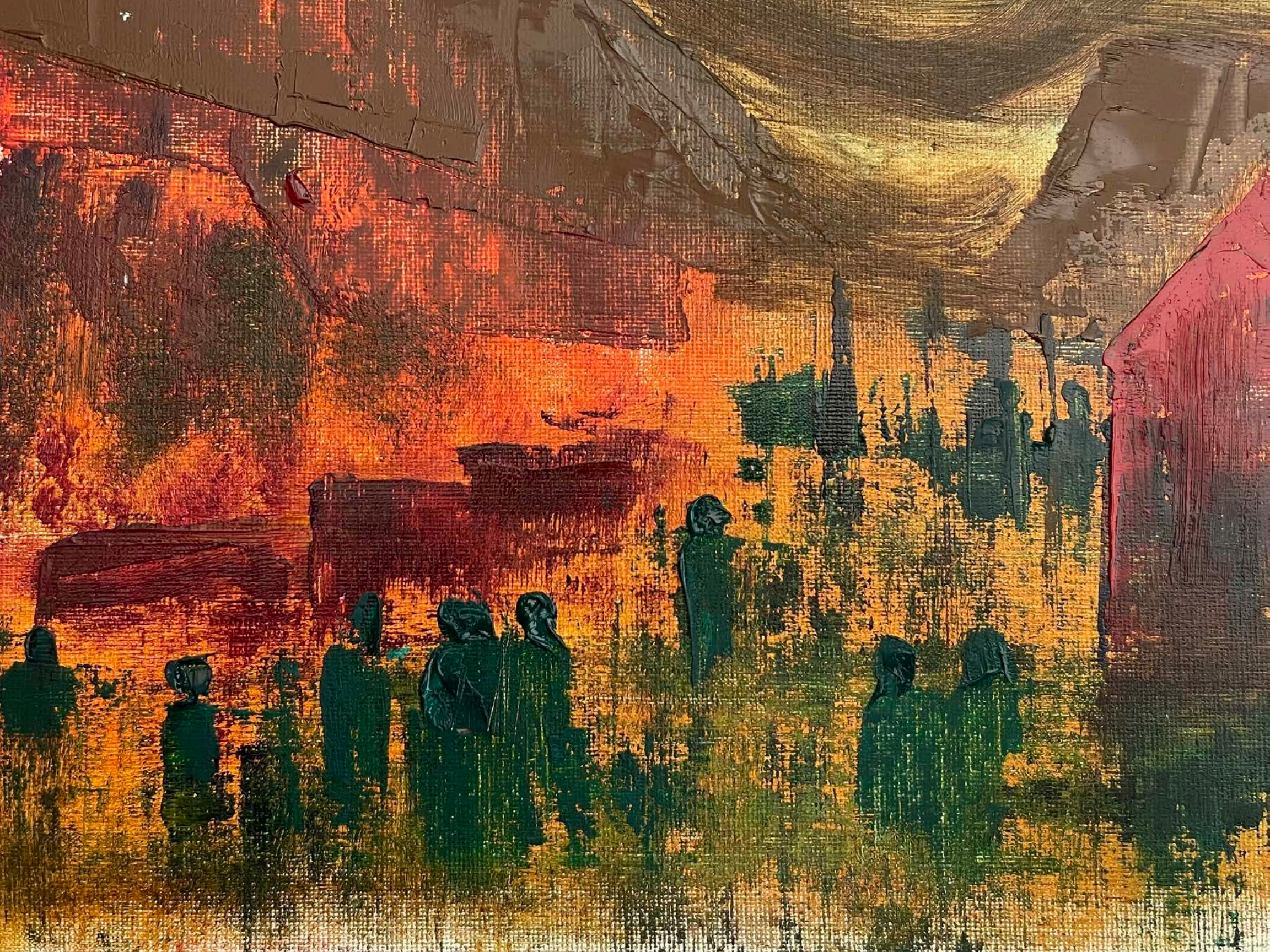
How do people move through third places?

Throughout the process of this painting, I aimed to capture the subjective qualities of third place that one cannot objectify. These subjective qualities including charm, connectivity, and the movement of human activity.













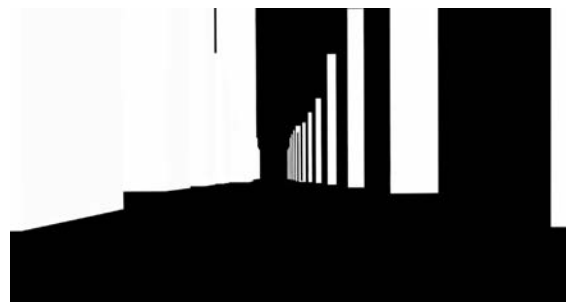
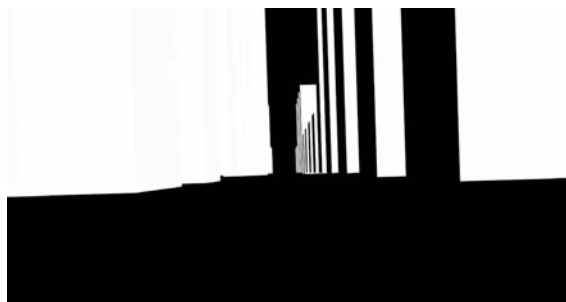
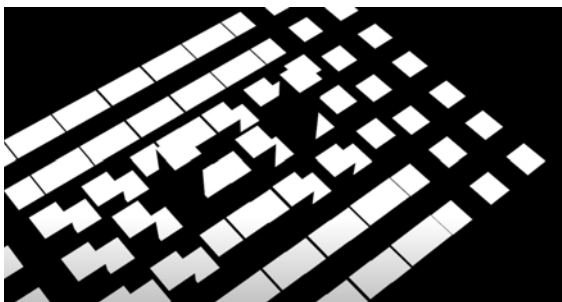
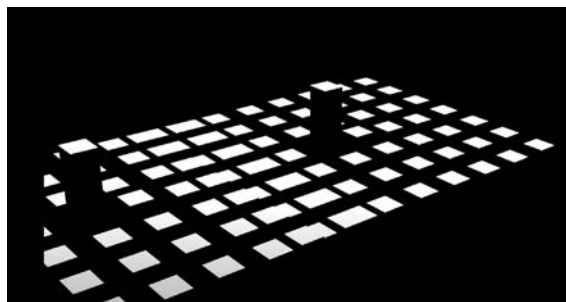
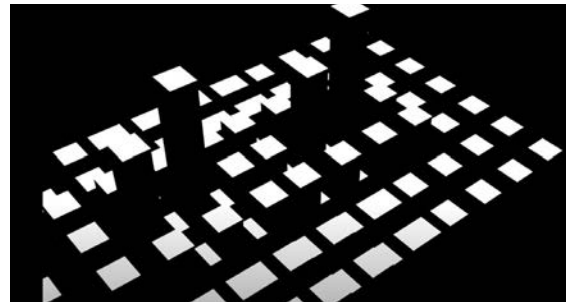
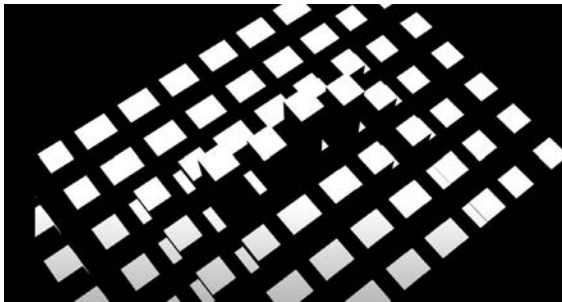
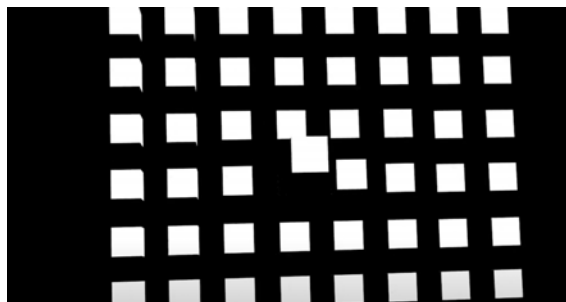
Hearing Third Places (Sound Animation)

In a continuous quest to find the essence of a third place, this exercise explores the sound of a third place. I previously captured the feeling of a third place through a series of impressionist paintings, like the paintings, I wanted to capture sounds of a third place. The sound captured in this animation uses the general noise of the Venice canals. The sound of the Venice canals is visually abstracted through motion animated objects that react to the sound waves of the human activity through the canals. The visually abstracted sound animations invokes the internal emotional feeling of a third place.

Third places move

Third places grow

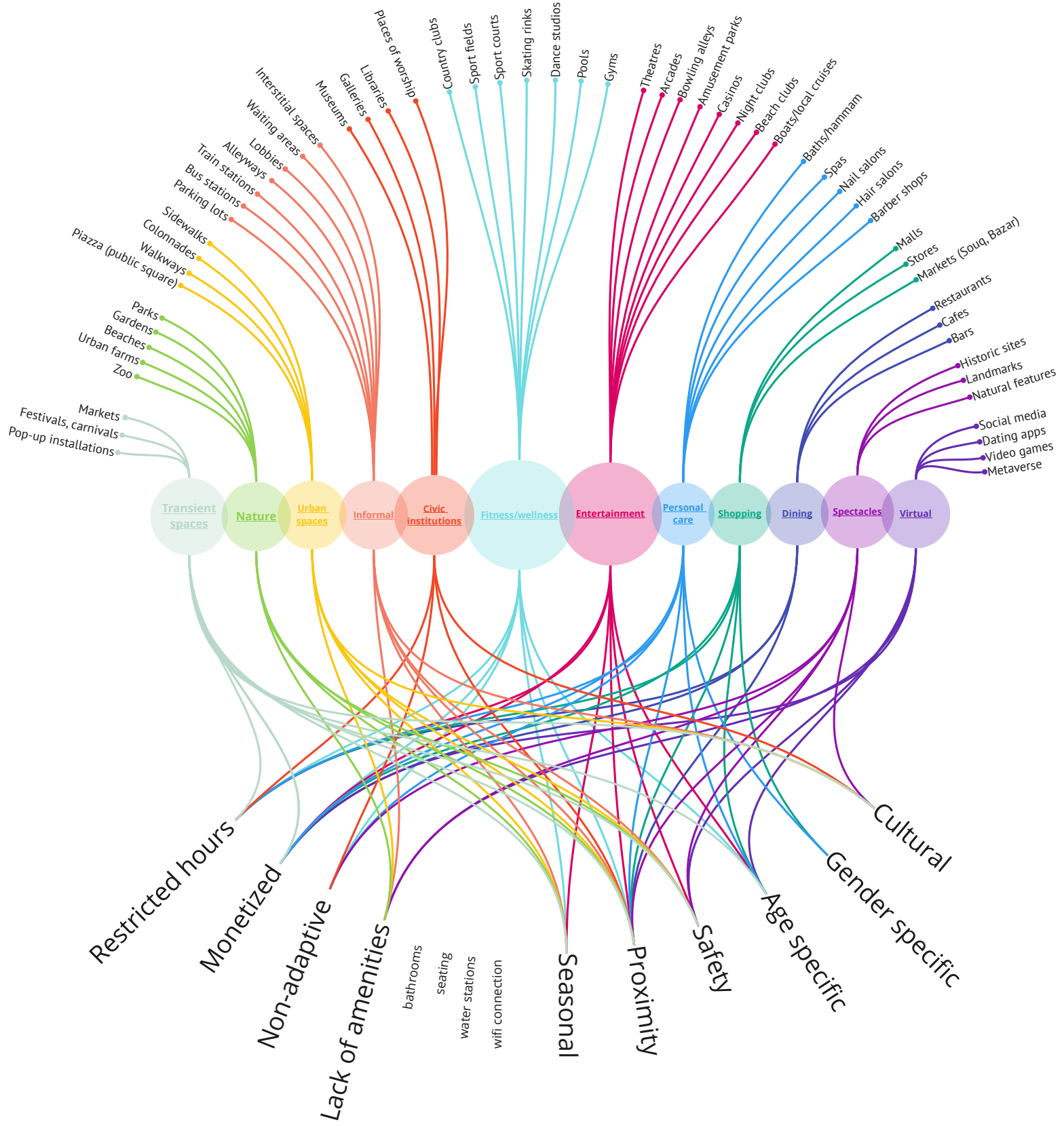
Third places entice a desire for exploration.



2.3 METHOD 3: THIRD PLACE EVALUATION

Building upon Ray Oldenburg's principles of the third place and Eric Klinenbergs notion of the soft infrastructure, the following analysis begins to distill the existing typologies of third places, including the programmed **activity** and its **limitations** for users.

This evaluation framework was then applied to multiple cities including Volterra Italy, Detroit Michigan, and Hamilton-Mountain Ontario, in order to measure the level of **diversity** and **density** of third places in these different built environments.



EXISTING THIRD PLACE TYPOLOGIES & CATEGORIES

Transient spaces

- Markets
- Festivals, carnivals
- Pop-up installations

Nature

- Parks
- Gardens
- Beaches
- Urban farms
- Zoo

Urban spaces

- Sidewalks
- Colonnades
- Piazza (public square)
- Walkways & boardwalks

Informal

- Lobbies
- Alleyways
- Train stations
- Bus stations
- Parking lots

Civic institutions

- Places of worship
- Libraries
- Galleries
- Museums

Fitness/wellness

- Gyms
- Pools
- Sport courts
- Sport fields
- Dance studios
- Skating rinks
- Country clubs

Entertainment

- Amusement parks
- Bowling alleys
- Theaters
- Arcades
- Casinos
- Night clubs
- Boats/local cruises
- Beach clubs

Personal care

- Baths/hammam
- Nail salons
- Spas
- Hair salons
- Barber shops

Shopping

- Malls
- Markets (Souq, Bazar)
- Stores

Dining

- Restaurants
- Cafes
- Bars

Spectacles

- Historic sites
- Landmarks
- Natural features

Virtual

- Social media
- Dating apps
- Video games
- Meta-verse

LIMITATIONS

Restricted hours - the space is not available for use anytime of the day

Monetized - requires some form of payment for spaces to be used or enjoyed to the fullest extent

Non-adaptive - the architectural form of the space is not adaptable to multiple programs in order for the space to be utilized multi-functionally by users

Lack of amenities

- Bathrooms
- Water stations
- Seating
- Wi-fi connection

Seasonal - the space is not well activated throughout all seasons

Proximity - the space is not within a walking distance or a 5-minute drive

Safety - the space lacks some form of security

Gender specific - the space is designed spatially or programed functionally towards a specific gender

Age specific - the space is designed spatially or programed functionally towards a specific age group, or is not functional to all age groups

Cultural - the space might be limited to a specific cultural group

The issue is not black or white. None of these limitations are **bad**, however, a lack of **density & diversity** in third-place typologies leads to an increased **limitation** of public space use across multiple demographics

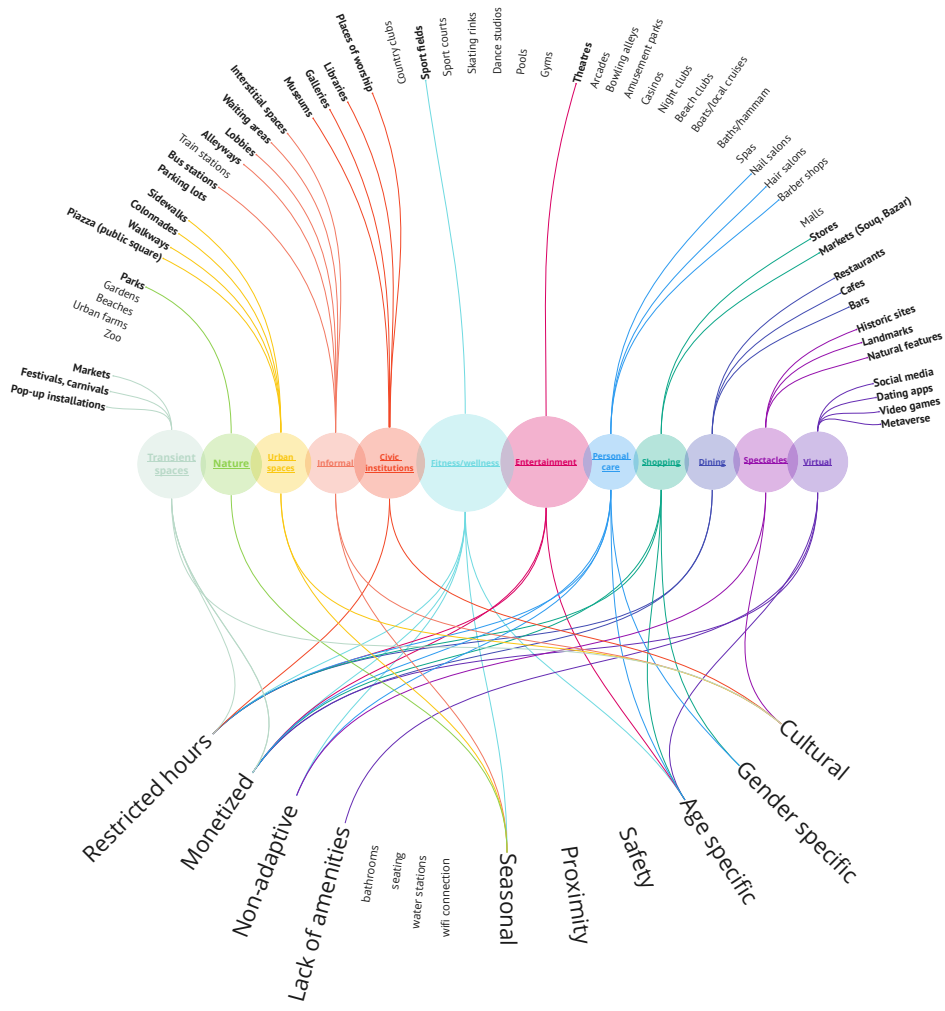
2.4 METHOD 4: VOLTERRA CASE STUDY







(Fig. 2.2) third place evaluation - Volterra map



TOTAL THIRD-PLACE TYPES = 12

(Fig. 2.3) third place evaluation - Volterra



PIAZZA DEI PRIORI

Piazza dei Priori in Volterra, Italy is a prime example of a multifunctional and flexible public space that encourages civic gathering and expression. This historic square is situated in the heart of the city and is surrounded by medieval buildings. The square is used for a variety of events and activities, ranging from cultural festivals to markets and outdoor concerts.

