

RECORDING VANIER'S CHANGING IDENTITY THROUGH NEW URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores questions of identity and the character of a place. It will also deal with how this place maintains its individuality, or its genius loci, defined as a special irreplaceable quality that joins it to its greater context. The intention is to create a vessel for the preservation of the existing identity of a place for its existing residents, while evolving to accommodate new residents.

Urban strategies are diagrammatically developed across greater Vanier, a working-class, traditionally Francophone neighbourhood, the specific site to be developed architecturally for this project is situated on the western edge

of Vanier. The site itself, designated by the City of Ottawa as a “gateway” to the neighbourhood, deals with various design challenges such as a connection to the rest of the city, to the Rideau River, and a mediation of scale differences in the surrounding urban fabric. It also deals with sociopolitical challenges such as urban intensification, gentrification and cultural identity. The design proposal aims to set standards for what will be argued as “responsible architecture”. These standards aim to establish positive examples in the development of the rapidly evolving neighbourhood of Vanier.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-------|
| <i>Abstract</i> | Pg.3 |
| <i>Statement</i> | Pg.6 |
| Introduction | Pg.7 |
| Chapter 1: Vanier | |
| 1.1 <i>The Past</i> | Pg.10 |
| 1.2 <i>Francophone Militancy in Vanier</i> | Pg.17 |
| 1.3 <i>From Working Class to Gentrified</i> | Pg.25 |
| Chapter 2: Housing | |
| 2.1 <i>The Big Problem</i> | Pg.27 |
| 2.2 <i>Modern Housing Initiatives in Ottawa</i> | Pg.34 |
| 2.3 <i>Beaver Barracks Case Study</i> | Pg.39 |
| Chapter 3: The Public Realm | |
| 3.1 <i>The importance of public space</i> | Pg.50 |
| 3.2 <i>Shareable Cities</i> | Pg.57 |
| 3.3 <i>Place d'Youville Case Study</i> | Pg.63 |
| Chapter 4: The Proposal | |
| 4.1 <i>Intro</i> | Pg.68 |
| 4.2 <i>Site Analysis</i> | Pg.72 |
| 4.3 <i>An Urban Solution</i> | Pg.76 |
| 4.4 <i>The Nodes</i> | Pg.81 |
| 4.5 <i>Into The Site</i> | Pg.84 |

| | |
|--|--------|
| 4.6 <i>The Main Node: Reclaiming Cummings Island</i> | Pg.102 |
| 4.7 <i>Rethinking Housing</i> | Pg.119 |
| Conclusion | Pg.131 |
| Bibliography | Pg.133 |

STATEMENT

This thesis examines how an always-evolving urban public realm can continue to honour its past history and peoples while simultaneously creating a more vital and vibrant environment. Whereas increasing the vibrancy of a neighborhood is generally coupled to the erasure of authentic history via gentrification, must that always be the case? This thesis posits that by decanting key programmatic requirements of conventional housing to new urban infrastructure, a neighborhood's existing

character and affordability can be maintained together.

INTRODUCTION

The City of Ottawa has long been trying to revitalize working class neighbourhoods inside the city's green belt, turning these blue-collar neighbourhoods into posh areas for the city's white-collar elite. This process is tied closely to gentrification whereby larger main streets start being populated by new condominiums causing property values to soar based on the speculative practices by real estate agents and developers. These new and typically expensive building typologies often lead

to the displacement of existing residents who can no longer afford the higher costs of living.

The Glebe area, which is now known as an upscale mature neighbourhood, was the first in Ottawa to undergo this change in the 1970s when it transformed from a low-income working class neighbourhood to the trendy, modern and relatively expensive neighborhood we know today. More neighborhoods followed suit, as Westboro, and more recently to Hintonburg, began their

own transformations. From 2007 to 2013, average housing values soared in Hintonburg by seventy-three percent compared to the city's thirty one percent average increase¹.

Vanier, once the small independent village of Eastview, has become a dense social mosaic. It was once a haven for French-Canadians, but an abundance of social housing, cheap land costs and lower costing rental units over the

years has made it a home for many new immigrants as well. These factors and Vanier's proximity to downtown have made this neighbourhood attractive to developers, making it next in line for an "urban makeover". We thus observe the early stages of this process known as gentrification. This thesis aims to explore a specific site adjacent to the Cummings Bridge and Montreal Road which has been designated as a "gateway site" by the City of Ottawa, acting as the western entry portal into

¹ "Resale Buyers Brave the February Freeze." Ottawa Real Estate Board. March 4, 2015. Accessed March 10, 2015.

Vanier. The goal of this design thesis is to develop a site that will showcase how a neighbourhood can develop positively without displacing the core people who form its identity. This design thesis aims to have new housing serve as a landmark that is now clearly missing in the area and that will positively impact the lives of existing residents rather than merely accommodate a future population. It is important to propose a site strategy that commemorates the identity of Vanier while helping it evolve progressively into the future.

CHAPTER 1 : VANIER

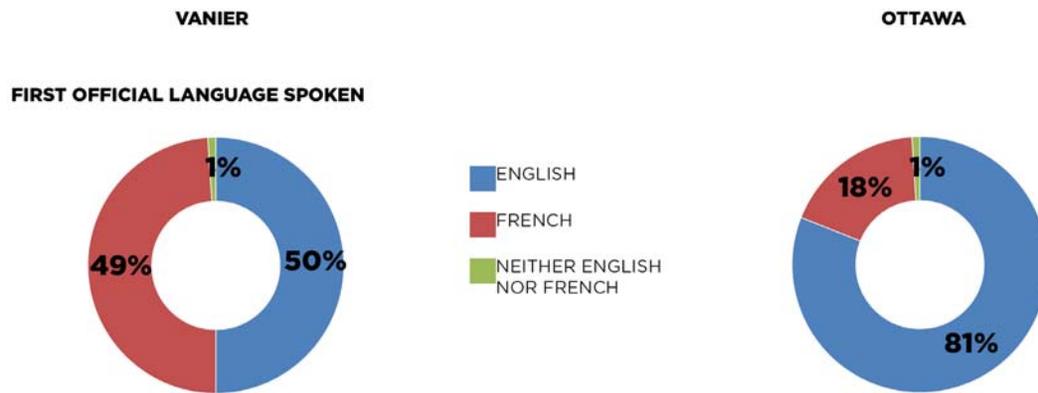
1.1 THE PAST

The neighbourhood of Vanier spans two kilometers between the Rideau River and St-Laurent Boulevard. Beechwood Avenue marks its northern boundary while McArthur Avenue separates it from Overbrook to the south.

This 2.8 km² community has quirks in its history that make it absolutely unique. It was formerly the only Canadian city completely situated within the boundaries of another city until it amalgamated with Ottawa in 2001. Its population reached about 20,000

habitants in 1969, which made it one of the densest cities in Canada before its unification with Ottawa. At that time approximately two thirds of those 20,000 residents were Francophone, establishing Vanier as a major French-Canadian stronghold outside of Quebec. Because of the recent gentrification, only 49% of Vanier's population self-identifies as French-speaking, which is an all-time low in the neighborhood's history yet still represents a number far greater than

FIGURE 1: FIRST OFFICIAL LANGUAGE SPOKEN



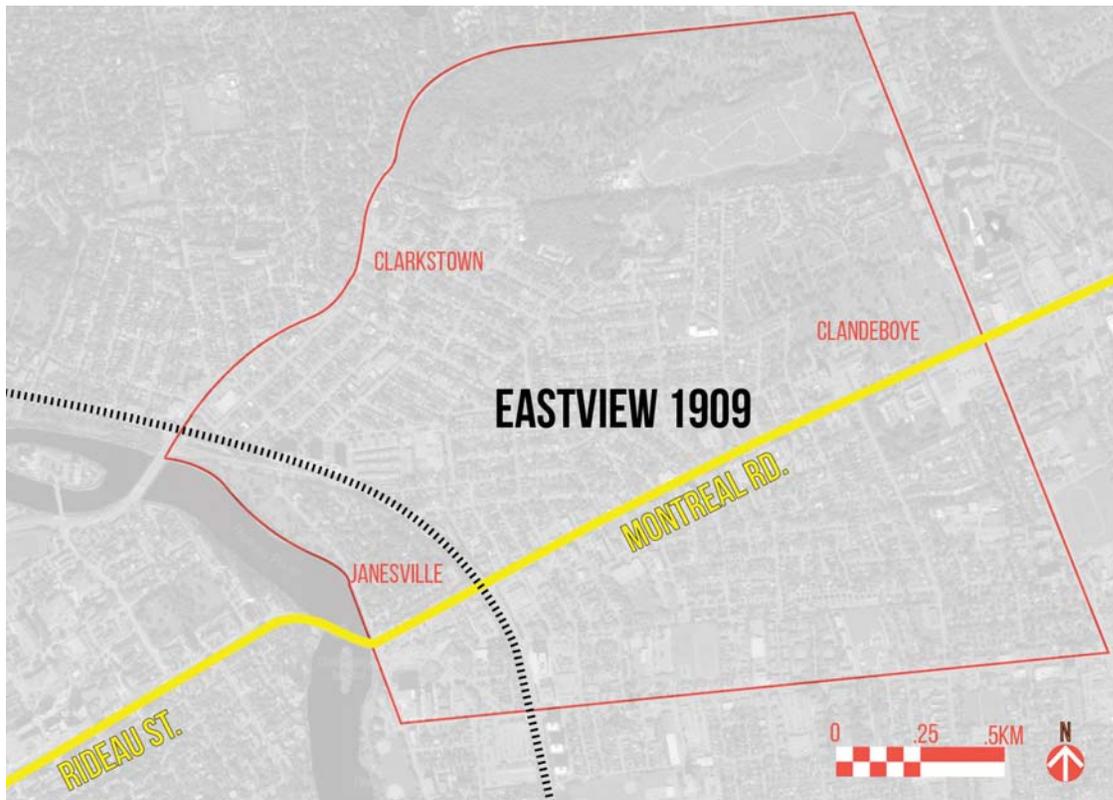
Source: NHS 2011

Ottawa’s average of 16%¹.