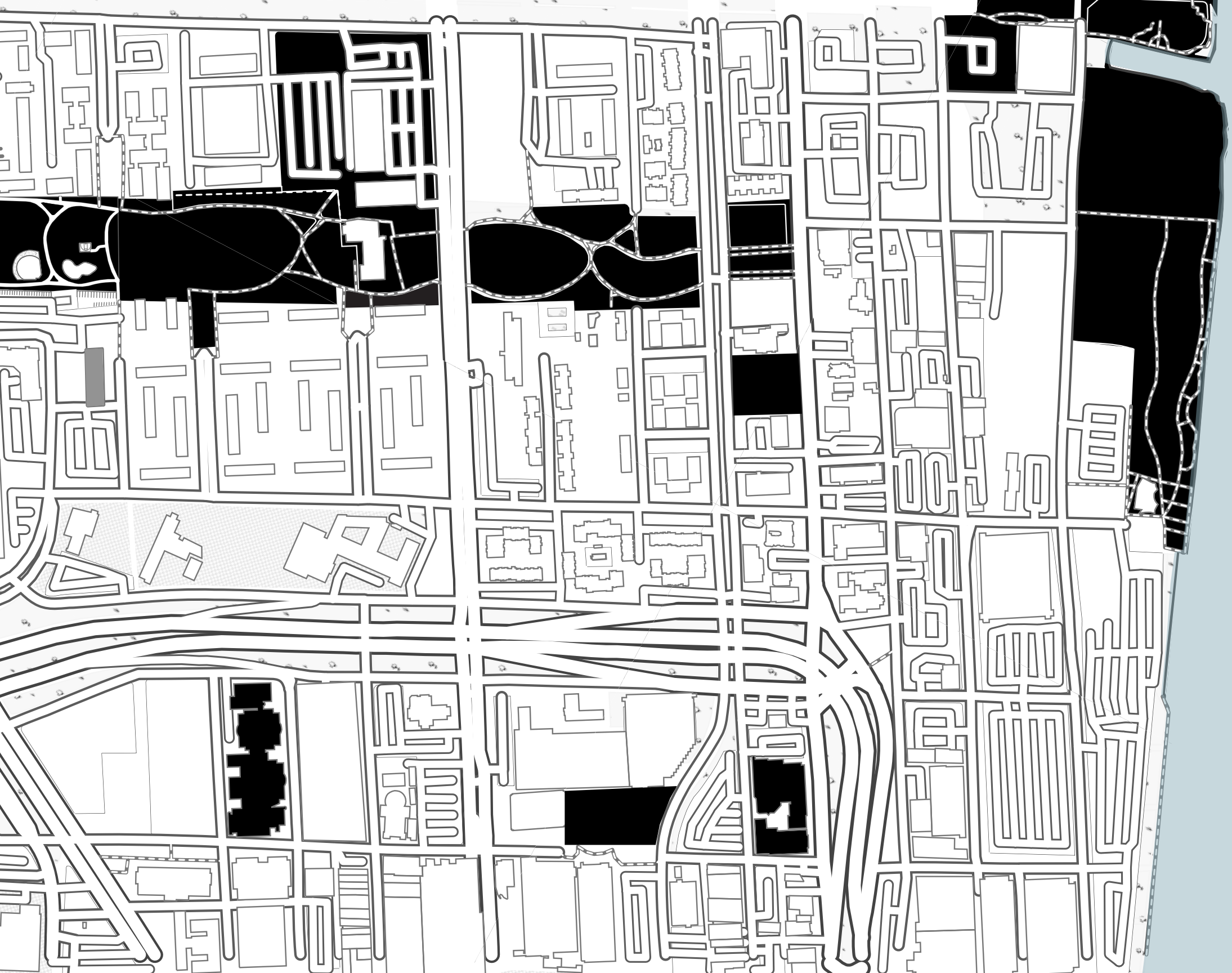
Piazza dei Priori's strategic location make it an ideal venue for large gatherings and demonstrations. Its open layout provides room for people to gather and express themselves.

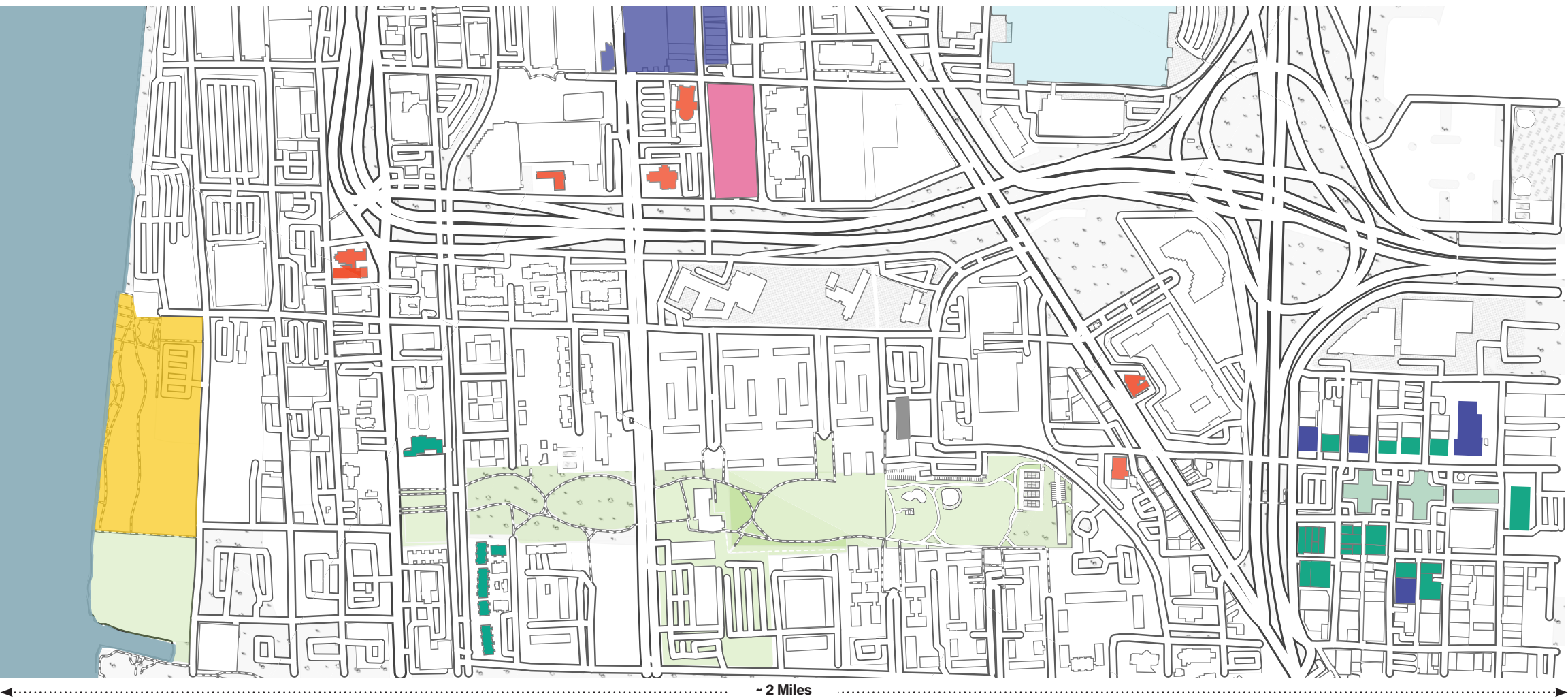
The square's flexible design also allows it to be used for a variety of other purposes, including outdoor dining and recreation. Several cafes and restaurants surround the square.

Piazza dei Priori is a great example of a multifunctional and flexible public space that encourages civic gathering and expression.

2.5 METHOD 5: DETROIT CASE STUDY

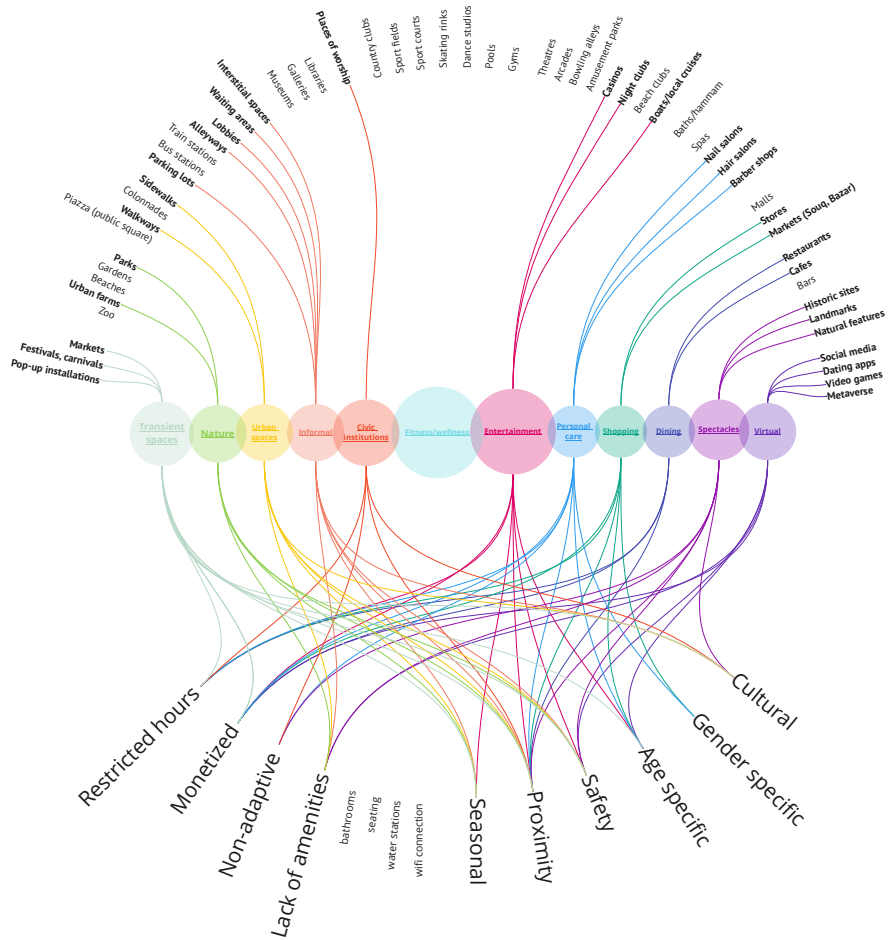






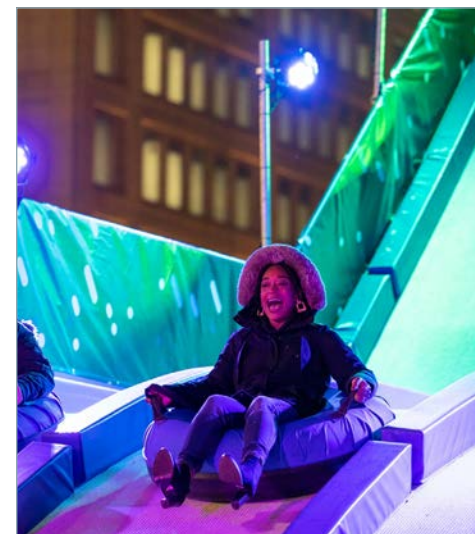
(Fig. 2.3) third place evaluation - Detroit map





TOTAL THIRD-PLACE TYPES = 11

(Fig. 2.4) third place evaluation - map

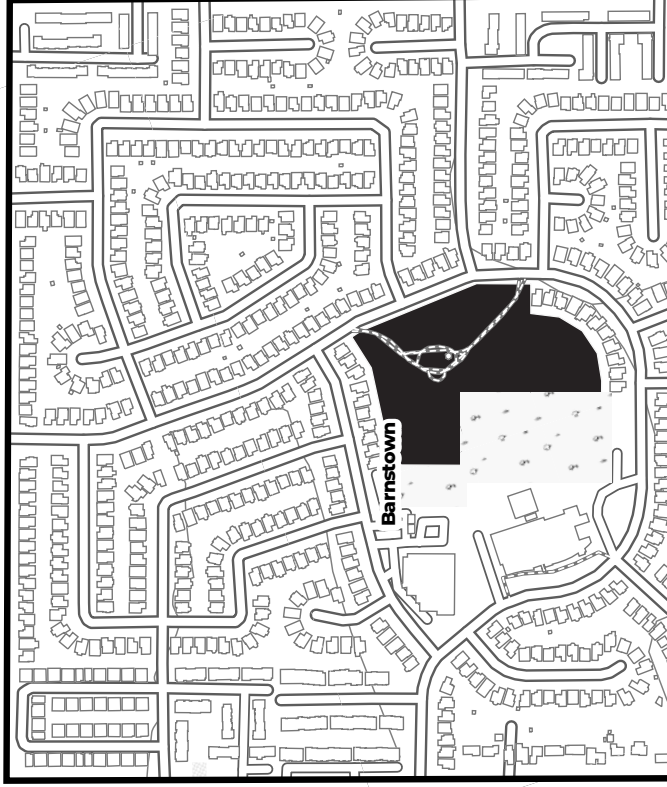
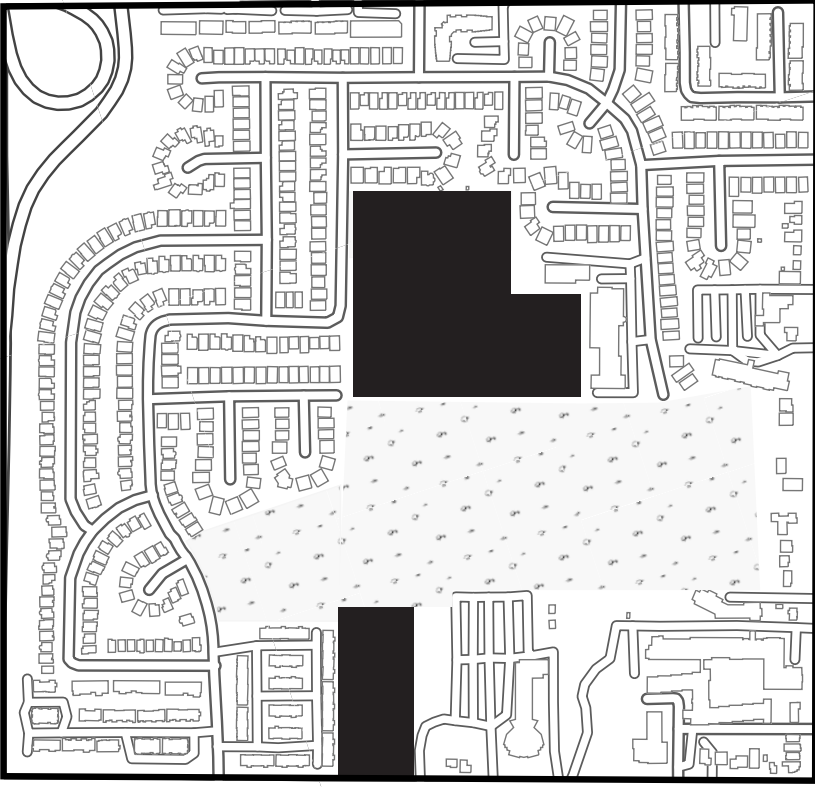
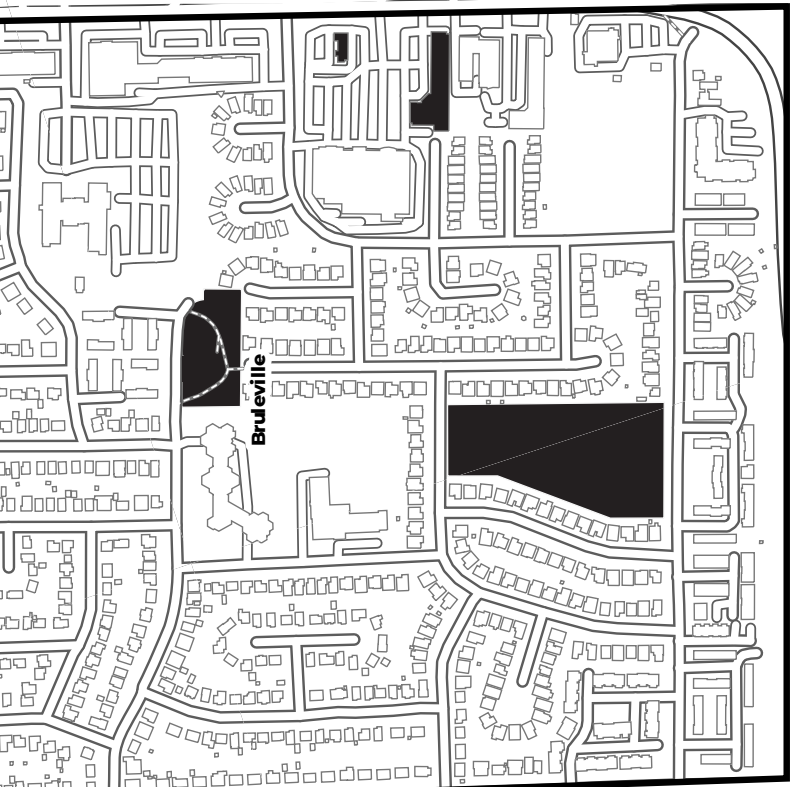
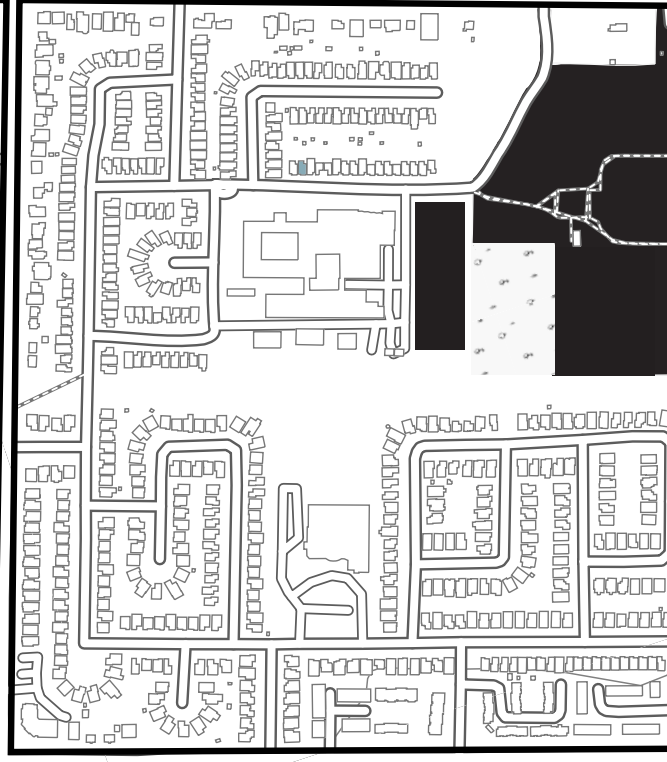
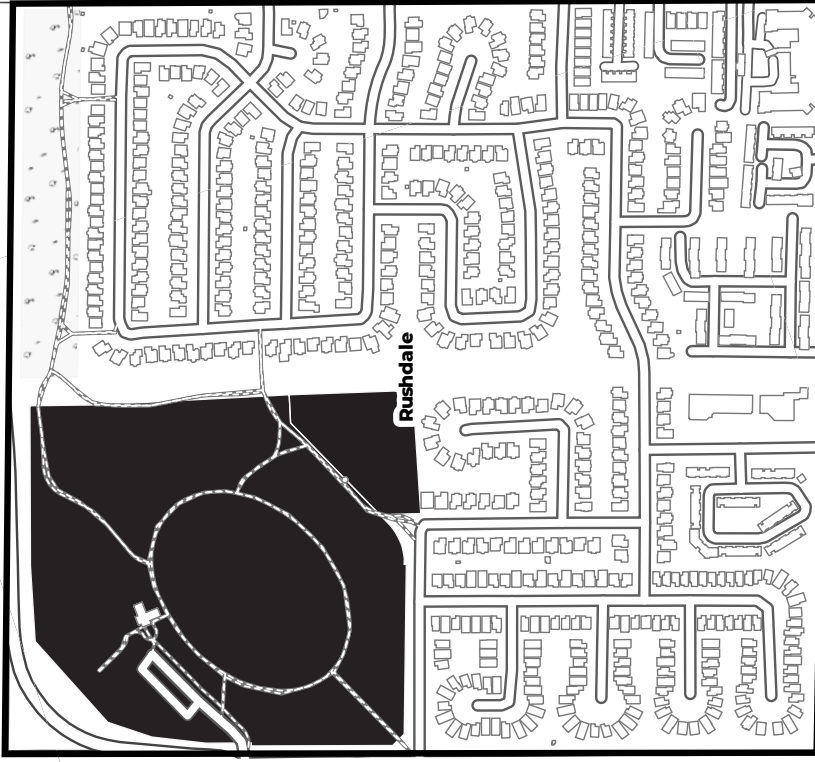
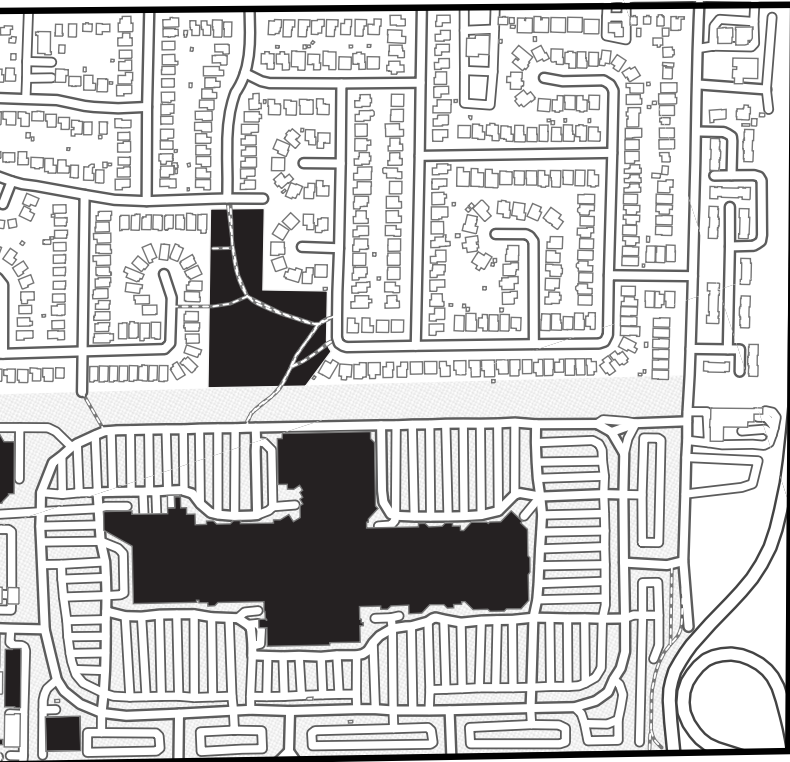