The present Vanier rests on what was previously the Township of Gloucester, named after the second Duke of Gloucester and Edinburgh and first known as Township B when it was first surveyed in 1792. It wasn’t until 1837 that the first rudimentary wooden bridge, named Cummings Bridge, was built connecting Rideau Street to Montreal road via an island in the Rideau River now known

1 “National Household Survey (NHS).” Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. May 8, 2013. Accessed January 10, 2015.

FIGURE 2: TOWNS OF JANESVILLE, CLANDEBOYE, AND CLARKSTOWN



as Cummings Island. Shortly after in 1840, Charles Cummings, the prosperous businessman who commissioned the bridge, moved into the new Cummings General Store with his family. The store was located on the island that housed the first post office in the township. Other important pioneer families such as McArthur, Clarke, and Sparks also later migrated to the township of Gloucester.²

² Glenn Clark. "A Historical Timeline for the Township of Gloucester." The Gloucester Historical Society. February 20, 2011. Accessed October 18, 2014. <http://www.gloucesterhistory.com/history.html>.

During this time, the village of Janesville formed adjacent to the bridge, along with the village Clandeboye to the east separated by the Bytown and Prescott Railway, which ran on what is now Vanier Parkway from Manotick to New Edinburg and eventually Bytown. Businesses started to develop along Montreal Road and the area saw a quick expansion due to the link created by the Cummings Bridge. Further north, just south of New Edinburgh, the village of Clarkstown developed simultaneously.

The development of these small towns depended on the lumber industry, which banked the Rideau River, as well as agriculture and farming along the river's edges. With the rapid expansion of the area, Charles Cumming commissioned the construction of a second wooden bridge in 1845 and collected tolls on the bridge and along Montreal Road. More than two decades later, in 1868, McArthur Avenue was built through the McArthur Farm, which offered the opportunity to bypass the tolls of Montreal Road. The City of

FIGURE 3: CUMMINGS BRIDGE 1920'S



Source: Library and Archives Canada

Ottawa constructed the third bridge, this time built of iron trusses, in 1893 to take its place. It was promptly named Bingham Bridge after Samuel Bingham, the alderman who headed the project. However, this stirred controversy as the name plates bearing “Cummings Bridge” were taken off on several occasions.³

In the early 20th century, these three towns came together to form the Village of Eastview, which would later change its name to the City of Vanier. William

³ Ibid.

FIGURE 4: ORIGINAL STREET GRID OF EASTVIEW 1879



Source: Vaniernow.ca scanned from Illustrated Historical Atlas of Carleton County, H. Belden & Co., 1879

Street, now Palace Road, was chosen in 1908 as the location for the first Eastview town hall. The street grid of Palace Street, Montgomery Street, Selkirk Avenue, and many other streets in the Janeville area remains intact today as a contrast to the development pattern that, over time, overtook the original small cluster of homes and small businesses. It is during this period that Eastview started to develop the character of the self-sustained small town that would for a long period fight amalgamation with the

larger City of Ottawa; it is this unique character of resistance to Anglophone cultural dominance that this thesis aims to preserve as the neighbourhood continues to evolve. In 1913, the village of Eastview was able to establish itself as a town with its own Police and Fire Departments, maintaining its independence from the City of Ottawa's services until they were absorbed by the Ottawa emergency services in the mid 1980s.⁴

4 Benali. "Vanier: French-Speaking Bastion in Ontario." Encyclopedia of French Cultural Heritage of North America. December 15, 2009. Accessed November 3, 2014.

1.2 FRANCOPHONE MILITANCY IN VANIER

During the same period, Eastview started to affirm itself as a stronghold for French Canadians. Shortly after its establishment, the French-Canadian Association of Ontario (Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario) relocated to Eastview to promote French-Canadian rights in the area. A similar “secret” organization known as ‘L’Ordre de Jacques Cartier’ (The Order of Jacques Cartier) was established in the basement of the Saint-Charles church on Beechwood Avenue, contrasting

with the typically Irish Freemasons, to protect the rights of disadvantaged French-Canadians. The need for such organizations stemmed from the fact that Francophones always felt like a colonized people as a result of British Canada’s oppression of the French.⁵ The preferred method of suppression was assimilation through restricting education in French. In the 1890s laws stating that public schooling was to be taught only in

⁵ Christine Fauteux. “Le signe secret: Ordre De Jacques Cartier.” HISTORIA TV. January 1, 2011. Accessed January 10, 2015.

English were passed. Francophones were forced to create their own private school system, rendering French schooling unaffordable for the average French-Canadian.⁶ Furthermore, positions of power in the federal government were strictly reserved for Anglophones. Many Francophones were unable to receive services in French. Even the Catholic Church in Canada was naming Irish bishops in most of its dioceses in Ontario

⁶ Gerald Hallowell. *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History*. Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press, 2004.

and Quebec in Francophone majority areas, not to mention the rest of the provinces. A strong French-Canadian solidarity emerged in response to a serious blow dealt by the Conservative Ontario Provincial government of Sir James P. Whitney in 1912, when it introduced Regulation 17 that prohibited teaching in French after the first two years of elementary school. Many organizations, namely the French Canadian newspaper, *Le Droit*, formed in order to give a voice to silenced Francophones. Regulation 17

was in effect for fifteen years. Senator John M. Godfrey, in 1978, expressed it as a ‘national catastrophe’ and went on to say,

*“Most Quebeckers and the French-speaking minority in Ontario are still very familiar indeed with the history of Regulation 17 and there is still some lingering resentment about it 50 years after it was repealed.”*⁷

In the 1960s, the province of Quebec underwent a major socio-political transition now known as the “Quiet

⁷ John M. Godfrey. “Regulation 17.” The Globe and Mail, May 29, 1978.

Revolution”. This era saw the province elect the Liberal party on a strong reform platform, namely the establishment of their own ministry of health and education. Over the next 20 years, Quebec closed in on itself and developed a strong desire for sovereignty.⁸ The province disassociated itself from the rest of French-Canadians, leaving the Francophones who resided outside of Quebec to develop their own unique

⁸ René Durocher. “Quiet Revolution.” The Canadian Encyclopedia. July 30, 2013. Accessed January 15, 2015.

FIGURE 5: L'ÉCOLE ANDRÉ-LAURENDEAU



Source: Vanier Museoparc (photo by Benoit Aubry)

culture. This helped strengthen the role of Eastview as a Francophone stronghold in Ottawa, and Ontario where there was already a strong French presence.

Although regulation 17 was repealed, education in French was limited to certain “special English” classes aimed at Anglophones. Some steps were taken in 1948 to have more inclusive classes strictly for Francophones in “bilingual” high schools. From the late 1950s onward, more and more classes were offered in French, leading the government of

Ontario to claim that:

“... the potential contribution of Franco-Ontarians to our society is too great to allow them to dissipate their energies and abilities because they are denied adequate opportunities for furthering their education to the utmost of their abilities ... It is a fundamental necessity of 1967, that the Franco-Ontarians be enabled to experience the full benefits of our educational system. Encompassed in this recognition of necessity is the proposal to extend what now is being done to provide, within the public school system of Ontario, secondary schools in which the language of instruction is

French".⁹

This eventually led to the opening of the first exclusively French high school in Eastview, more than a hundred years after confederation. Although French-Canadians were now allowed to study in their native tongue, the problem of inferior education still persisted.

French Canadians showed a very high dropout rate compared to their

9 Thomas H.B. Symons. "John Parmenter Roberts, Premier of Ontario, 1961-71." Ontario Heritage Trust. February 14, 2014. Accessed March 29, 2015. transcript of speech given during Ontario's Heritage Week celebrations

Anglophone counterparts. A federal study on bilingualism and biculturalism in 1969 showed that only 3% of French-Canadians were reaching thirteenth grade in Ontario whereas the number of anglophones were nearing 20%.¹⁰ The repercussions of this inferior education were felt in Eastview, which became a working class neighbourhood with a Francophone majority.