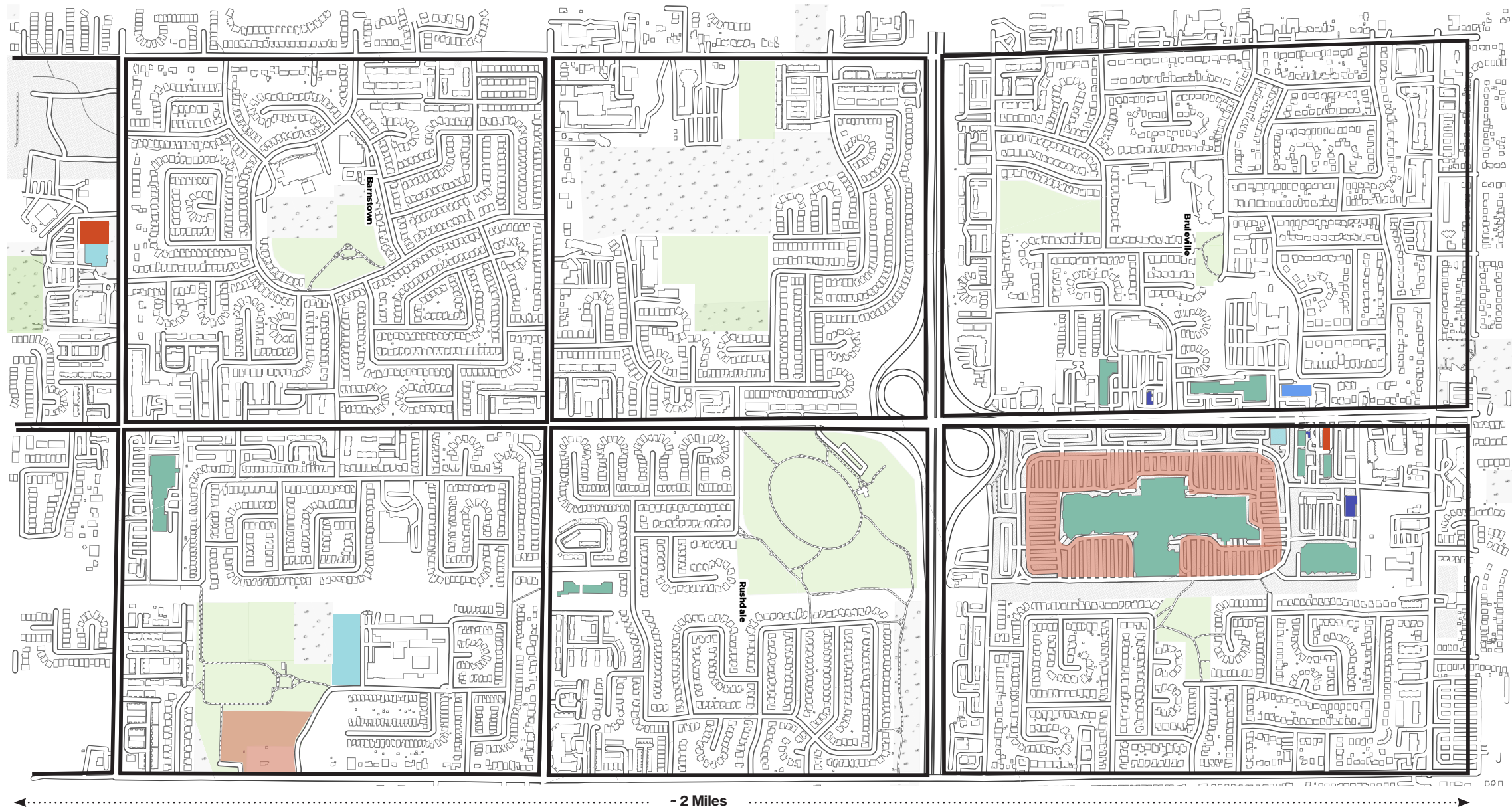
MONROE MIDWAY

Monroe Midway Free Public Playground is a vibrant and colorful play area located in downtown Detroit. This playground is a popular spot for families and children to spend their leisure time. It features a range of play equipment suitable for kids of all ages. The park is open to the public, and admission is free. Monroe Midway Free Public Playground is a fun-filled and safe space for children to enjoy and explore in the heart of downtown Detroit. The Monroe Midway Park serves as a great example of an accessible third place

2.6 METHOD 6: HAMILTON CASE STUDY I

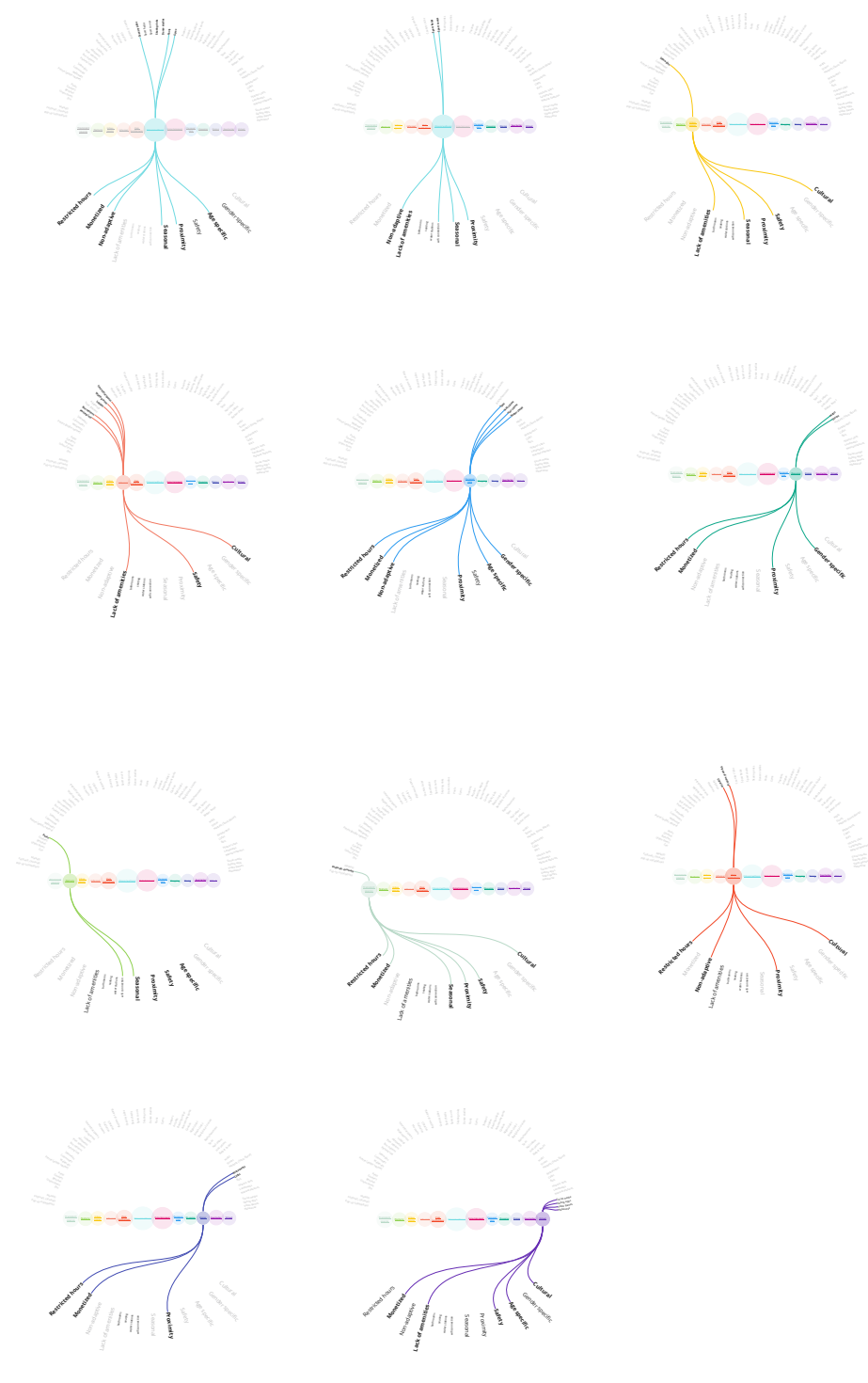
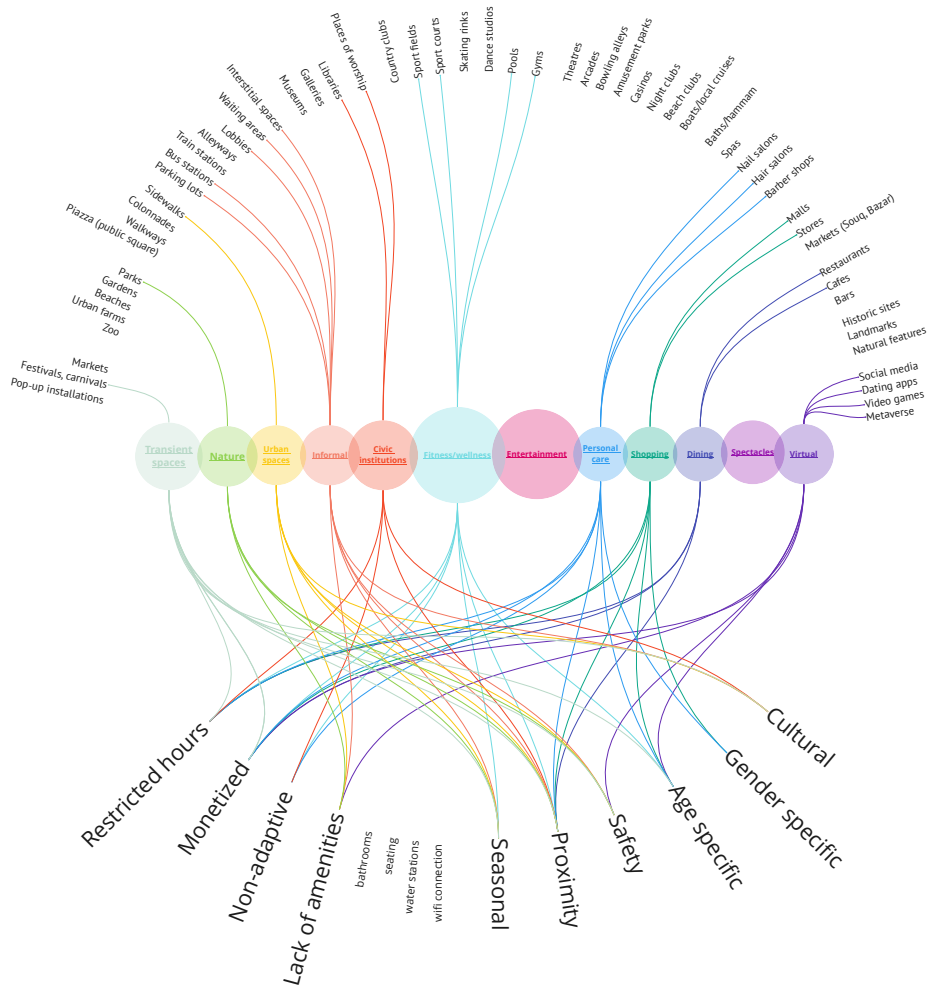






(Fig. 2.5) third place evaluation - Hamilton map





TOTAL THIRD-PLACE TYPES = 11

(Fig. 2.6) third place evaluation - Hamilton



**6/11 ARE
MONETIZED**



**5/11 ARE
SEASONAL**



**6/11 HAVE
RESTRICTED
HOURS**



**SUBURBAN
GROUNDHOG
DAY**

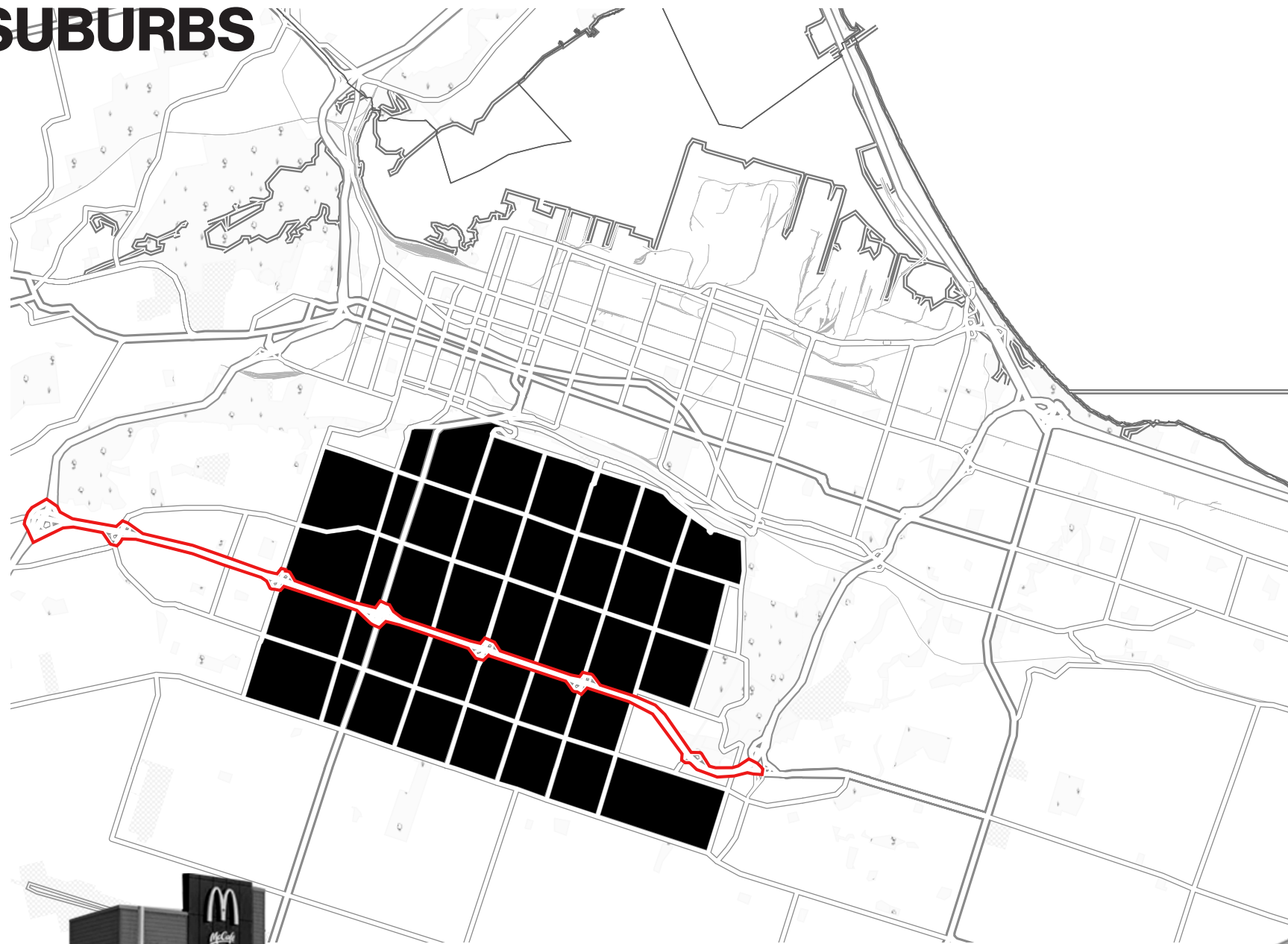


**SEPARATED BY A
BORDER, UNITED BY
SUBURBAN SPRAWL:
HAMILTON + DETROIT
ALIKE**

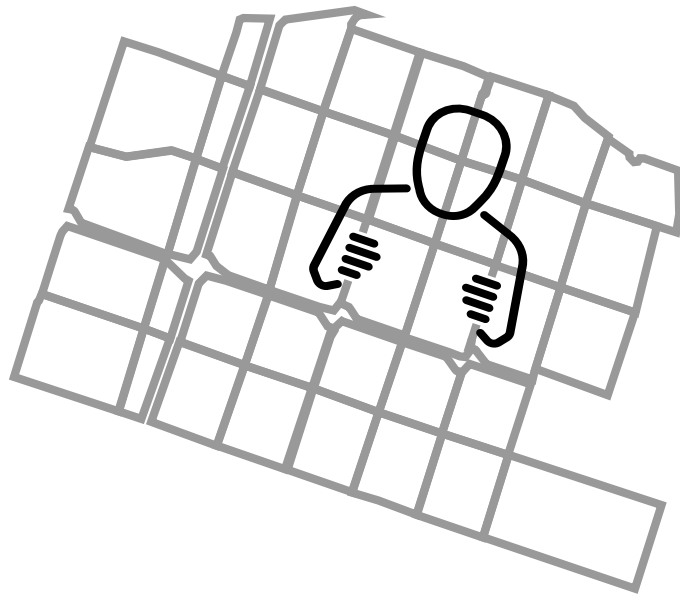
2.7 METHOD 7: HAMILTON CASE STUDY II



WELCOME TO THE SUBURBS



A PLACE TO FIND **YOUR COMMUNITY**



HAMILTON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY | HOW THIRD-PLACES IMPACT THE COMMUNITY

“Not having third-places led to crime. We didn’t have anything to do or anywhere to be besides being on the street” - Male , 20