10 Louis-Gabriel Bordeleau. "L'école Secondaire Et Les Franco-Ontariens: Expression Des Besoins Et Perception Des Services." Canadian Journal of Education / Revue Canadienne De L'éducation Vol. 8, no. No. 4 (1983).

However, L'ordre de Jacque Cartier, which held its activities in the basement of the Saint-Charles church on Beechwood Avenue, continued to record many other French-Canadian successes such as the Richelieu International, a Francophone organization similar to the Knights of Columbus, which now operates 275 clubs internationally. The order is also credited with bringing the banking cooperative Caisse Populaire Desjardins to Ontario from Quebec starting in the 1940s and is said to have opened up to three quarters

of the banks in Ontario first operating in the basement of the Saint Charles church in Eastview.¹¹

Eastview was and remains home to the first bilingual hospital in Ontario to serve the Francophone population in the region. It was the congregation of Daughters of Wisdom located on Montreal road in Eastview under father Edmond Ducharme who fought to have a facility

11 Marthe Hamelin. 25 Ans De Succès Livre Souvenir — 25E Anniversaire De L'Alliance Des Caisses Populaires De L'Ontario Limitée. Sudbury, Ontario: L'Alliance Des Caisses Populaires De L'Ontario Limitée, 2004.

FIGURE 6: L'HÔPITAL MONTFORT



Source: Montfort Hospital Archives

that would offer French services. With help from the provincial government, and a loan from the Catholic Church, the Montfort Hospital would open its doors in 1953¹². The hospital would later prove the resilience of French-Canadians on a national scale when it was threatened by closure in the early 1990s. It remains the only Francophone hospital in Ontario.

In 1963, Eastview was incorporated as a City. Shortly after, to reflect Eastview's

12 Jean Yves Pelletier. *Chronologie De L'histoire De L'hôpital Montfort D'Ottawa*. Ottawa, Ontario: L'Hôpital Montfort, 2013.

strong Francophone presence, now two thirds of city's population, the city was renamed to Vanier after George Vanier, the first Francophone Governor General. He had died two years earlier. Even though Vanier was becoming a seminal area for the rights of Francophones, French-Canadians still struggled for equality. In 1971, the average Anglophone salary was 350\$ greater than Franco-Ontarians.¹³ The demographic profile

13 Bordeleau. "L'école Secondaire Et Les Franco-Ontariens: Expression Des Besoins Et Perception Des Services."

of Francophones in Ontario resembled that of poor and uneducated immigrants. In his book 'L'école secondaire et les franco-ontariens: Expressions des besoins et perception des services' (High School and Franco-Ontarians: Expression of needs and Perception of Services) Louis-Gabriel Bordeleau claims: "Franco- Ontarians have always been regrouped in occupations with far lesser revenue and prestige. (Translation)"¹⁴ Francophones were almost absent in

14 Ibid.

leadership positions such as owners of large companies, factory administrators and banking institutions. Again, this was a direct result of being handicapped by their lack of education. Statistics in 1961 show that 79% of Franco-Ontarians had not made it to high school, compared to 53% Anglophones, and only 3% of them reached university.¹⁵

15 Ibid.

1.3 FROM WORKING CLASS TO GENTRIFIED

As a result, the neighbourhood of Vanier remained a low income, working class neighbourhood condemned by high crime rates, poor living conditions and a lack of services. Despite many of these issues and the dwindling Francophone population in Vanier, it remained its own city until it was forced to amalgamate with the city of Ottawa in 2001; at the time of amalgamation, Vanier's francophone represented about 50% of the population.

In time, however, the baby-boomers who bought homes in the 1970s and

1980's have been gradually investing in their homes and cleaning up the neighbourhood one house at a time. Other initiatives such as the creation of the Vanier Community Association and the Vanier Business Improvement Area in the 1980s have worked to bring development to the area. In the past decade, crime and prostitution, responsible for Vanier's bad reputation, were on the decline and the neighbourhood was looking more attractive to real estate developers and speculators.

FIGURE 7: 90 LANDRY STREET - CLARIDGE TOWERS



Source: ottawahomesandcondos.com

In an article in the Ottawa Business Journal, Mark Kaluski, the chair of the Quartier Vanier Business Improvement Area, states that “Vanier is on the cusp of a major gentrification” with over 795 million dollars invested in the neighbourhood.¹⁶ However, most of these new developments are condos and poor architecture. Towers, such as Claridge’s twenty storey condo towers on Vanier Parkway, are poorly designed

¹⁶ Jacob Serebrin. (2014, April 21). Vanier BIA hopes to alter perceptions, boost investments. Ottawa Business Journal.

and, although they are adding more housing stock, they are doing nothing to maintain the main affordability in the area. This open-door approach to developers, explained in the same article, is in some ways helping the speeding of the area’s development,¹⁷ but if not approached responsibly with the good of the community in mind, will end up causing more harm than good.

¹⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2: HOUSING

2.1 THE BIG PROBLEM

Still affected by its challenges of the past, Vanier, traditionally a low working-class neighbourhood, is still struggling with poverty and crime. This amplifies the consequence of Ottawa's poor social housing policies, since a great number of people require some sort of subsidized housing. The Rideau-Vanier ward is where 15% of non-market units in Ottawa are located. The neighbourhood, which was self-administered until amalgamation in 2001, is the victim of years of poor planning that resulted in the

erection of many substandard buildings and streets that are now in disrepair. War-time bungalows built during the Second World War with limited building supplies and a large number of low-rise apartment buildings make up the fabric of the neighbourhood. Many of these buildings are the result of a surge in the 1950s when housing in Eastview (Vanier) was in high demand due to the rise in population caused by the post WWII baby boom. However, 70 years later, many of these typical 1950's low-rise blocks

FIGURE 8: 368-420 BLAKE BOULEVARD, VANIER



Source: maps.google.ca

FIGURE 9: 368-420 BLAKE BOULEVARD, VANIER (AERIAL)



Source: maps.google.ca

are in disrepair and in many cases have poor urban conditions that have led to the decay of the streets on which they are located. The same issue plagues most war-time housing in the area. War-time houses were typically built as affordable shelter for people who worked towards the war efforts as well as veterans and their families. These standardized, inexpensive house types were intended to be temporary suburbs, but many of them remain standing today. Up to 30,000 houses were built between 1941 and 1947

by Wartime Housing Limited that later became the CMHC.¹

The 2011 national household survey showed that almost 45% of the housing in Vanier was composed of apartment buildings under five stories. Another 20% of this total was apartments over five stories², meaning that the neighborhood consists of almost two thirds rental,

1 History of Wartime Houses. (208, June 1). Retrieved February 15, 2015, from <http://www.nowhouseproject.com/aboutHistory.php>

2 National Household Survey (NHS). (2013, May 8). Retrieved January 10, 2015, from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/index-eng.cfm>

compared to Ottawa’s average, which is on par with the Canadian average of two thirds ownership. In fact, detached homes only make up about 15% of Vanier’s total housing stock, whereas in Ottawa that figure is closer to 45%. Furthermore, Vanier is home to a large percentage of Ottawa’s subsidized housing. The ‘70s were a time of social reform, “an era of community activism”³ as Sewell calls it in his book *Houses and*

3 John Sewell. (1994). *Social Housing*. In *Houses and homes: Housing for Canadians*. Toronto: James Lorimer &.

Homes: Housing for Canadians, where many religious and community groups fought for housing policy reform. The federal government adopted the National Housing Act in 1973, which contributes to not-for-profit housing by creating programs to provide loans for 100% of the capital costs of projects as well as establishing regulations on unit prices and rent control policies. There was great resistance by the public concerning the government's role in housing in Canada. Sewell claims that many shared the view

that “social housing [was said] to be just another government program foisted on an unsuspecting public”⁴. This mentality contributed to the rise of ‘nimbyism’ – Nimby being an acronym for ‘Not in My Backyard’, where many social housing developments were created in parts of the city where they would face the least resistance, namely in lower-income neighbourhoods like Vanier and principally the Somerset Ward in Ottawa. In the fifteen years following 1974,

⁴ Ibid.

FIGURE 10: MARK AVENUE HOUSING, VANIER



Source: maps.google.ca

FIGURE 11: MARK AVENUE HOUSING, VANIER (AERIAL)



Source: maps.google.ca

17,000 social housing units were created throughout Canada, with the bulk of them being in Ontario. However, in 1989, a struggling economy sent housing prices spiraling down, leading high vacancy rates for at market-rent housing. Many social-housing projects function on the basis of income mix, where profits of market-rentals contribute towards the subsidized units. But with the increase of vacancy rates, these projects were forced to rent at a rent-geared-to-income basis, which Sewell claims increased the

ratio of low- income tenants in some projects,⁵ leading to poor conditions. With this decline in the economy, the federal government pulled most of their funding in the early '90s after having funded 50 000 co-op units and 90 000 nonprofit units in the past 17 years⁶. Part of the tab was picked up by the provincial government, but for the most part, private nonprofit organizations and community groups were left to find new

5 Ibid. p.175

6 Ibid. p.174

approaches to finance the construction and maintenance of housing projects. Sewell claims that:

“[the] CMHC squeezed Maximum Unit Prices so tightly that construction quality suffered, [just when it most] needed careful attention...”⁷

The combination of poorly constructed buildings and the lack of funding from the government led to many of these buildings in Ontario, especially in places in Vanier where multiple large housing projects were

7 Ibid. p.176

located, fall into states of disrepair,
which is the case to the present today.

2.2 MODERN HOUSING INITIATIVES IN OTTAWA

Affordable housing continues to be a problem today. In Vanier, the need for affordability is even more pronounced - in 2005 the national household survey showed that individuals in Vanier made up to ten thousand dollars less per year than the Ottawa average. Household income showed an even greater gap, where households in Vanier represented thirty-thousand-dollars less per year than the average Ottawa family.⁸

⁸ National Household Survey (NHS). (2005). Retrieved February 17, 2015, from <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/index-eng.cfm>

Affordable housing is a national issue, but its absence of course hits harder in areas with a much lower income. Presently, up to 7,920 households in the Rideau-Vanier ward spend more than thirty percent of their incomes on shelter-related expenses⁹. This is part of a vicious cycle that contributes to low-income neighbourhoods remaining that way. A passage from “Housing Needs in Ottawa : An Overview” written by the City of Ottawa expresses that

⁹ Ibid.

“Children living in unaffordable housing situations resulting in frequent moves have been found to underperform in school with long-term consequences for their capacity to participate in the labour market.”¹⁰

These children have a much harder time getting out of these difficult situations and end up in the same financial positions as their parents. The same report clearly indicated that there is a need for affordable housing in Ottawa as 9,717 households were on the waiting

¹⁰ The City of Ottawa Housing Services. (2013). *Housing Needs in Ottawa : An Overview*. Ottawa, Ontario: The City of Ottawa.

list for subsidized housing in early 2013¹¹.

To address this, the City of Ottawa developed a ten-year plan in 2013 with the aim of creating more affordable housing units and allocating more funding to repairing the existing housing stock. They had hoped to create 130 new affordable housing units by 2015 through the Investing in Affordable Housing Program, as well as using the “Ontario Renovates Program” in order to repair up to 200 homes for low income residents.

¹¹ Ibid.

Although the number of people on the affordable housing waiting list decreased by seven percent in the two years after the plan was released, the city has a long way to go. This has been a growing concern for years prior to 2013. In a CBC article from October 2007, a group that advocates for the homeless claims that the City of Ottawa is “failing to come close to its targets for creating new housing for low

income families”¹² and comes nowhere near the goal of having 25 percent of new housing stock be affordable for families below the 30th percentile of income. In the same CBC article, Alex Cullen, the Bay Ward Councilor says “The housing market doesn’t respond because they’re [developers] making more money elsewhere” and adds that “In many

12 Marissa Nelson. (2007, October 22). Ottawa’s affordable housing policy needs ‘teeth’ to meet targets: Advocate. CBC News. Retrieved January 12, 2015, from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/ottawa-s-affordable-housing-policy-needs-teeth-to-meet-targets-advocate-1.679624>

cases, “elsewhere” is large homes and luxury condos that low-income families can’t afford”¹³. This is the situation in Vanier now with the early stages of gentrification. Developers are coming in and buying inexpensive land close to downtown and are building large condominium towers that low income families, many of them francophone, cannot afford. However, some new developments in Ottawa have been a positive improvement and a great success

¹³ Ibid.

in regards to affordability and good design. One such example is The Beaver Barracks, created by the Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation (CCOC) “whose mission is to create, maintain and promote housing for low and moderate income people”¹⁴. Designed by Barry J. Hobin and Associates Architects Inc, it provides a multitude of unit types and affordability while maintaining a very desirable urban presence. It was short

¹⁴ Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation. (2014, June 20). About Us. Retrieved March 30, 2015.

listed as a top ten international finalist
for the World Habitat Award in 2013.¹⁵

15 Sousa, S. (2014, August 13). Beaver Barracks and Sustainable Community Development - Site Tour. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from <http://cagbcottawa.ca/cagbcorc/index.php/read/green-buildings-in-ottawa/50-beaver-barracks-and-sustainable-community-development-site-tour>

FIGURE 12: BEAVER BARRACKS



Source: hobinarc.com

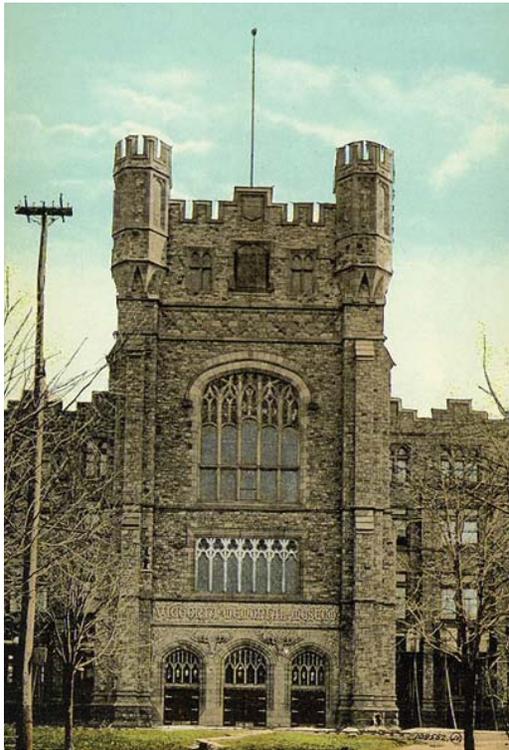
2.3 BEAVER BARRACKS CASE STUDY

The World Habitat Awards recognizes projects internationally that “provide practical and innovative solutions to current housing needs and problems”.¹⁶ The Beaver Barracks in downtown Ottawa well demonstrates how affordable housing can be inserted in a city’s core and not only provide a safe and beautiful place to live for its residents, but also an urban presence that contributes to the embellishment of the surrounding

community. This was accomplished by the CCOC through the city’s “Action Ottawa” programme, which aims to promote the development of affordable housing. In collaboration with Barry J. Hobin and Associates Architects, the CCOC developed a sustainable housing complex focused around community infrastructure to meet the needs for their housing. As noted earlier, most new housing in Ottawa takes on the form of condominiums, which Graeme Hussey, Development Manager for the

16 World Habitat Awards. (n.d.). About the Awards. Retrieved January 22, 2015, from <http://www.worldhabitatawards.org/about/?lang=00>

FIGURE 13: MUSEUM OF NATURE



Source: Toronto Public Library

CCOC claims “in the last 10 years has threatened the mixed-income nature of the area, eroding the existing social fabric through gentrification”¹⁷. The CCOC would use its strong proven track record and experience in creating affordable housing in Ottawa to counter this phenomenon by putting together their biggest project yet. The design was

17 World Habitat Awards. (n.d.). CCOC Beaver Barracks Development. Retrieved March 30, 2015, from <http://www.world-habitatawards.org/winners-and-finalists/project-details.cfm?lang=00&theProjectID=9E55F401-15C5-F4C0-996EC79CB668C53A>

achieved not only by the architect and the client, but by consulting the community via integrated design workshops in order to have the whole team thinking in an innovative and collaborative way about this project.

In order to celebrate its history, the Beaver Barracks is named after a WWII military barracks that formerly occupied the site. This fits a strong heritage component that influenced the design, which sought to be respectful of the context, namely the Museum of Nature

and the Windsor Arms Apartments, which are important turn of the century structures. The project's five buildings house a total of 254 units for mixed income levels: 20% subsidized units, 40% below market rent (small subsidy), and 40% at market rent. Over time, the market rent units pay for the subsidized units. The perimeter development is organized around a large community garden and has facades on three streets. Being Downtown, the Beaver Barracks are located near schools, recreational

amenities and public transit. This is essential in the CCOC's philosophy "that keeping families downtown is critical to the social and economic health of the community".¹⁸ Accessibility and "visitability" are also major features in this design as 89 percent of the units can be entered by people in wheelchairs and 10 per cent of the units are fully accessible.