Residents emphasized the need for indoor spaces, particularly in cold weather, and suggested coffee shops, reading/study places, and recreation centers as ideal third-places. They expressed a desire for spaces that are age-appropriate, intellectually stimulating, and engaging in healthy activities. The lack of third-places made it difficult to interact with others outside of their community and slowed down the process of integrating into Canadian culture upon recent immigration. One interviewee expressed sadness at seeing friends dealing with drug issues, which they attributed to the lack of options for positive activities

The community interviews conducted in Hamilton, Ontario revealed a strong need for third places in the suburbs, particularly for young people. Residents emphasized that the suburbs lack adequate public spaces for people to come together and interact. The interviews revealed that without third places, people are left with few options for socializing, which can lead to isolation, boredom, and potentially negative behaviors. Residents expressed a desire for more diverse, inclusive, and accessible third places that are safe and cater to a wide range of interests.

One of the main reasons residents expressed a need for third places is the lack of programmed public spaces in the suburbs. Participants emphasized that the suburban streetscape lack interest, which makes it undesirable for people to walk or bike to public spaces.

Many residents travel long distances by car in order to engage in civic gathering, this can be a barrier to community engagement, particularly for those with little self-autonomy including seniors and children. As a result, residents in the suburbs are often left with limited options for socializing, which can lead to isolation and boredom.

In addition, residents expressed a need for third places to provide opportunities for young people to engage in positive activities and foster healthy environments for adolescence. Residents noted that without these spaces, young people turned to negative behaviors such as drug use, alcohol abuse, and other illegal activities due to lack of healthy activities and publicly accessed spaces for people of different socioeconomic backgrounds. One interviewee noted that the lack of third places in his community has led to increased crime rates, and that he and his friends often resort to driving around looking for places to hang out and eventually defaulting to parking lots as a hang-out spot. Residents emphasized the importance of creating safe, age-appropriate spaces where young people can engage in positive activities such as sports, arts, and music.

Residents also expressed a need for more diverse and inclusive third places that cater to a wide range of interests. Many participants noted

that the existing public spaces in the suburbs are often geared towards families and children, and do not provide opportunities for young adults or seniors to socialize. Participants expressed a desire for third places that are welcoming to all members of the community, regardless of age, race, or socio-economic status. They suggested that these spaces could include coffee shops, libraries, community centers, or outdoor spaces such as plazas or streets with storefronts and visual interest and variety.

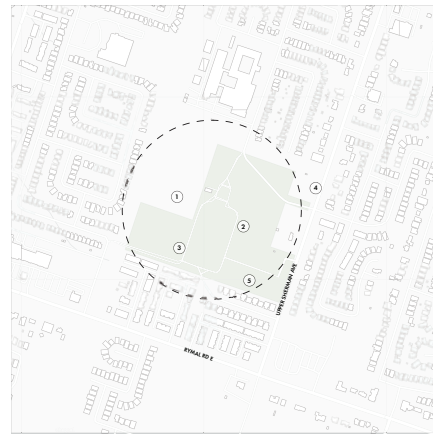
Finally, participants emphasized the need for third places that are accessible and safe. Many interviewees noted that the existing public spaces in the suburbs are poorly lit, lack seating, and are not comfortable. They suggested that these issues could be addressed by investing in infrastructure improvements, such as better lighting, benches, and some indoor spaces for the winter months. Participants also emphasized the importance of creating safe spaces, particularly for women and marginalized groups who may feel unsafe in public spaces after dark. They suggested that this could be achieved through increased police presence, community watch groups, or design elements such as well-lit pathways and clear sightlines.

In summary, the community interviews conducted in Hamilton, Ontario revealed a strong need for third places in the suburbs. Residents emphasized the lack of public spaces, as well as the need for more diverse, inclusive, accessible, and safe third places. The interviews highlighted the importance of these spaces in fostering community engagement, social connection, and positive behaviors, and underscored the need for government and community leaders to invest in public infrastructure to address this need.

“I think it would’ve allowed me to integrate into the Canadian culture much faster and have a place outside of school and the library to hang out with friends.” - Female , 27

Refer to appendix A for full excerpts

1950s



The city of Hamilton, located in Southern Ontario, Canada, and is known for its rich industrial history and the role it played in the development of Canada's manufacturing industry.

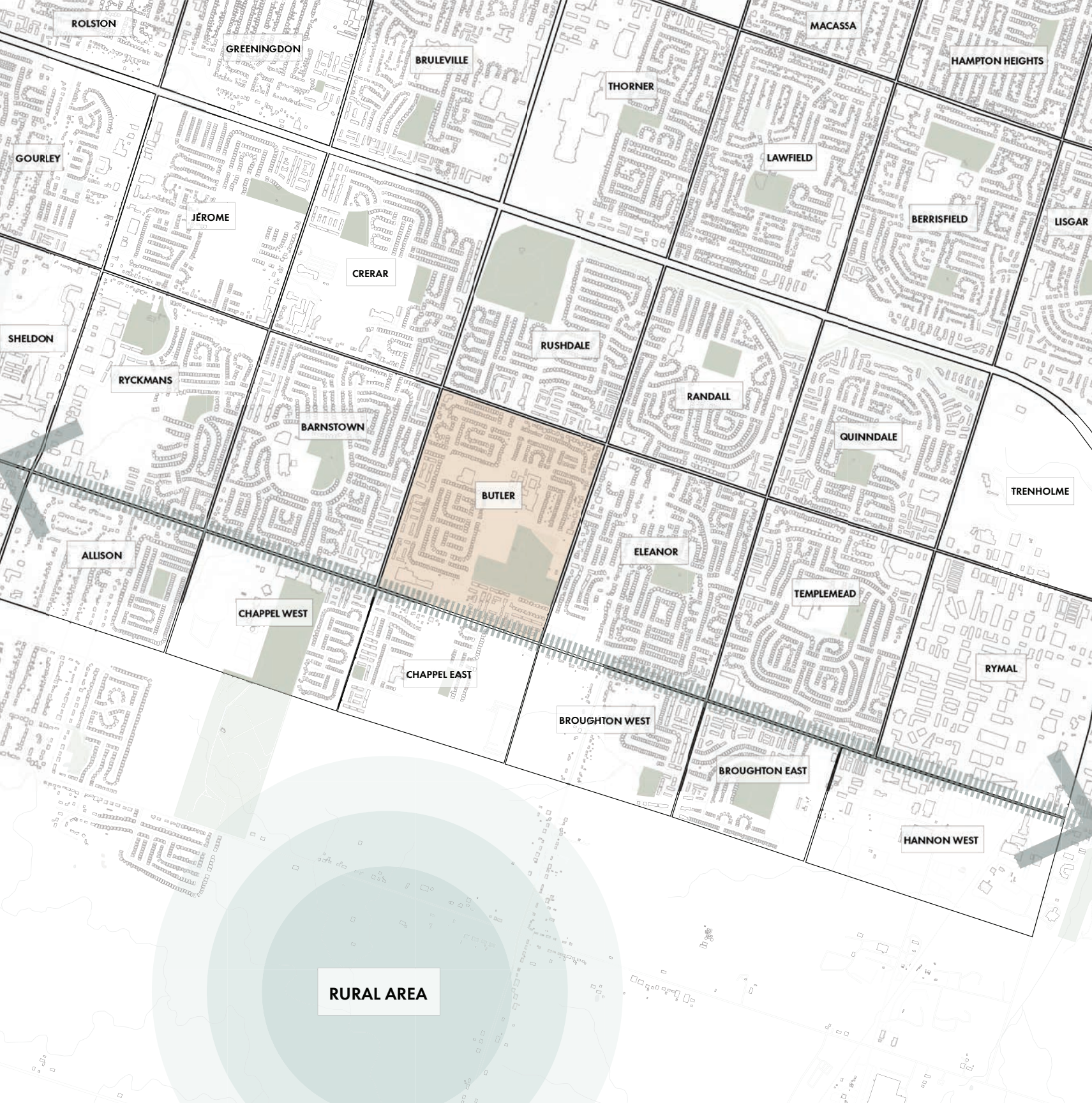
In recent years, the Steel city has undergone significant changes that many industrial cities have faced, including a shift towards post-industrialism and a focus on knowledge-based industries. While this shift has brought some positive changes to the city, it has also highlighted some of the challenges facing the city's suburbs, including the consumerist based approach to the city's urban design of public space.

With the suburban edges sprawled from the industrial center of the city third places are often few and far between in neighborhoods on Hamilton Mountain, leaving residents feeling disconnected from their communities. As manufacturing plants closed and communities disintegrated, the clustering force of the city has changed.

One factor contributing to the lack of third places in Hamilton's suburbs is the city's focus on automobile-centric development. Many of the city's suburbs were designed around the idea of the car, with large parking lots and wide roads that make it difficult for pedestrians to move around.

The geography of third places is intimately tied to the scale and density of urban form. In other words, the built environment plays a critical role in the development of third places. In order to create more third places in Hamilton's suburbs, planners and developers need to rethink the scale and density of suburban neighborhoods prioritizing the development of pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.





HAMILTON GRID

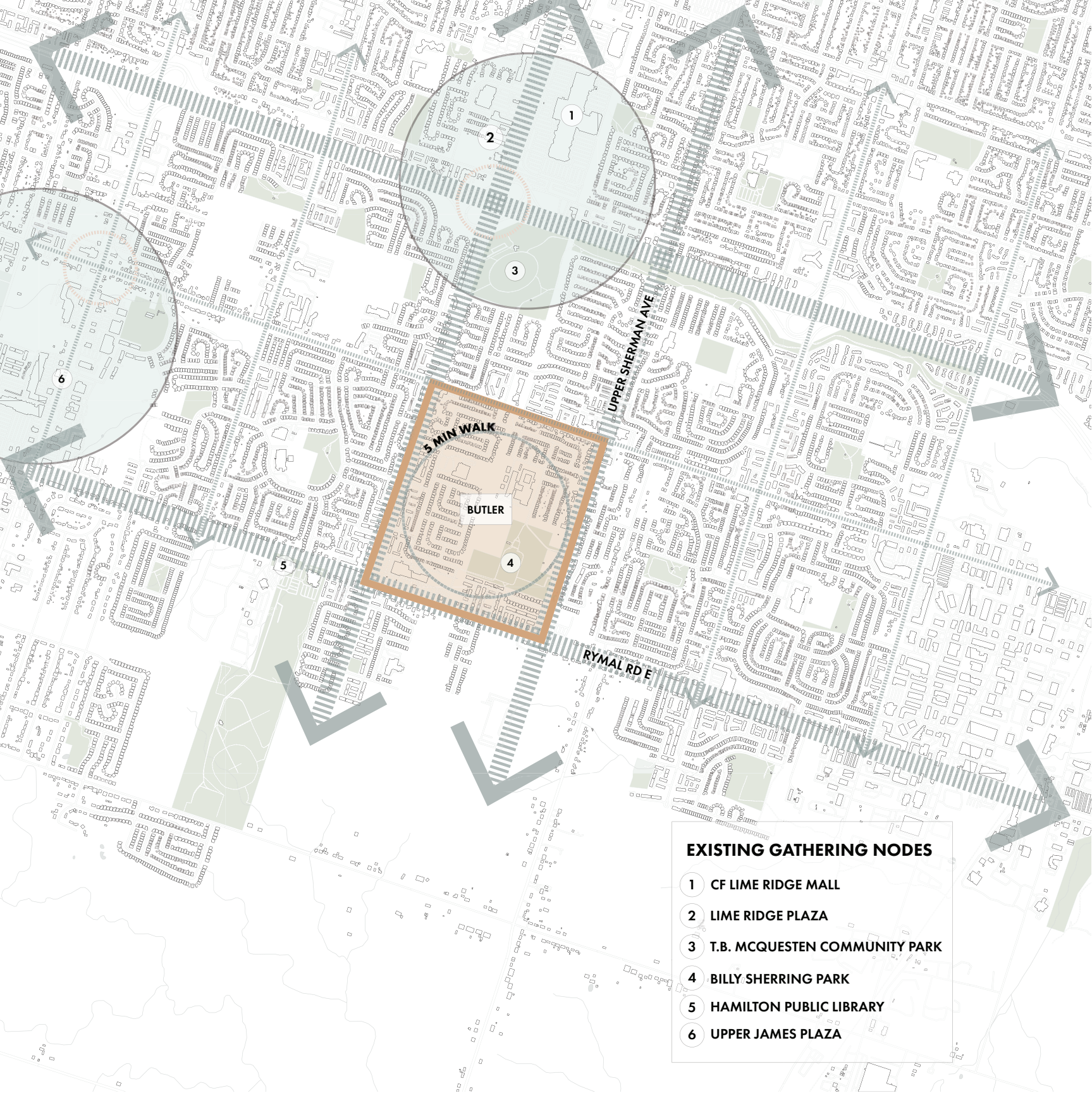
A confining grid system bounded with roads designed for cars rather than streets designed for people, streets where encounters are more likely to occur. Each quadrant within the grid is constricted to its zone, predominantly small lot single family detached.

The grid is divided by the Lincoln M. Alexander Parkway, where the anti-third places (including Lime Ridge Mall and McDonald's) are situated nearby highway exits to attract consumers rather than create walkable places of civic expression. The 'Linc' is the largest tentacle of connection within the suburbs of Hamilton Ontario and it is occupied by cars which pollute the adjacent areas containing government housing and diverse townhome typologies.

Though each neighborhood quadrant within the Hamilton suburban grid is confined by a boarder of roads, each quadrant presents an opportunity to become a superblock. Originating from the urban layout of Barcelona, Spain, the concept of superblocks is an applicable solution to the confined grid system of the Hamilton suburbs. Superblocks are large urban planning units that group several conventional city blocks into a single unit. They typically measure between 400 and 500 meters on each side and have an inner grid of streets that are pedestrian-friendly and prioritize non-motorized transportation. Superblocks aim to reduce traffic, noise, and pollution by creating car-free zones in urban areas, promoting walking, cycling, and public transportation.