18 Action Ottawa. (2007). Action Ottawa: Affordable housing initiative project brief. Ottawa, Ontario: The City of Ottawa. P.6

FIGURE 14: BEAVER BARRACKS SITE PLAN



Source: Action Ottawa - Beaver Barracks Project Brief, 2007

The project was built in two phases. First, apartments were built fronting onto Metcalfe Street, the eastern boundary of the site, with a new EMS station to replace the former station that was on Catherine Street. Also, during this phase a four-and-a-half storey building was built along Argyle Street to the north, as well as two three-and-a-half storey stacked town home buildings that encircle the large central community garden. The use of town houses, in the central part as well as the base of the Argyle building,

is to maximize grade- accessible family oriented rentals. Townhouses provide an added benefit in that each unit has a private entry at grade that allows the structure to feel more humanly scaled. This orientation has many benefits, one being that it allows “children to play safely within the protective realm of their parents and neighbours eyes and ears”¹⁹ as many units face the inner courtyard. In their urban setting, the buildings also act as a sound barrier from the 417 highway,

19 Ibid

just south of the site, and other adjacent streets thus creating a pleasant park-like environment in the center. The use of the community garden as the central space is a direct response to the voices of community groups such as the Bytown Urban Gardeners who have operated an organic urban garden on this site while it was vacant for over fifteen years. Their mandate has always been to educate the public through workshops and events. To this day, they continue to teach low-income families how to grow their own

FIGURE 15: BEAVER BARRACKS CENTRAL COURTYARD



Source: © Doublespace Photography - Archdaily

FIGURE 16: TOWNHOUSE ENTRANCE



Source: © Doublespace Photography - Archdaily

FIGURE 17: BEAVER BARRACKS COMMUNITY GARDEN



Source: © Doublespace Photography - Archdaily

food in their newly expanded garden.

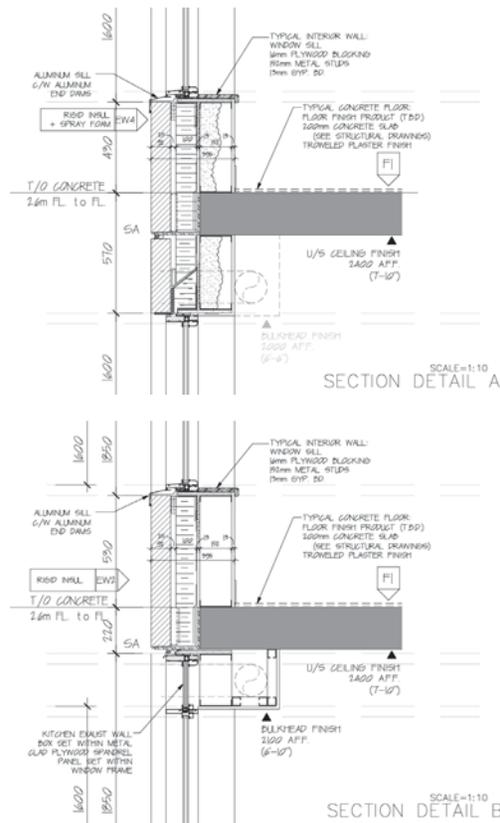
Gord Lorimer, project architect for the Beaver Barracks, said that the focus was to have an important social impact in designing the project in order to create as many opportunities as possible to meet strangers and neighbours on the site.²⁰ They achieved this with simple means such as providing a public laundry room, garbage room, and of course basing the design around a large public

garden. Furthermore, the Catherine Street apartment building was to house a ground floor community amenity to host events in order to educate tenants on how to be more energy efficient and sustainable: talks occur regularly here on methods of saving money, for example, via recycling. Phase two consists of a six storey concrete frame building with 76 affordable rental units with some ground floor commercial.

It is important to recognize that the Beaver Barracks is “one of the most

²⁰ Gordon, L. (Director) (2014, September 26). Beaver Barracks. Benjamin Gianni Housing Studio. Lecture conducted from , Ottawa.

FIGURE 18: METCALFE BUILDING WALL SECTION



Source: Barry J. Hobin & Associates Architects

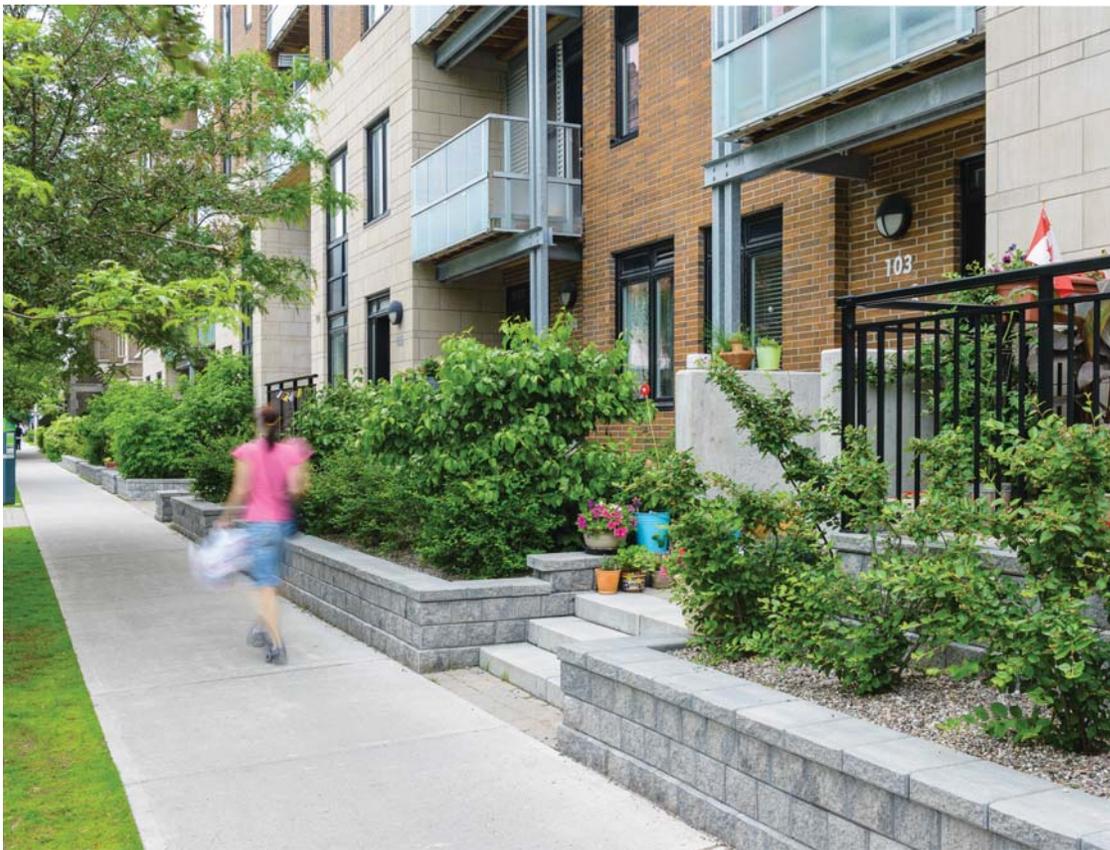
sustainable rental housing developments in Ottawa from both a design and lifestyle perspective”.²¹ The reuse of a brownfield site means that previously unusable land in the city has now been made vital. Since this is affordable housing in a central location, the argument was made that tenants rely less on vehicles, reducing the need for underground parking. Power is generated on site by 50 geothermal wells, installed by a third party that produces

21 World Habitat Awards. CCOC Beaver Barracks Development.

energy on site and sells it to tenants at a fair price negotiated with the CCOC. The community garden mentioned earlier means that the development provides what the CCOC calls “food sovereignty.” From a building technology standpoint, the buildings have triple glazed windows, an energy recovery ventilator as well as a building envelope comprised of 40 per cent recycled material, all of which result in a development that is 40 per cent more efficient compared to similar buildings.²²

22 Ibid.

FIGURE 19: ARGYLE BUILDING FACADE



Source: © Doublespace Photography - Archdaily

Steps towards a greener lifestyle are even written within the terms of the lease. Sustainable practices like these reduce operating costs and provide physically and emotionally healthier environments, significantly improving the cost-benefit equation for residents while augmenting their quality of life.

The architectural design in this case is kept modest and in scale with its context. The architects explain that “the low rise apartments and stacked townhouse are articulated both vertically and

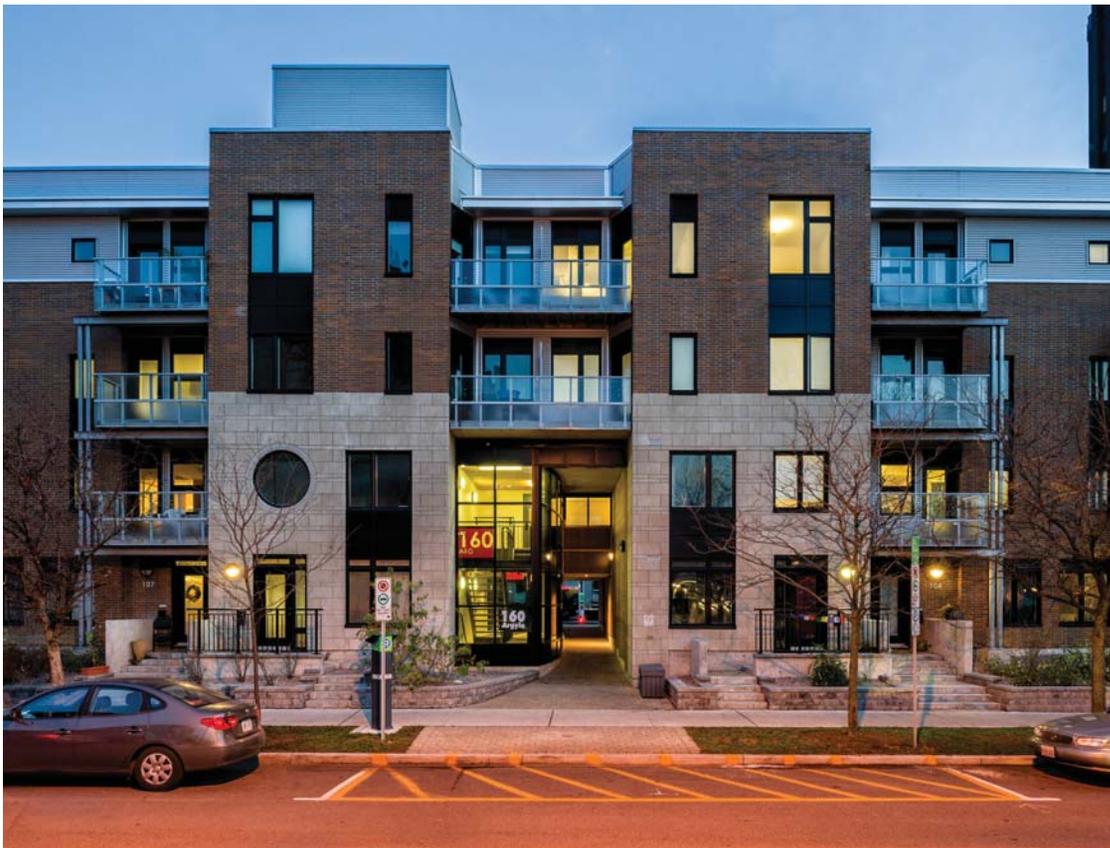
horizontally to break up the building’s mass into house sized blocks” in order to maintain a human scale. On Argyle Street, as well as from the central courtyard, the modulating facades express the individual units which are perceived as tight urban homes rather than a single social housing building.

The CCOC, the architects and the community came together to create a beautiful urban development that enriches the community with quality affordable housing surrounded by

successful public space. The respected architectural news website Archdaily.com writes in an article that the Beaver Barracks “eliminates any potential stigma that may be attributed to social housing.”²³ Perhaps more importantly, the World Habitat Awards recognized that: “Although only recently fully completed, there has been a noticeable change in the neighbourhood. For 15

23 The Beaver Barracks Community Housing / Barry J. Hobin & Associates Architects. (2014, January 24). Retrieved January 24, 2015, from <http://www.archdaily.com/?p=469626>

FIGURE 20 ARGYLE BUILDING COURTYARD ENTRANCE



Source: © Doublespace Photography - Archdaily

years the site was unoccupied and had been an eyesore. With 254 households including over 100 children, the development has helped reinvigorate the immediate neighbourhood. Local schools and day care centres that used to struggle with declining populations now have a permanent new source of families and children to use the available services.”

CHAPTER 3: THE PUBLIC REALM

3.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SPACE

“An essential compliment to housing and to the complex activities of modern life is the systematic organization of open spaces, in order that they may best fulfill their regenerative functions”¹

Technology, namely transportation, has been credited with the demise of the public realm². The rise of car ownership has taken people out of the cities and into the suburbs. Private vehicles

isolated rider’s as they journey to and from their places of work or any other activities that would bring them to the urban core, into a private vehicle. In the past decades, cyber space has had a similar effect of threatening public space. Public spaces were once a forum for all kinds of different people to exchange ideas, but they are now being substituted by online gatherings through social media. Despite this, cities are showing an increasing support for public space disproving the premise that the urban

1 Jacques Greber. Plan for the National Capital; General Report Submitted to the National Capital Planning Committee. Ottawa, Ontario: National Capital Planning Service, 1950.

2 Howard Besser. “Intellectual Property: The Attack on Public Space in Cyberspace.” UCLA School of Education & Information Papers. March 19, 2001. Accessed February 13, 2015.

public space is dead. Cities with vibrant public amenities are far more attractive to millennials³. Lawrence Herzog, in his book *Return to the Center*, sees no way that cyber space, nor the suburbs, could ever replace the “spontaneity of commercial streets, the civic squares and gardens, the overflowing promenades” that become “the anchors for successful downtown economic redevelopment in the twenty-

3 Alex Steffen. *Carbon Zero: Imagining Cities That Can Save the Planet*. New York City, New York, 2012. P.43

first century”⁴ as people are flocking back to urban cores.

The idea is that a public realm, that is, all the spaces that are not private such as areas around and between buildings, streets, pathways, right of ways, parks, publicly accessible open spaces and any public and civic building and facilities, are essential to the success of a neighbourhood or a city in which people

4 Lawrence A. Herzog. *Return to the Center: Culture, Public Space, and City Building in a Global Era*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2006. P.226

want to live and work. The philosopher, Hannah Arendt a fierce proponent of the public realm, in her masterwork, *The Human Condition*, explains the public realm as vital to our lives as individuals living in a common world. In parallel, this public, often un-built space is seen by Clare Cooper Marcus and Carolyn Francis as much more than just a luxury but an essential need of urban life. In their book *People Places*, these two internationally recognized researchers in the field of psychology and sociology of architecture,

land-use planning and landscape design, speak of the research of psychotherapist Joanna Poppink, who writes:

“...spending time in an outdoor café or bustling shopping street is more than just a pleasant diversion, it is a necessary element of a healthy urban life. She believes that much of the fear and distrust experienced by urbanites is directly related to a lack of open public spaces where different groups can interact. “If we don’t leave the house, we fill ourselves up with the fantasies created from television and our own fears.” In contrast, when you’re “out in the real world, you get to see people as they really are: different ages, different races, and different relationships that you can

observe firsthand."⁵

In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt speaks of the importance of multiple perspectives when faced with a common problem. These varying approaches can only exist in the public realm: "Like a table around which people are gathered, that world relates and separates men at the same time"⁶. She argues that only the experience of sharing a common

5 Clare Cooper Marcus. *People Places: Design Guidelines for Urban Open Space*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1990. P.3

6 Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. P.52

world with others who themselves have different perspectives can enable us to have a shared common vision. Without the perspective of others, we can only look inwards and create our own subjective reality. Consequently, this results in the destruction of the public realm, and such would render us inhuman according to the *The Human Condition*. Arendt is not alone in pushing the importance of plurality; the concept that as a society we are granted freedom, meaning the capacity to start something new, to do

the unexpected, is a right if not an actual obligation that we have by birth. Arendt calls this condition whereby we have the right to act in the public realm “natality”.

By extension, endless urban studies have shown the benefit of social-mixing in neighbourhoods. For example, diversity represents a childrearing advantage over “homogeneous suburbs” because children are exposed to social ‘reality’ and to the give-and-take of social and cultural accommodation with those who are different. For adults the urban

ambience of diversity is a continual source of stimulation and renewal and a reminder of the cultural relativity of one’s own style of life. It is said to be a relief from the subcultural sameness and “boredom” of many suburban communities.⁷ Social mixing is not only beneficial on moral and ethical grounds, but also helps build stronger and more diverse communities equipped with a

7 Irving Allen. “The Ideology Of Dense Neighborhood Redevelopment: Cultural Diversity And Transcendent Community Experience.” *Urban Affairs Review* 15, no. No. 4 (1980): 409-28. P.31-32

plethora of perspectives. In *The Human Condition*, plurality necessitates equality and distinction. The fact is that all human beings belong to the same species and are sufficiently alike to understand one another, but yet no two of them are ever the same, since they are each individuals and have their own perspective on the world. A successful public space creates fertile ground for equality and discourse, which is essential to our lives in the city. This is especially relevant for future developments in a low-income

neighbourhood such as Vanier, where the existing demographic mix greatly varies and contributes to the character of the place that this thesis aims to defend.