Through mapping the suburban Hamilton grid, it appears that there are approximately 35 quadrants, average size of 800 meters by 900 meters potential superblocks on Hamilton Mountain between Rymal Road and Concession Street

(Fig. 2.7) Hamilton grid map

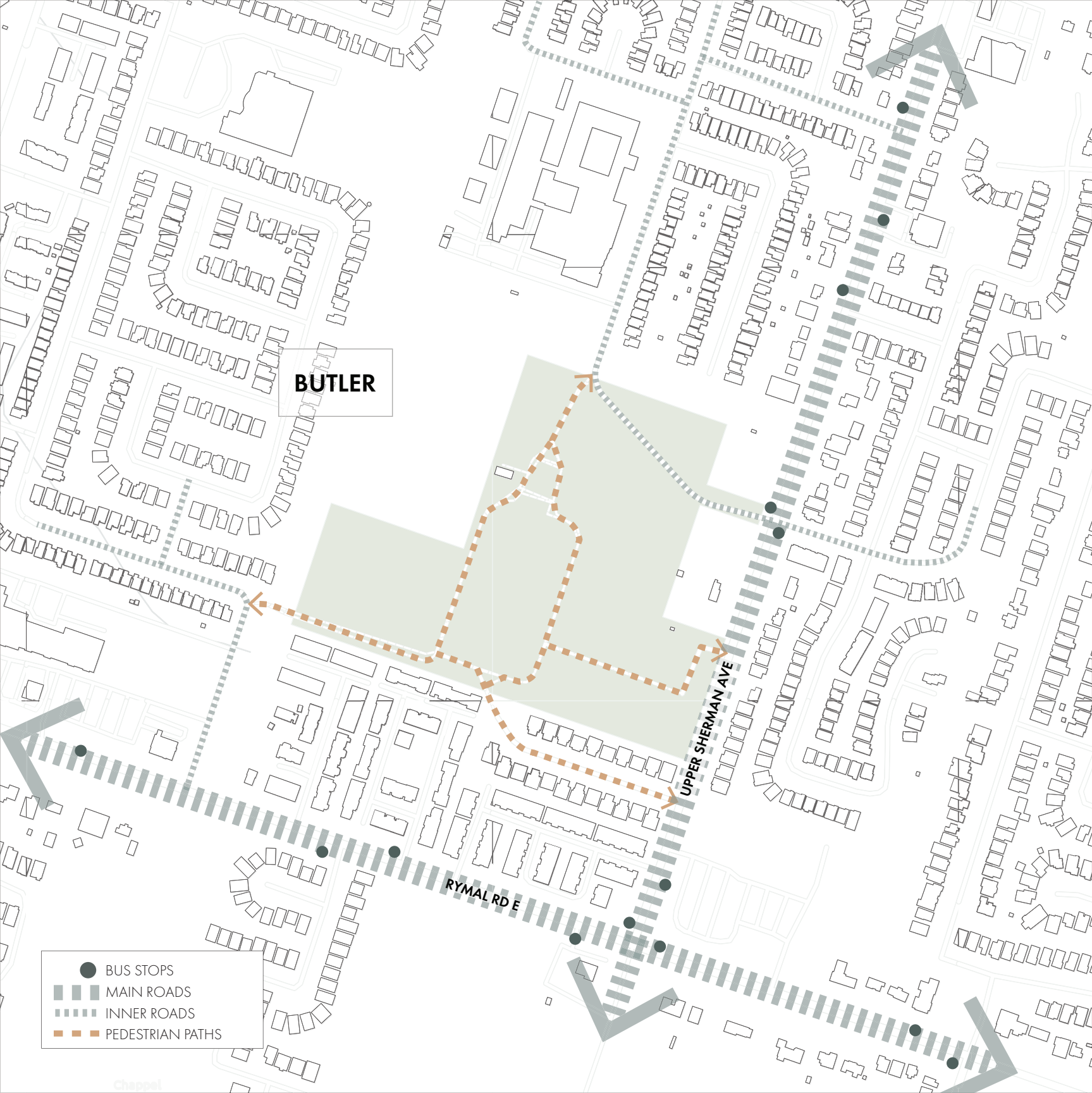


- EXISTING GATHERING NODES**
- 1 CF LIME RIDGE MALL
 - 2 LIME RIDGE PLAZA
 - 3 T.B. MCQUESTEN COMMUNITY PARK
 - 4 BILLY SHERRING PARK
 - 5 HAMILTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
 - 6 UPPER JAMES PLAZA

IDENTIFYING EXISTING GATHERING NODES

COMMERCIALISM

(Fig. 2.8) Hamilton site analysis map



BUTLER

UPPER SHERMAN AVE

RYMAL RDE

- BUS STOPS
- ▬ MAIN ROADS
- ⋯ INNER ROADS
- - - PEDESTRIAN PATHS

ANALYZING MODES OF CIRCULATION

CAR ORIENTED

(Fig. 2.9) Hamilton circulation map



PUBLIC-PRIVATE FIGURE
GROUND

PRIVATISM

(Fig. 2.10) Hamilton figure-ground map



- SINGLE FAMILY HOUSES
- MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING
- SECOND PLACES

ANALYZING BUILDING TYPOLOGY OF THE GRID

HOMOGENEOUS

(Fig. 2.11) Hamilton typology map



UNDERSTANDING SCALE
AND DENSITY: HAMILTON
VOLTERRA OVERLAY

(Fig. 2.12) Hamilton Volterra overlay map

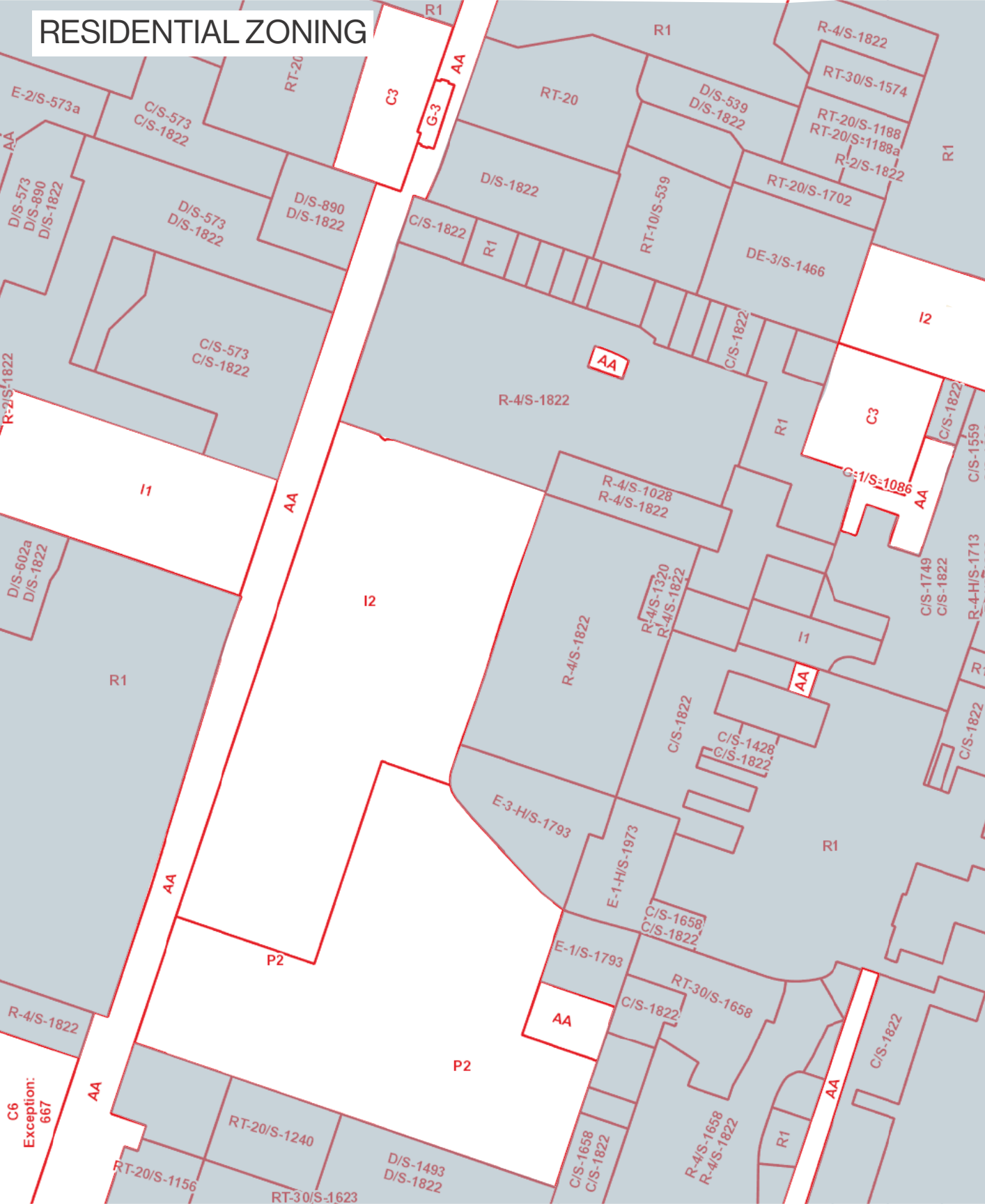
ZONING BOUNDARIES



“THE ARBITRARY RESTRICTIONS THAT ZONING PLACES ON CITIES ALSO SHOW UP IN OUR CAPACITY TO GROW AND INNOVATE AS A NATION”
 (GRAY, 2022)

(Fig. 2.13) Hamilton zoning boundary

RESIDENTIAL ZONING



Zoning is a land use planning tool that divides a city or town into different zones, each with its own set of permitted land uses and building regulations. While zoning is intended to promote orderly development and protect property values, it can also have unintended consequences for social interactions. Nolan M. Gray's Arbitrary Lines sheds light on the ways in which zoning can perpetuate social and economic inequalities and highlights the need for more thoughtful and inclusive land use planning practices.

Zoning laws that separate residential and commercial areas can make it difficult for people to access the goods and services they need, forcing them to travel long distances to meet their basic needs. This can lead to a sense of isolation and disconnection from the community, as people spend less time interacting with their neighbors and more time in their cars.

Zoning can create social barriers by segregating people based on their income, race, or other characteristics. Zoning laws that prohibit the construction of affordable housing in certain areas, for example, can limit the opportunities for people of different income levels to live in the same neighborhood and interact with one another which perpetuates social and economic inequalities and reinforce stereotypes and prejudices.

(Fig. 2.14) Hamilton zoning map

COMMERCIAL ZONING



combining residential, and commercial uses, in the same area, mixed-use zoning makes it easier for people to access the amenities they need without having to rely on cars or other forms of motorized transportation. This not only helps to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, but it also promotes a healthier lifestyle by encouraging people to be more active and to spend more time outdoors.

Another benefit of mixed-use zoning is that it can help to create more economically vibrant communities. By allowing commercial and office spaces to be located in residential areas, mixed-use zoning can help to create more business opportunities, which can in turn lead to more jobs and higher tax revenues. This can be especially important in suburban neighborhoods that may have been struggling economically in recent years. By creating more economic activity and providing more jobs, mixed-use zoning can help to revitalize these neighborhoods and make them more attractive places to live and work.

(Fig. 2.16) Hamilton zoning map

03

FINDINGS

Purpose: The purpose of this zoning code is to encourage the development of third places within the city, which serve as important gathering nodes for community members to socialize and engage in various activities. This code is intended to promote the creation of diverse, accessible, and inclusive third places that contribute to the social, cultural, and economic vitality of the city.

Definition: Third places are public spaces that provide a setting for social interactions outside of home (first place) and work (second place). Third places provide the basic amenities stated in the comprehensive framework (refer to chapter 3.1) to be publicly accessed by communities at no monetary cost.

Zone Designation: Third places are to be designated as a special zoning category within the city's zoning code. The third place zone shall be applied to each neighborhood boundary within a city. The third place zone may be applied in conjunction with other zoning designations, such as residential and commercial.

Permitted Uses: The following uses shall be permitted within the third place zone: Community centers, libraries, and other cultural and civic institutions. Parks, plazas, and other outdoor recreational spaces. Cafes, restaurants, and bars that promote social interaction and community engagement. Co-working spaces, maker spaces, and other collaborative workspaces. Art galleries, performance venues, and other cultural spaces. Educational and training facilities that promote skill-building and lifelong learning.

Other uses that promote social engagement, cultural exchange, and civic participation.

Design Standards: The following design standards shall be applied to third places within the third place zone:

Accessibility: Third places shall be accessible to all members of the community, including those with disabilities and limited mobility.

Safety and Security: Third places shall provide a safe and secure environment for all visitors, including adequate lighting, surveillance, and emergency exits.

Sustainability: Third places shall incorporate sustainable design practices, such as green roofs, rain gardens, and permeable pavements.

Flexibility: Third places shall be designed to accommodate a variety of uses and activities, and should be adaptable to changing community needs.

Aesthetics: Third places shall be designed to enhance the visual character of the surrounding area, and should incorporate high-quality materials, textures, and colors.

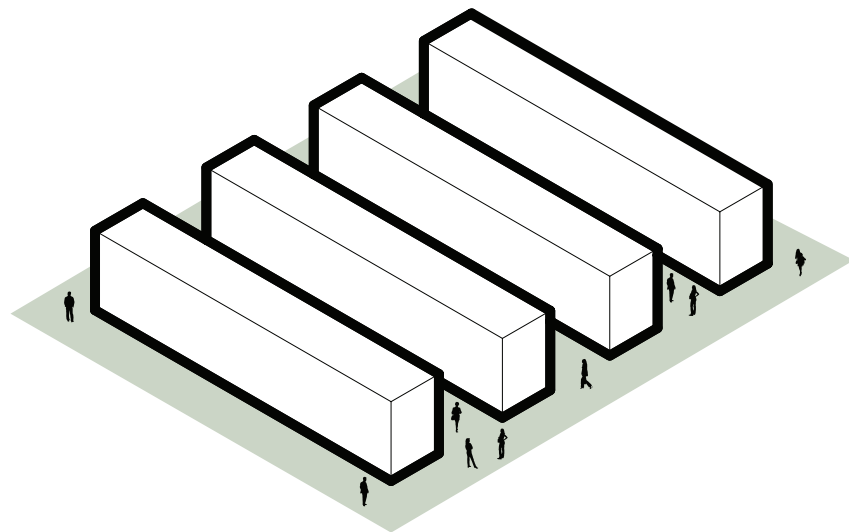
Transportation: Third places shall be designed to encourage alternative modes of transportation, including walking, biking, and public transit.

Community Engagement: Developers of third places shall engage with the local community to ensure that the design and programming of the third place meets the needs and preferences of the community. Public input shall be solicited through community meetings, online surveys, and other forms of outreach. Collaboration and partnerships can help to create multifunctional spaces. Third places can partner with local businesses, artists, and organizations to provide a wider range of services and programs.

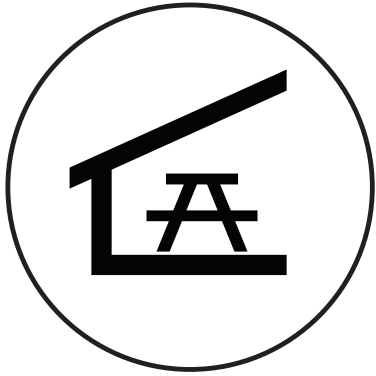
Building a Community: A Comprehensive Framework for Third Places



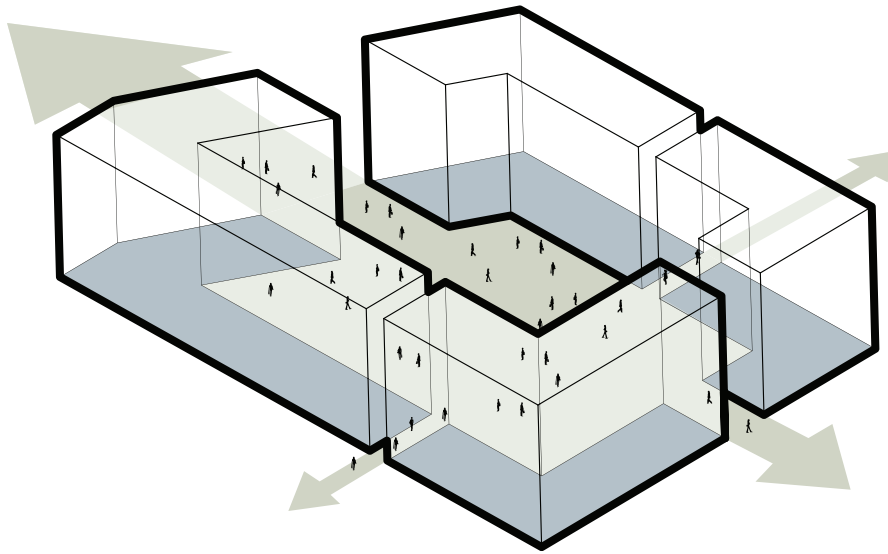
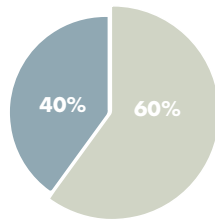
HUMAN SCALE



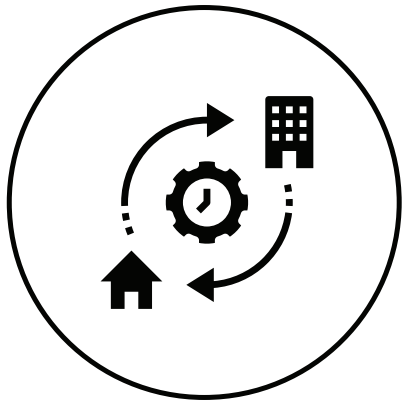
Third places designed to human scale feel more comfortable to use because they are proportional to the human body and therefore create a more intuitive and user friendly environment. By considering the needs of human users, buildings that are designed to human scale feel more intimate, inviting, and human centered.



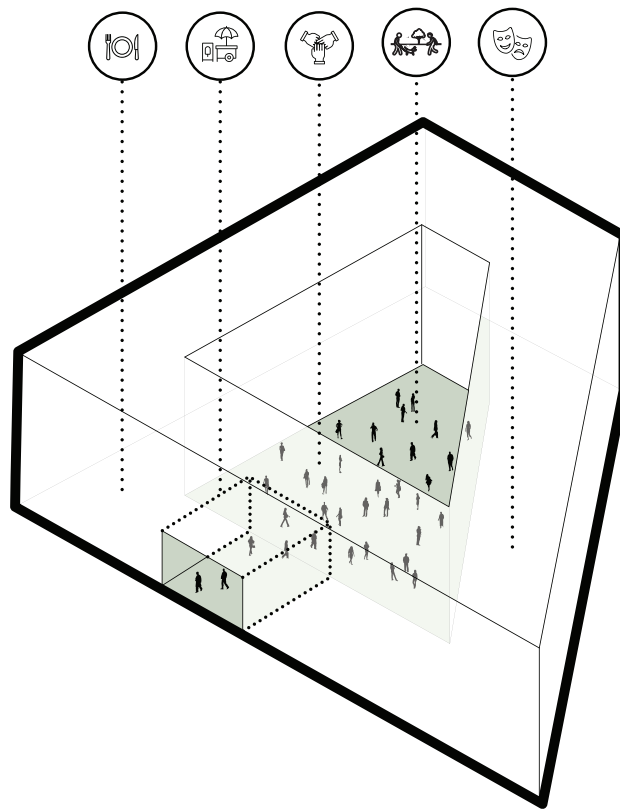
SHELTER



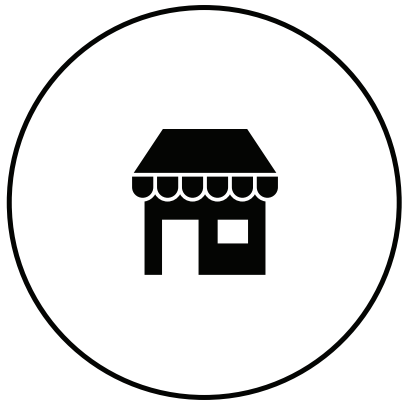
Third places should have a 60% outdoor to 40% indoor ratio. Creating indoor shelter provides a safe and comfortable environment for people during inclement weather and extreme temperatures. This maximizes the use of open spaces allowing it to be activated throughout all seasons. Outdoor space bounded by indoor space frames the third place creating a defined demarcation for civic gathering to occur.



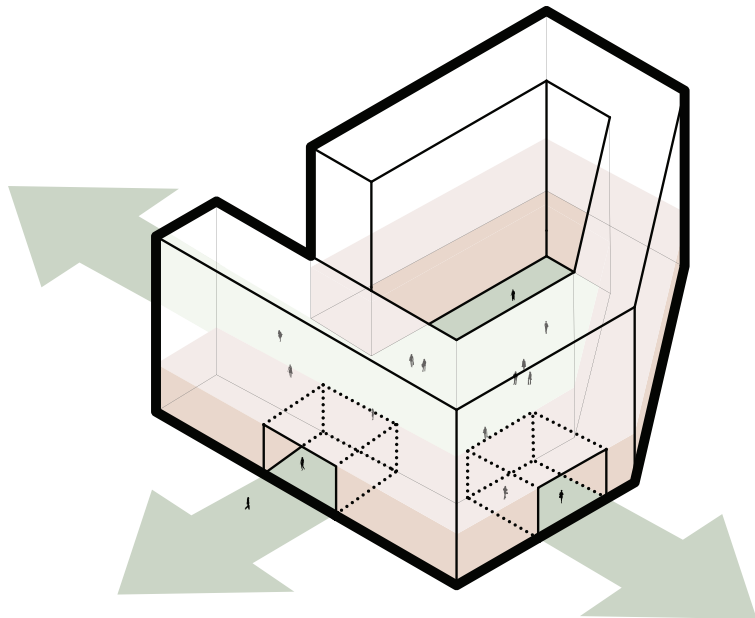
FLEXIBILITY



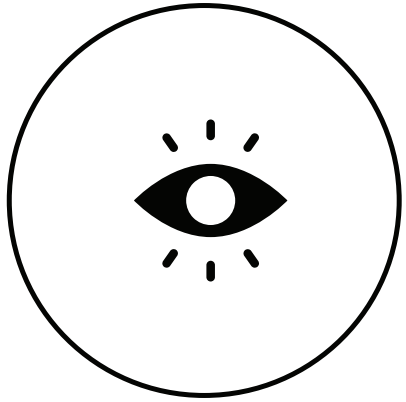
It is important for third places to be multi-functional so that they are not limited to a single program, yet still include enough programmatic elements that create a functional space for the community



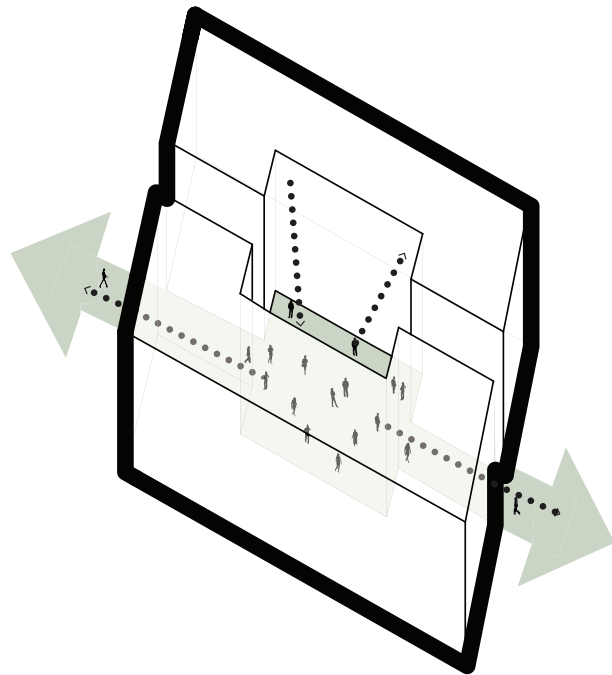
COMMERCIAL PUBLIC RATIO



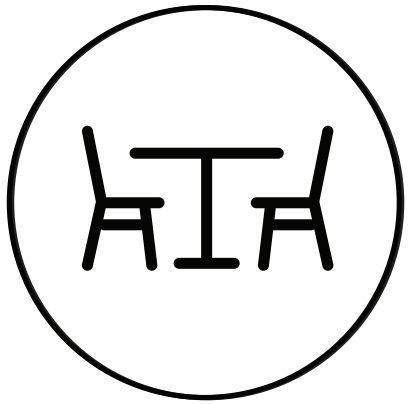
Third places should have a 80% non-commercialized space to 20% commercialized space ratio. Commercial programs in third places should be implemented to enhance the public activity rather than solely serve as places of consumption.



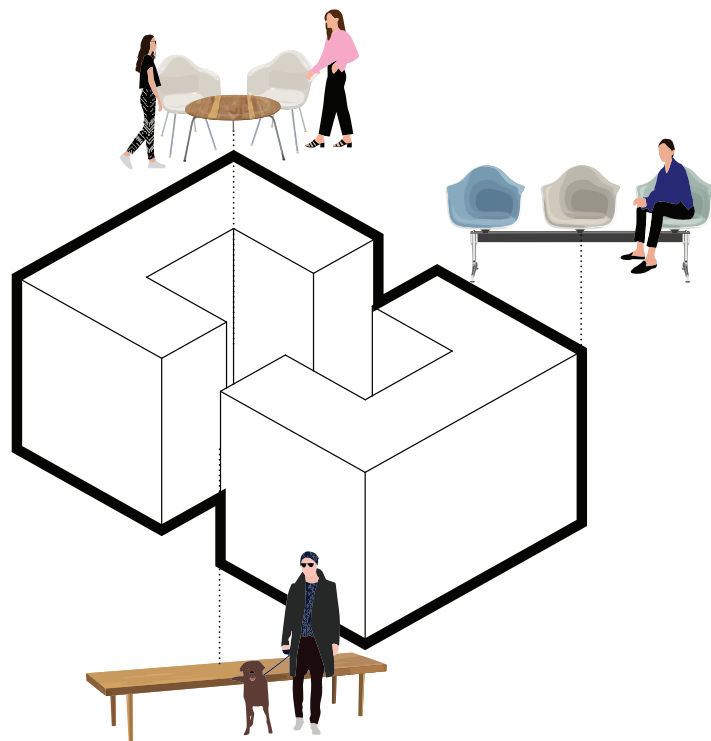
VIEWS



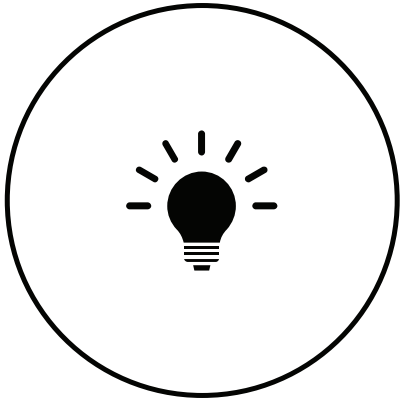
Third places should create a level of visibility within the space. Visibility creates a sense of safety and connection. It also allows for more social interactions to occur, and better way-finding for those navigating the space.



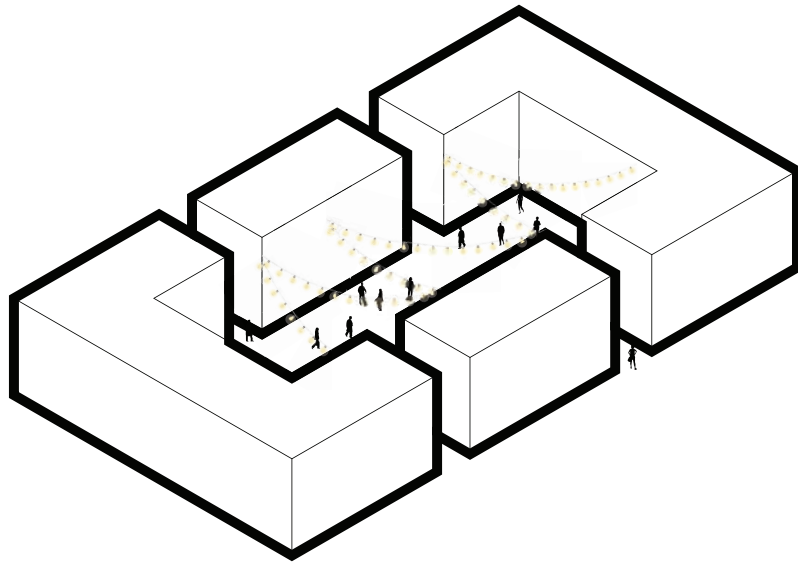
SEATING



Seating in third places provides a place for people to rest, especially for those who are elderly, disabled, or otherwise in need of a break. Seating can be useful for people who are waiting for a bus, train, or someone else. Seating also attracts multiple users including those who are using public spaces for various activities, such as reading, eating, or talking with friends. Seating in third places can encourage social interaction and a sense of community, as people are more likely to stop and chat if they have a place to sit.



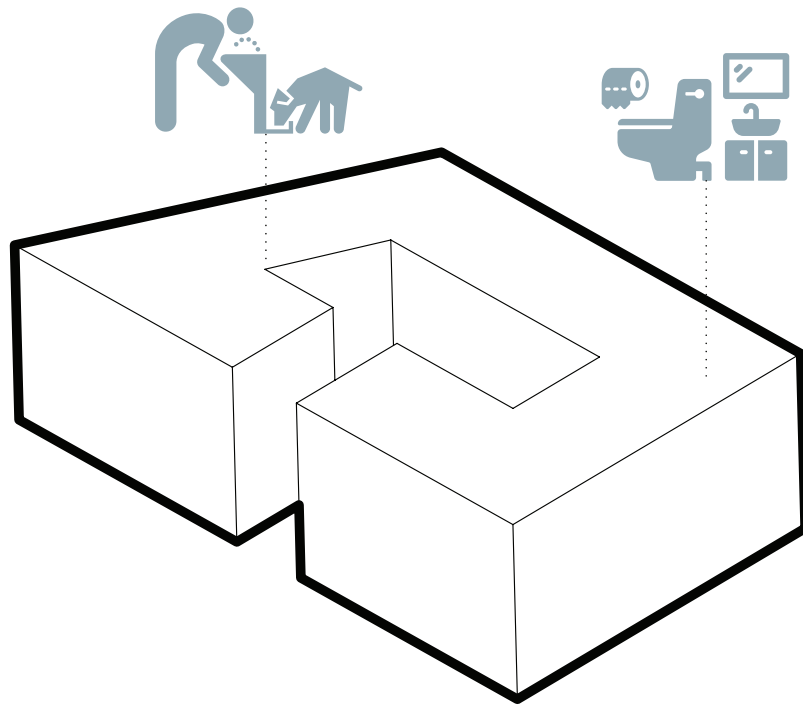
LIGHTING



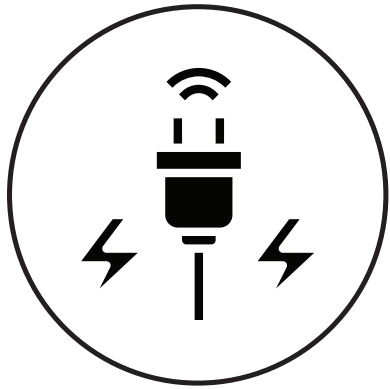
Third places should have adequate lighting to ensure safety and visibility for all users, as well as to create a welcoming and well-lit environment for activities and gatherings. Good lighting can also have a positive impact on people's moods and emotions by promoting feelings of comfort, security, and relaxation.



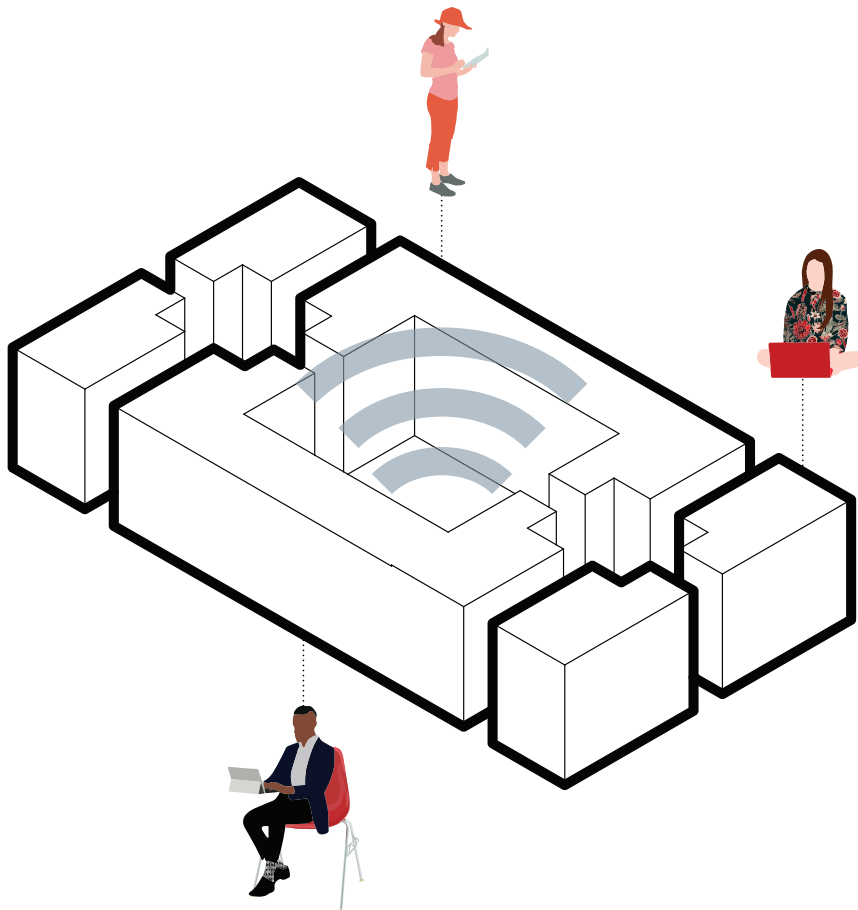
RESTROOMS + WATER



It is essential to have public accessed bathrooms and drinking water in third places in order to meet the basic needs and health requirements of all users. Promoting hygiene, comfort, and health, as well as providing a welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone.



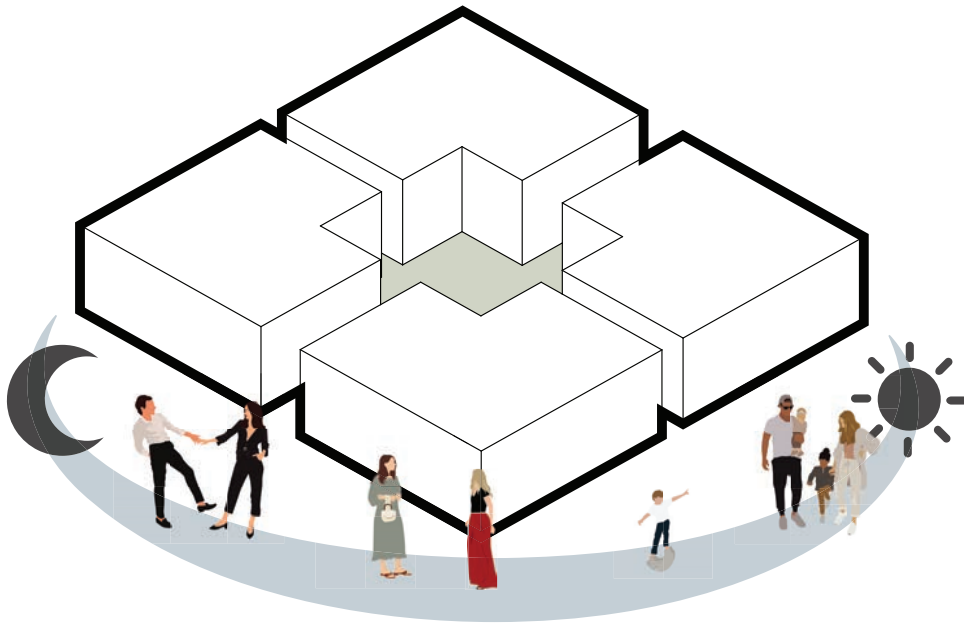
CONNECTION + POWER



Having wifi connection and electric power in third places provides access to the internet and supports digital connectivity for all users, facilitating increased productivity, communication, and information sharing for the public.