An area can change, but it is essential that this area maintains its *genius loci*, or its character, which creates an inexplicable attractive quality that creates a sense of well-being. As influential American landscape writer J.B. Jackson explains:

“...in the eighteenth century the Latin phrase was usually translated as ‘the genius of a place’, meaning its influence. ... We now use the current version to describe the atmosphere to a place, the

quality of its environment. Nevertheless, we recognize that certain localities have an attraction which gives us a certain indefinable sense of well-being and which we want to return to, time and again.”⁸

8 John Brinckerhoff Jackson. *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994. P.157-158

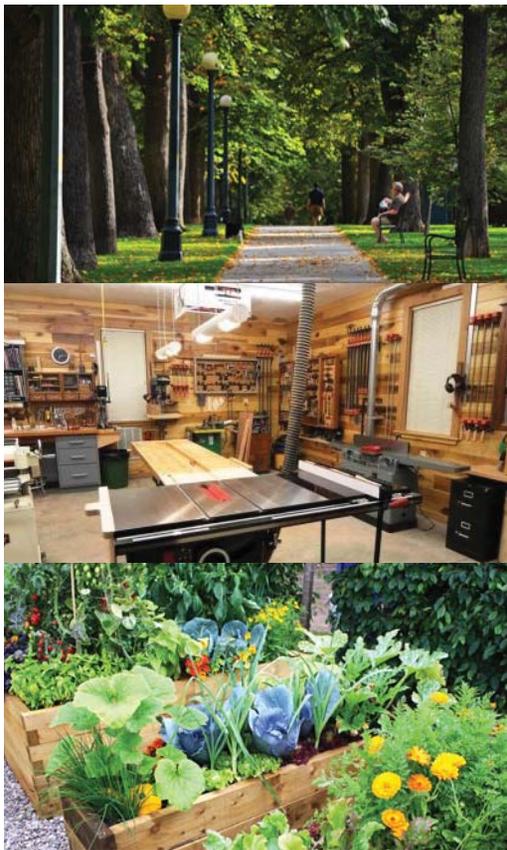
3.2 SHAREABLE CITIES

The concept of Shareable Cities comes from Alex Steffen's book *Carbon Zero*, where he speaks of the benefits of having good public space in a city as more than just a platform for politics. He claims that having better public space and infrastructure means we can have denser communities that can support shared public services. With this density comes an alternate way of viewing our transportation systems, which leads to significantly more sustainable and healthy cities and neighbourhoods. In

turn, well-designed public spaces can have a beneficial impact on low-income people by creating more affordable neighbourhoods. Smart, neighbourhoods can be more compact, which adds to the housing stock, decreasing prices. When these compact neighbourhoods are well serviced by public transit, the hidden cost of poor health associated with inactivity, as well as transportation cost of owning and maintaining a vehicle.

Steffen makes the claim that there has been a transition from people wanting

FIGURE 21 SHAREABLE AMENITIES



Source: google images

dream homes to people wanting dream neighbourhoods. The momentum for wanting better urban space is especially popular among millennials. In his TED talk, Steffen uses the analogy of a home power drill: one can be found in almost any household in North America, but on average they are used between six and twenty minutes in their lifetime. Our cities are the same, and we're just now finding realizing that they are "stockpiles

of these surplus capacities"⁹. The public space can and should take the roles of multiple services, in order to make the space needed in our private realms smaller. Instead of needing space in every home to house a power drill or a stockpile of tools that are underutilized, individuals should consider tool collectives and public workshops. The same can be said for front and rear yards replaced by parks and public spaces that

9 Steffen, Alex. "The shareable future of cities." Lecture, TEDGlobal 2011, Edinburgh, July 1, 2011.

not only allow us to get to know our neighbours and bond as a community, but also to build denser neighbourhoods that support a more physically and emotionally healthy quality of life. The proposal seen in the last chapter of this thesis will reimagine the program of our private lives in order to give more importance to the public realm, which can be made greater by a communal goal. Steffen presents interesting statistics concerning this changing desire for public life over private space.

“Seven times more people say the neighborhood where a house is located (88%) is a bigger consideration in deciding where to live than the size of the house (12%).... More than three-quarters of the public (77%) consider having sidewalks and places to take walks important.... Young singles (under 35) are especially likely to [place the highest value] on a neighborhood with a mix of houses and businesses.” This trend is most pronounced for the young people cities most want to attract.”¹⁰

These claims are starting to gain popularity among urban planners. Jeff Speck, in a 2013 TED talk titled ‘The Walkable City’, speaks of Portland,

¹⁰ Alex Steffen. Carbon Zero. P.43

Oregon, as a great example of a city that invested in its pedestrian and walking public infrastructure in the seventies when everyone else was investing in car-centric planning principles. In Portland, people spend dramatically less as a result:

“The typical Portland citizen drives four miles less, and 11 minutes less per day than they did before. The economist Joe Cortright did the math and he found out that those four miles plus those 11 minutes adds up to fully three and a half percent of all income earned in the region.”¹¹

¹¹ Jeff Speck. “The walkable city.” Lecture, TED-City2.0, New York City, September 20, 2013.

This means that, in a low-income neighbourhood like Vanier, it should be a priority to eliminate cars. They are finding that people in Portland are spending this money on their homes¹², which the population of Vanier could be doing as well. By upgrading their immediate environments, the place in which they live, and their quality of life, they can increase the prices of their home, and in turn their security. The solution is not to displace the working-

¹² Ibid.

class but to empower them and to help them attain a level of prosperity through proper planning initiatives and social programs so that they too can contribute back as proud members of a society.

Steffen maintains that

“Good development can benefit low-income people because compact [more walkable] neighborhoods are cheaper to live in; and the more compact they get, on average, the more the cost of living drops”¹³

Dispersed, car-centric neighbourhoods are also contributing to the obesity

¹³ Alex Steffen. Carbon Zero. P.61

epidemic. A CBC article showcases a new report by the McKinsey Global Institute that claims that the cost of obesity globally has risen to \$2 trillion annually and says it is a problem “among the top three social problems generated by human beings. It puts its impact at 2.8 per cent of global gross domestic product.”¹⁴ It is easy to brush this off as being an American problem, and feel as if Canada is somehow exempt from

¹⁴ “Obesity’s Global Costs Hit \$2 Trillion a Year, Report Suggests.” CBC News, November 20, 2014, Health sec.

this, but according to a study from Memorial University, obesity rates have tripled since 1985. The McKinsey study recommends that the 'restructuring urban and education environments to encourage physical activity' is how we start collectively dealing with this problem.

FIGURE 22 PLACE D'YOUVILLE AERIAL



Source: claudecormier.com

3.3 PLACE D'YOUVILLE CASE STUDY

The need for a greater interrelation of the individual with the natural landscape is now primary. Parks and playgrounds are as important as good roads and sidewalks in the public realm, as they offer a destination to the journey. In his book *Contemporary Public Space Un-volumetric Architecture*, Aydo Amino explains the shift from the city to landscape:

“If from the middle of the 1910s to the end of the 1980s a ferment of ideas had taken shape around studies of the city, of its construction, its growth and its more macroscopic and recurrent phenomena, there can be no doubt that since the 1990s attention has shifted, in an apparently

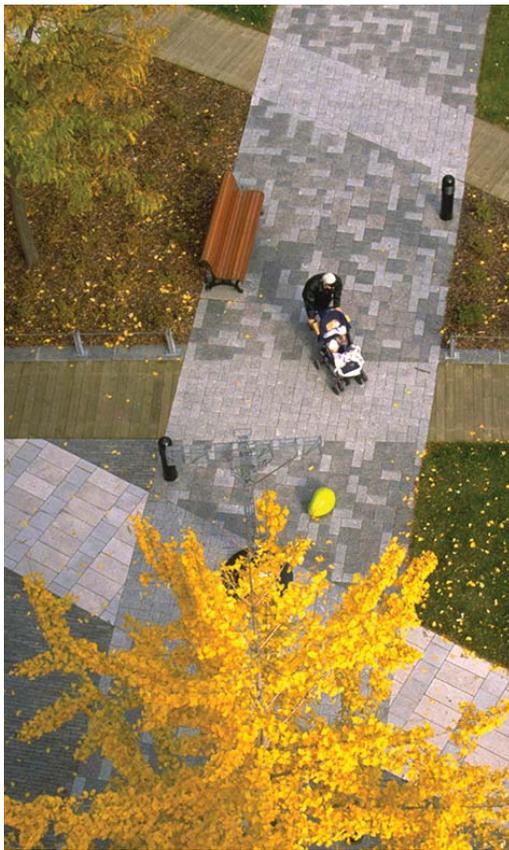
abrupt manner, to territory and landscape”¹⁵.

In some cases like Place D'Youville in Montreal, we find a linear park that acts not only as a destination, but as a new artery for pedestrians.

To celebrate the 350th anniversary, the city of Montreal and the Ministry of Culture and communications of Quebec organised a competition for a new linear park that would highlight the rich history of the very site where Paul de Chomedey,

15 Aldo Aymonino. *Contemporary Public Space: Un-volumetric Architecture*. Milan: Skira, 2006.

FIGURE 23 PLACE D'YOUVILLE AXIS



Source: claudecormier.com

Sieur de Maisonneuve founded the city. At the same time, this park would reclaim a street for pedestrians that had been dominated by surface parking for decades. In order to celebrate the history of the site, The Cardinal Hardy Group and Claude Cormier Landscape Architects used a series of different textures, plantings, materials, and axes inspired by the natural movements of pedestrians through the four block long site. A series of pedestrian passageways through the site underscore the history

of buildings that form the perimeter of the square. Without dwelling on every single detail of the past to influence every aspect of the project, the architects realized that the importance should be placed on the dynamic, multifaceted nature of history. In doing so, they opted to glorify a few select anecdotes that reflect the complexity of the site's history¹⁶. The repertoire of local

16 "PLACE D'YOUVILLE, MONTRÉAL Commande Publique Par Voie De Concours." Association Des Architectes Paysagistes Du Québec. Accessed March 5, 2015.