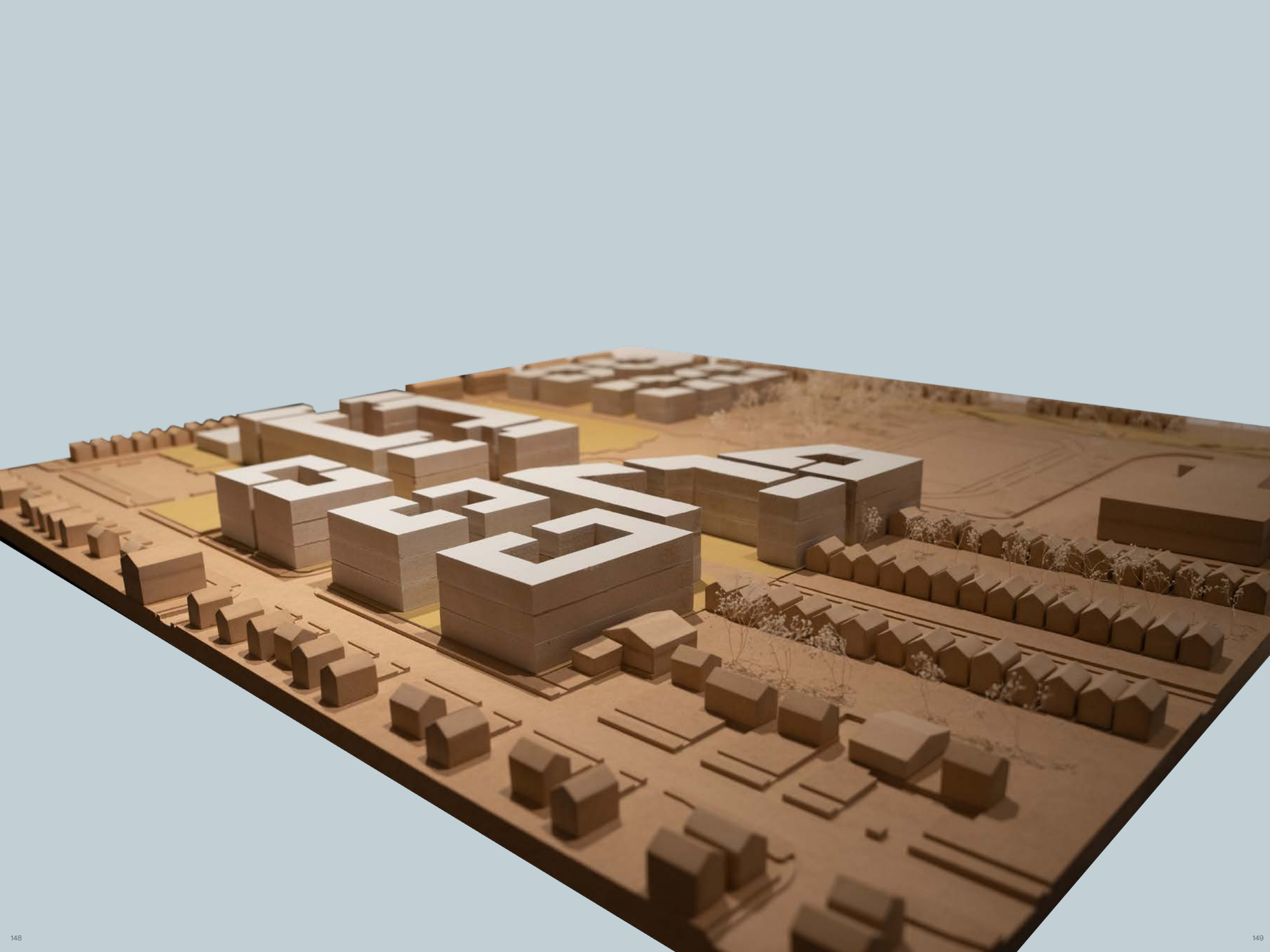
UNRESTRICTED HOURS

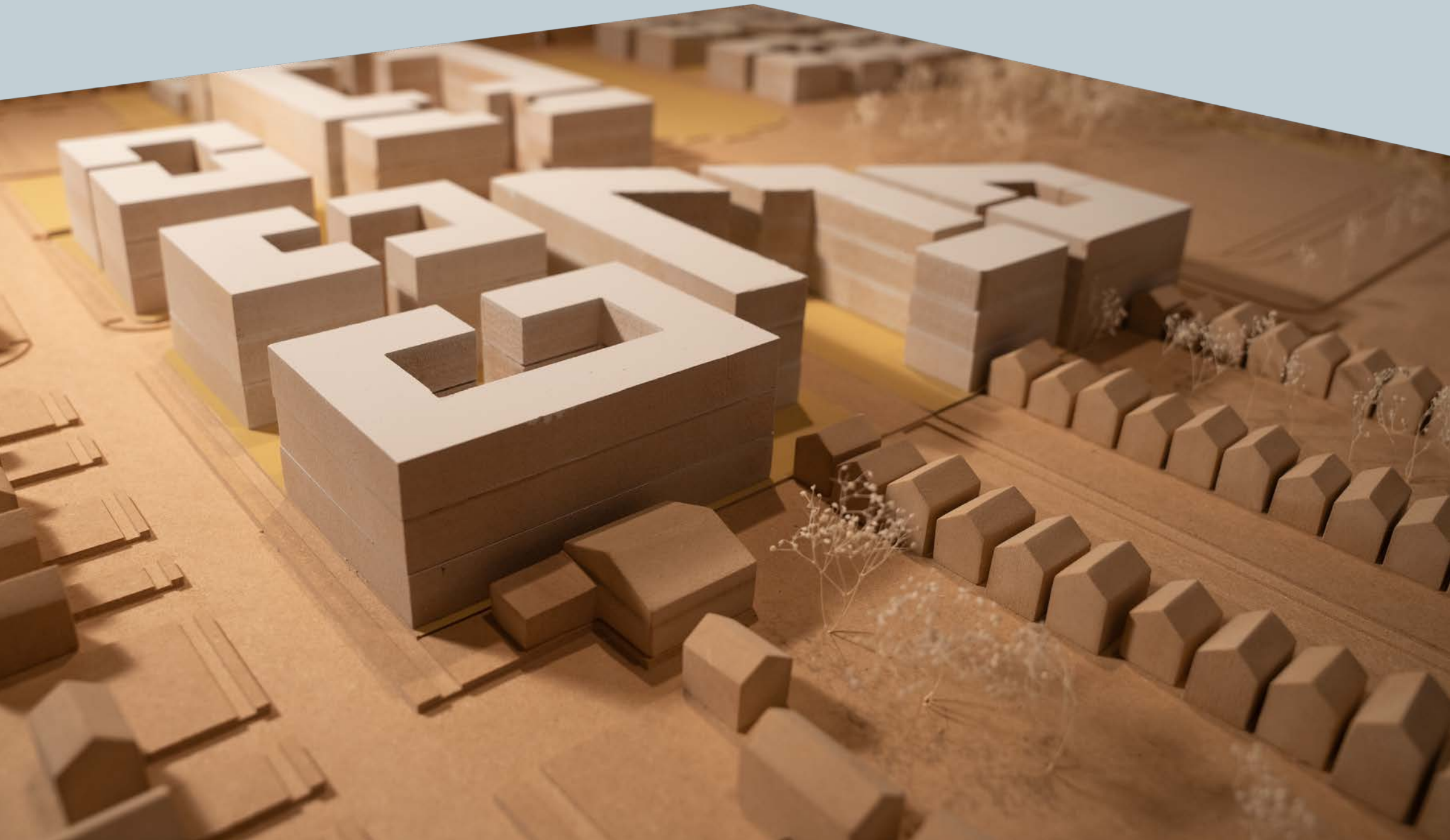


Having unrestricted hours in third places provides equal access for all members of the community to use and enjoy the space for various purposes, promoting social interaction, community building, and improved quality of life. It also allows for maximum utilization of public resources and infrastructure, ensuring the best use of taxpayer dollars.

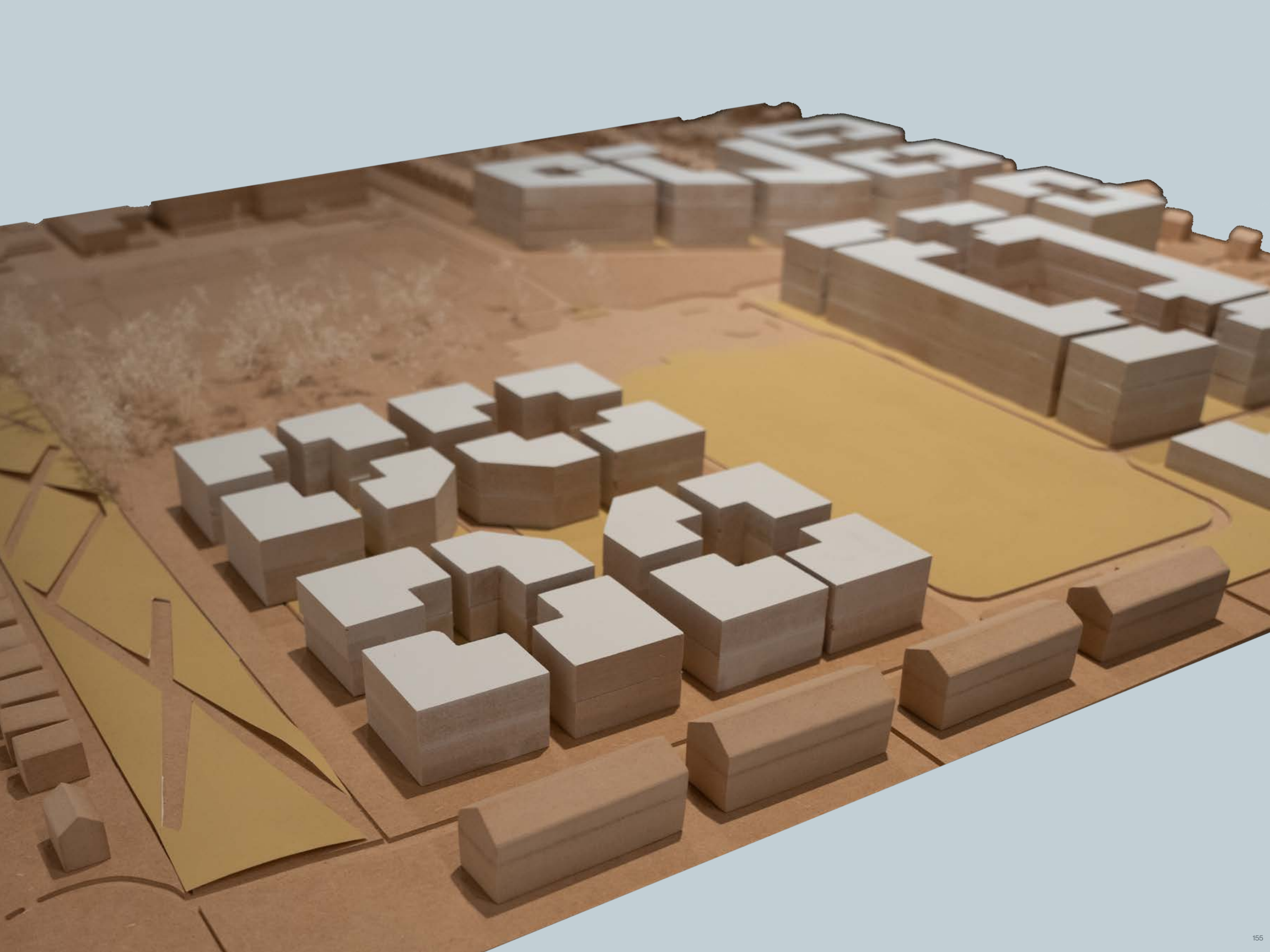
3.2 INTERVENTION PROPOSAL

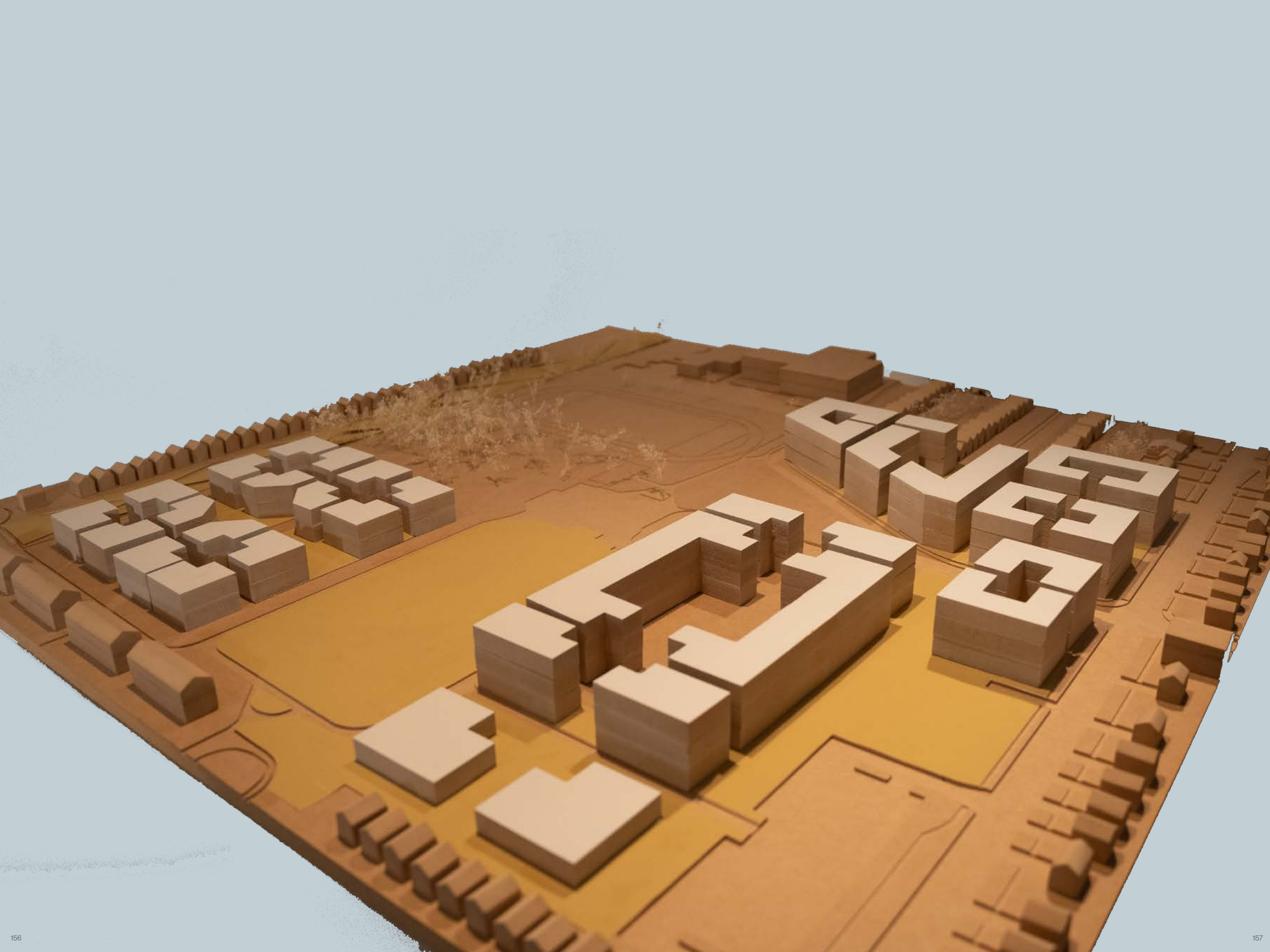




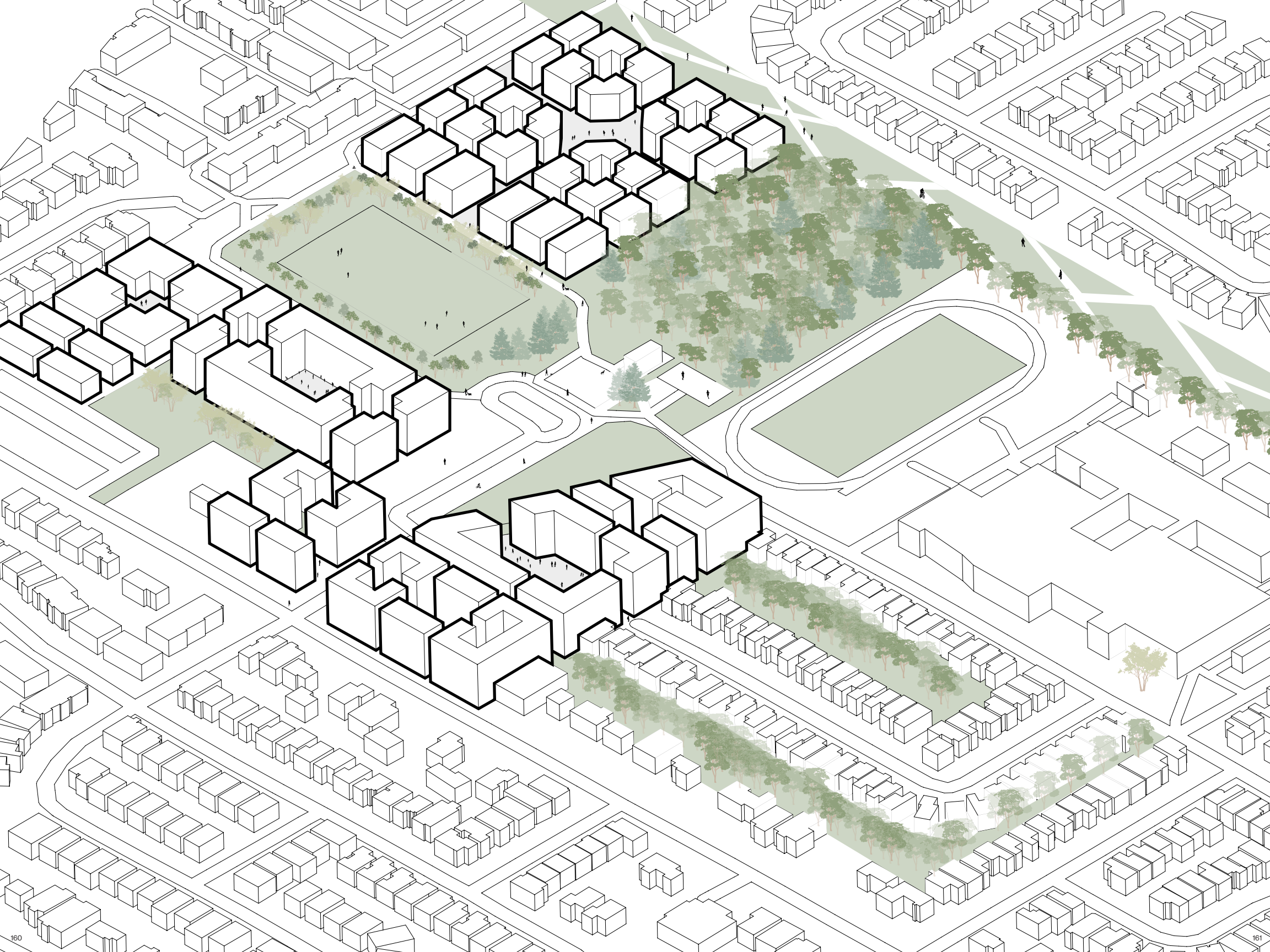


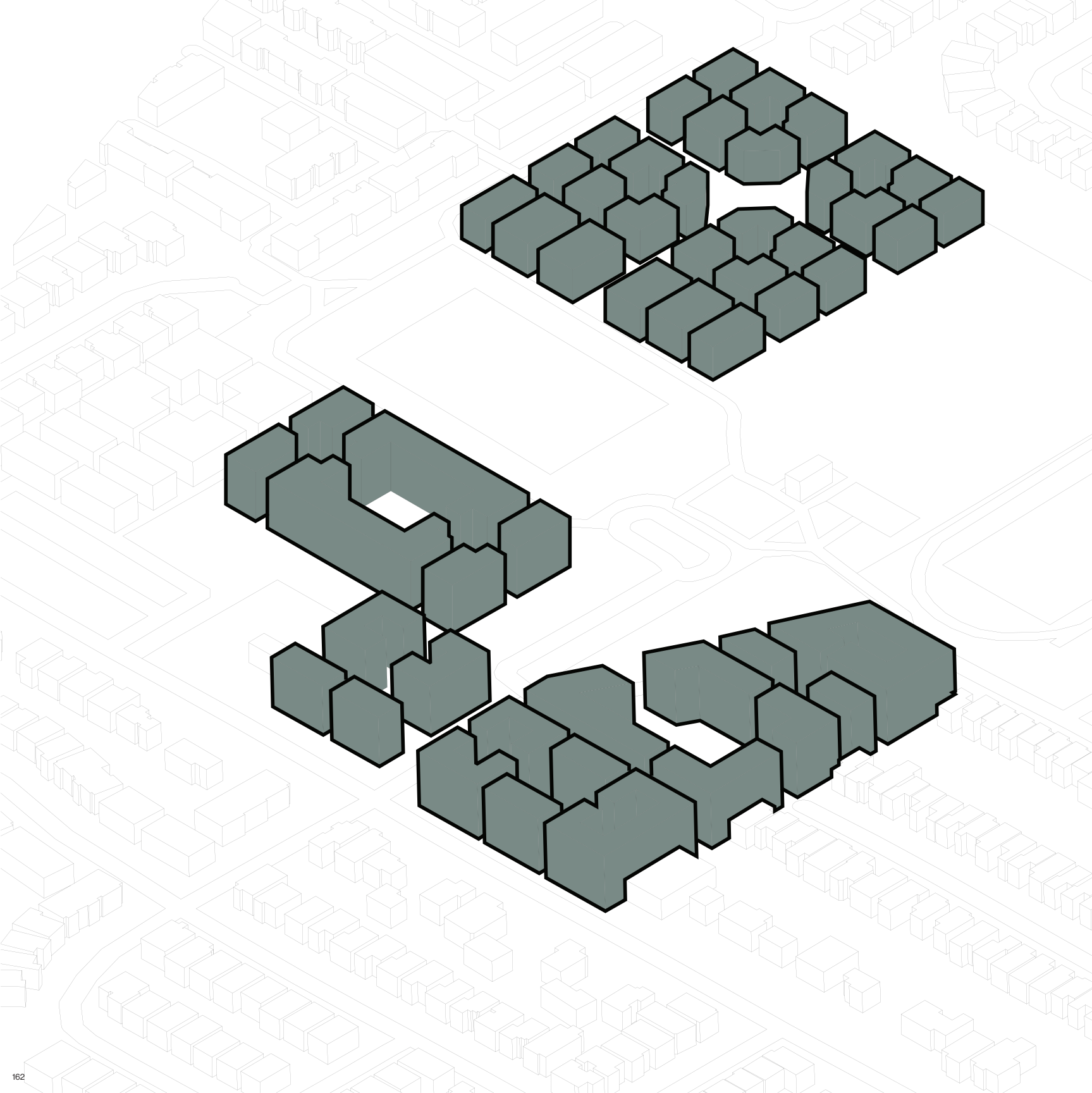






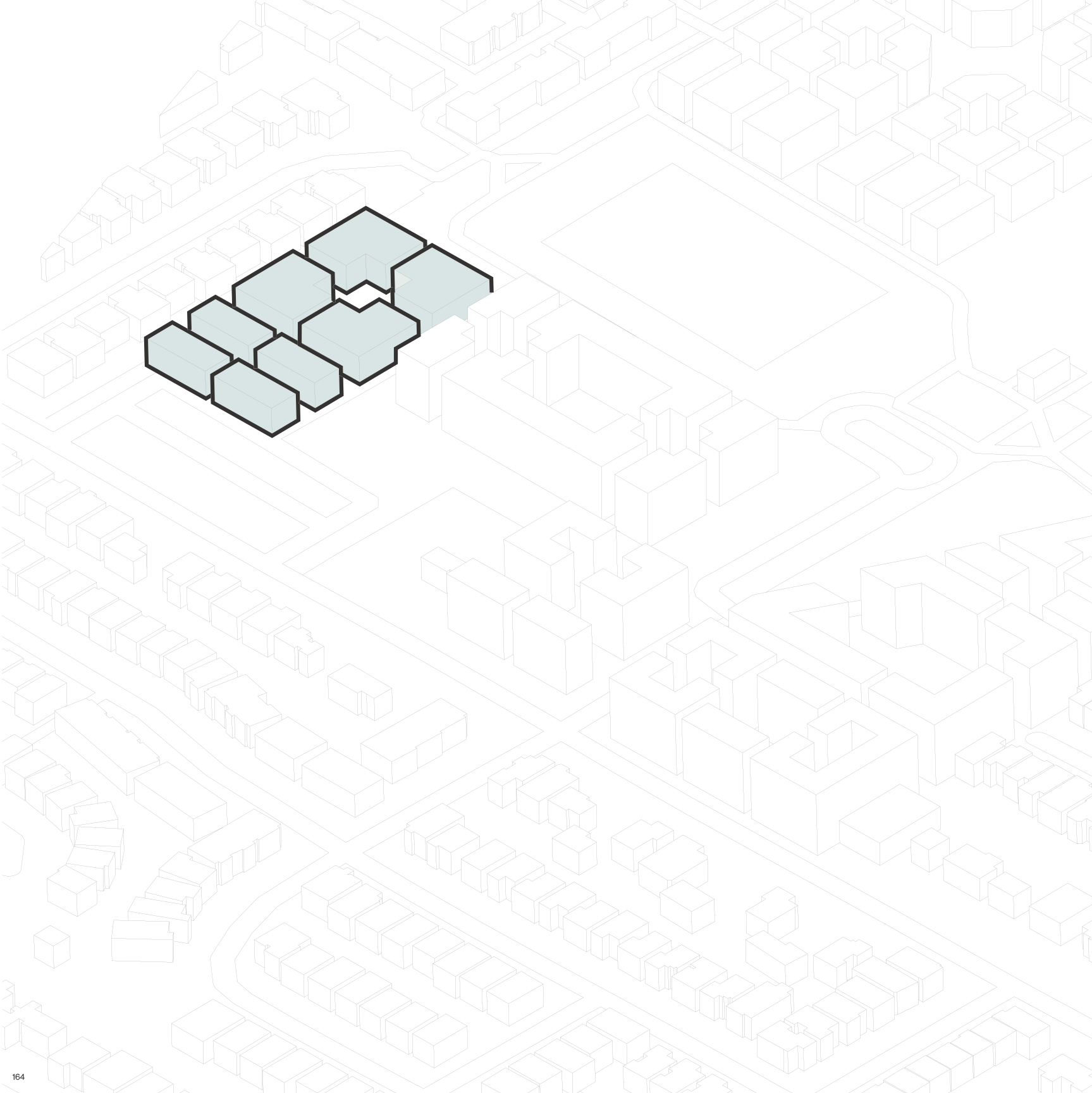






MIXED-USE

(Fig. 3.11) Proposal



RESIDENTIAL

(Fig. 3.12) Proposal



**PROPOSED
FIGURE GROUND**

(Fig. 3.13) Proposal figure ground

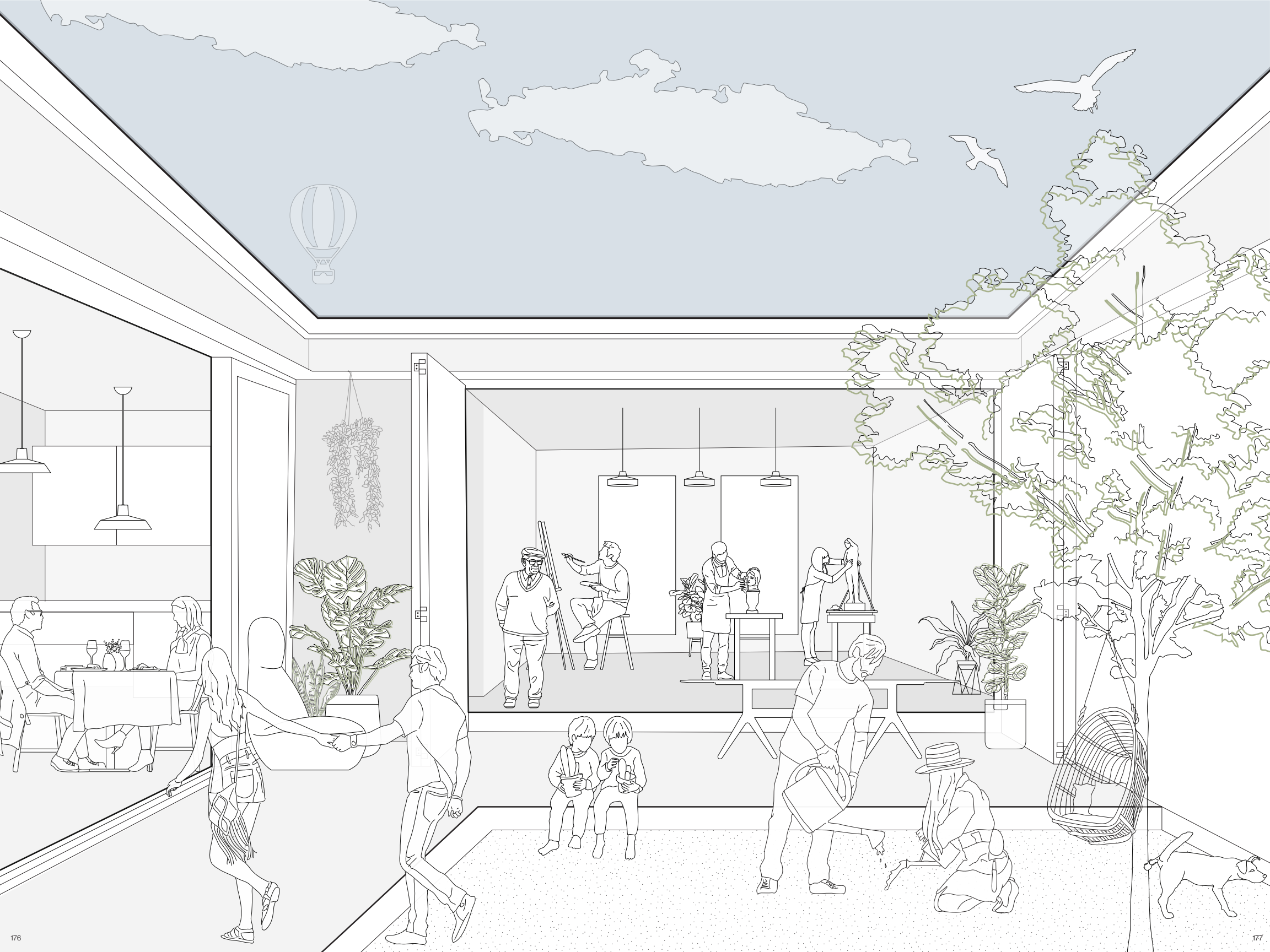




Signature







04

DISCUSSION

The implementation of third places in North American suburbs plays a critical role in strengthening the soft infrastructure of neighborhoods. The research findings in this thesis indicate several important steps can be taken to identify spatial opportunities for third places, determining community needs, evaluating limitations, and creating vibrant and accessible communal spaces with low limitations.

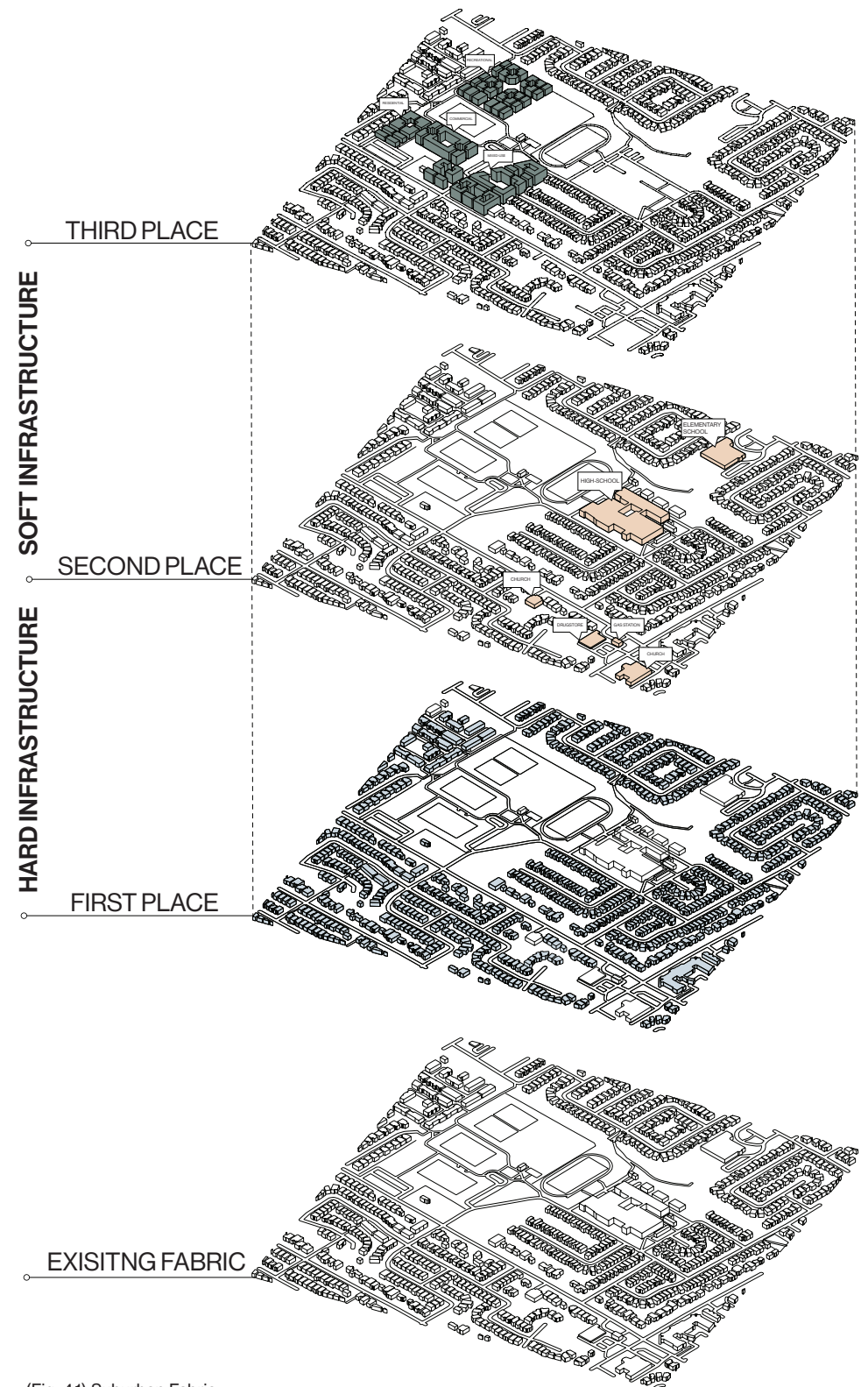
Mapping underutilized or non-active sites in a neighborhood is an effective method for identifying potential locations for third places. Through a spatial analysis in community developments, these underutilized areas can be transformed into vibrant communal spaces, fostering social connections and a sense of community.

Civic engagement is crucial for identifying community needs and ensuring that third places are tailored to the unique needs and desires of the community they serve. Engagements can facilitate community involvement in the planning and implementation process, ultimately creating third places that are appropriate to the context.

Evaluate the limitations of existing and future third places. A comprehensive approach using the density and diversity analysis method developed in this thesis to evaluate third place limitations will enable the creation of third places that are truly beneficial to the community they serve.

The Comprehensive Framework for Third Places provides a valuable tool for building vibrant communal spaces with low limitations. This framework provides the essential elements to implement the skeleton of a successful third place in suburban communities.

Through this research approach, it is possible to create third places that foster social connections, strengthen the sense of community, and improve the overall quality of life in North American suburban neighborhoods.



(Fig. 4.1) Suburban Fabric

Layering the Fabric of Suburbia

05

CONCLUSION

***In the North American suburbs, where
streets lay still,
Neighborhoods lack a communal thrill,
The soft infrastructure we seek to build,
To cultivate a sense of belonging instilled.***

***Third places, the heart of social life,
Where friends meet by chance, and ideas
come to life,
A library, a center, a cafe in walkable sight,
To gather people, to unite.***

***With soft infrastructure, we create a space,
Where bonds are forged, and memories in
place,
A neighborhood alive, through all senses,
with people, and their sound, all embraced.
And a sense of community, that cannot be
replaced.***

***Let us build the third places we need,
To plant the seeds of belonging, and let them
breed,
For a neighborhood to thrive, it must indeed,
Have soft infrastructure, to take the lead.***

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Hamilton Community Engagement Excerpts

APPENDIX B
Conceptual Framework

Community Interview Questions:

The following questions were used as conversation openers with community members living in Hamilton-Mountain Ontario.

Provided definition of third-place: The space outside of your home (first-place) and school or work (second place) where social encounters are formed.

Living in Hamilton-Mountain, do you feel like you had enough spaces outside your home and school/work to spend leisure time in?

If so, where are your third-places?

if you're not at home or at work where do you hangout?

Are these places proximate to you (within a walking distance)?

When & how often do you go?

Does this change seasonally (do you go only in winter or summer)?

If you feel as though there are not enough third-places, what types of third-places do you wish you had?

If you experienced a lack of a third-place, how did this affect your social life and personal life?

"We spent a lot of time during high school in a trap house, ya I feel like not having third-places led to crime. We didn't have anything to do or anywhere to be besides being on the street. In order to do anything you need money, and if you don't have money you do what needs to be done to feel normal. It would be nice if the YMCA or library would be open to midnight so we can chill after school but there was no places to go we wouldn't even be able to chill inside of the McDonalds because they wouldn't want a bunch of teenagers loitering. A lot of the friends I grew up with are now dealing with drug issues - it makes me cry thinking about it. All the lack of third-places also led to boredom, if there were more third-places we would use them. We all had big dreams of becoming athletes, maybe there could've been more facilities to support these activities that don't cost the price of our rent"
- Male, 20

"No, there weren't enough spaces, especially for my age group at the time and especially indoor places considering the Canadian cold weather. As a teenager, I only had one place to go to, it was either the public library or Tim Hortons. It wasn't a walking distance I had to either bike or take the bus which I could only do in the summer time. In the winter I didn't have a car since I had just come to Canada. I wish there were coffee shops for my age group or reading/study places that were hybrid reading and coffee shops. Places to play board games, something that is intellectually involved and very interactive. I think it would've allowed me to integrate into the Canadian culture much faster and have a place outside of school and the library to hang out with friends. A place where it is age appropriate and engaging in healthy activities. Not having that, made me more isolated because I didn't feel safe interacting with Canadians by attending parties since I didn't know the culture so I wasn't sure what these parties would lead to. I also couldn't interact with people at the library because that is a quiet place that people go to, to get their work done. So it made it hard to meet people who are on the same intellectual level as me and people who were interested in doing the same things that I enjoyed doing. It also took me longer time to truly know and understand the culture."
- Female, 27

"We would drive around and look for places to be. I usually hangout in the block I'm from, plazas, shisha bars. I would like to have more places to go out and eat and relax with friends, do homework go shopping. I only know how to interact with people that I know I don't know how to interact with others because I don't know if they had the same community upbringing"
- Male, 20

"I've lived in these suburbs for about 10 years now, and while there are some things I like about it, there are also some things that I find limiting. One thing that I've noticed is that there aren't really any good public places in my neighborhood that I can just walk to. You know, places like coffee shops or parks where people can get together or run into each other and talk. I think this lack of third places really limits my options for socializing, it can feel pretty isolating and boring especially in the winter. I think a community center close by would be great. Somewhere that people can go to read or talk. I think it's important for a neighborhood to have a sense of energy and life. When I walk down my street, it just feels a bit dull and uninviting, you don't see too many people walking around. There aren't many shops or restaurants, and the buildings are all pretty plain. I think this lack of visual interest discourages me from walking and exploring my neighborhood. I'd like to see more art or landmarks like fountains or statues, more shops and restaurants. I think these things would make my neighborhood more inviting and enjoyable to walk through. For example, in Europe when you walk down the street there is always something to do or someone to see, it's not residential houses only. I don't think that residential homes should ever be on main streets, the streets should be filled with restaurants, shops, and people."
- Male, 64

THIRD PLACES BUILDING THE SOFT INFRASTRUCTURE