FIGURE 24 PLACE D'YOUVILLE MATERIALS



Source: aapq.org

materials represent different uses along the linear park. The domestic uses are all interconnected by wooden pathways. Any sort of urban pathway that relates to the greater site, the city of Montreal, is concrete. Institutional buildings are distinguished by limestone pavers. These paths become a metaphor for the movement in history that has layered this site for three and a half centuries, as beautifully described in a *Land Forum* article: “History is the art of connections through time – the explanations that link

existing facts together into meaning”¹⁷. The main central path bisecting the park, which is slightly concave in one section, memorializes the brick viaduct that contained a small river, leading to the port of Montreal, covered over in the mid 1930s. It still plays a significant role in circulation between important civic buildings –it once led early settlers from the St-Laurent River to the parliament of Upper and Lower Canada, and now serves

17 Peter Walke. “Place D’Youville.” *LAND FORUM*, September 21, 2000, 72-75.

as a guide towards the “Centre d’Histoire de Montreal”.

The plantings add to the layering in time that drives the design of this long plaza. The trees are spaced in such a way to not give an impression of formal alignment. Furthermore, the architects and archeologists carefully planned where they would touch ground in order to protect the rich artifacts that could be found in the soil beneath them and to prevent the site from becoming a perpetual archeological dig.

On a purely functional level, this project has not only made it safer for pedestrians within the park itself, but the two small streets that flanked the previous parking lot were slowed down by the use of trees that help to crowd the road. “When drivers feel they must pay attention, they drive more carefully and slowly”.¹⁸ It could, however, have contributed more to the bicycle infrastructure to tie the path following the Saint Laurent to McGill Street corridor to make the approach to

18 Alex Steffen. Carbon Zero. P.49

FIGURE 25 PLACE D'YOUVILLE CENTRAL PATH



Source: claudecormier.com

the many civic buildings easier for those who choose not to drive.

Place d'Youville demonstrates that a modest urban intervention can dramatically improve the vitality of an area, and at the same time commemorate the rich layers of history of a place in an artistic way. Without being too explicit it rouses the mind about its background and indirectly promotes the museums found on the site. It awakens interest and contributes to the qualities of a city that makes citizens want to walk and

rediscover the spaces we that pass us by at high speeds. Walking is crucially tied to the spatial experience of the city and, as Chtcheglov, a French political theorist, beautifully states in his book *Formulary for a New Urbanism*,

*“the whole spectrum of feelings that one encounters by chance in everyday life is available to the one who wanders the city by foot.”*¹⁹

19 Ivan Chtcheglov. *Formulary for a New Urbanism*. London: London Psychogeographical Association, 1997.

CHAPTER 4: THE PROPOSAL

4.1 INTRO

My proposal aims to deal with the dynamic history of the neighbourhood of Vanier and to create a new layer that will maintain the ‘genius loci’. It is meant to act as a counter proposal to the large condominium towers being proposed by several developers and architecture firms on an under-utilized area that the city has designated as the “gateway” site to the community. These proposed condominium towers take no consideration of the history of the place nor do they make any attempt at

a narrative that includes the context. New buildings, such as those proposed in Vanier, often try to minimize all inefficiencies or “unpredictable actions” as Arendt would call them, which are a by-product of freedom. In doing so, we are putting ourselves in a position to abstain from action altogether. This withdrawal from the public realm discussed earlier is the result of irresponsible developers taking advantage of poor regulations to maximize potential profit. This ethical debate was presented at the World

Conference for World Peace Through Law in 1973 when Constantinos A. Doxiadis, an architect and urban planner, wrote in a paper titled “The Great Urban Crimes that We Permit by Law”, that

*“high-rise buildings destroy the urban landscape by eliminating all values which existed in the past. Human symbols, such as churches, mosques, temples of all kinds, city halls, which once rose above the city are now below skyscrapers. **We may not agree that god or government should rise above man but are we ready to agree that symbols of capital gain should rise above***

everything else.”¹

Furthermore, in most cases, the community is kept in the dark resulting in the developers pushing the city to make exceptions on height, ground coverage restrictions and public space offered. Although these urban developments are often marketed as a renewal of public spaces they often have the reverse effect. Towers are often fast-

1 Kōnstantinos Apostolou Doxiadēs. The Great Urban Crimes We Permit by Law. Athens: [Ly-cabettus Press], 1973.

tracked and seem to appear out of thin-air due to the lack of transparency in the early stages of design. In turn, residents who were completely excluded from the process often have trouble seeing the narrative. This brings about a sense of “placelessness”, a concept coined by Edward Relph, in 1976. Relph believed that it is a deep understanding of a place that contributes to its maintenance and restoration, which in turn allows for the creation of new places. He argues that without a thorough understanding of a

place and its significance to its habitants, it is very difficult to describe why a particular place is special.²

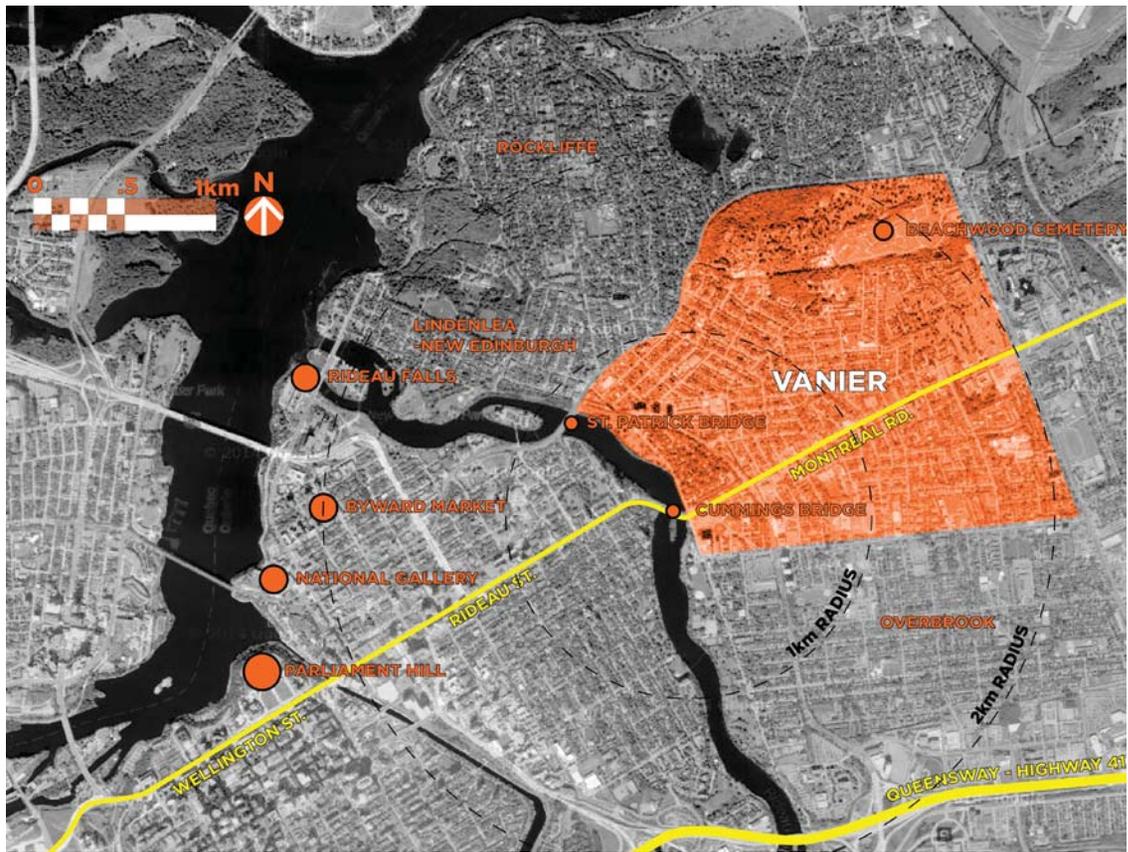
This intervention in Vanier will vary in scale. The neighbourhood will first be examined as a whole by modifying a series of existing roads. This will not only highlight important historical and cultural icons in Vanier, but will also make the area a pedestrian and cyclist friendly network that can be used as

² Edward Relph. *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion, 1976.

an example for the rest of the city. A series of nodes will be created along this network, each with a different identity. The project will then focus on the major node, a site along the Rideau River designated by the City of Ottawa as a gateway to the neighbourhood. The narrative, coming from Ottawa into Vanier, will take citizens over a new bridge via the Cummings Island through a revitalized park and into the site itself, which is part of a large housing project that will serve as an example of a very

dense housing development focused on history and public space.

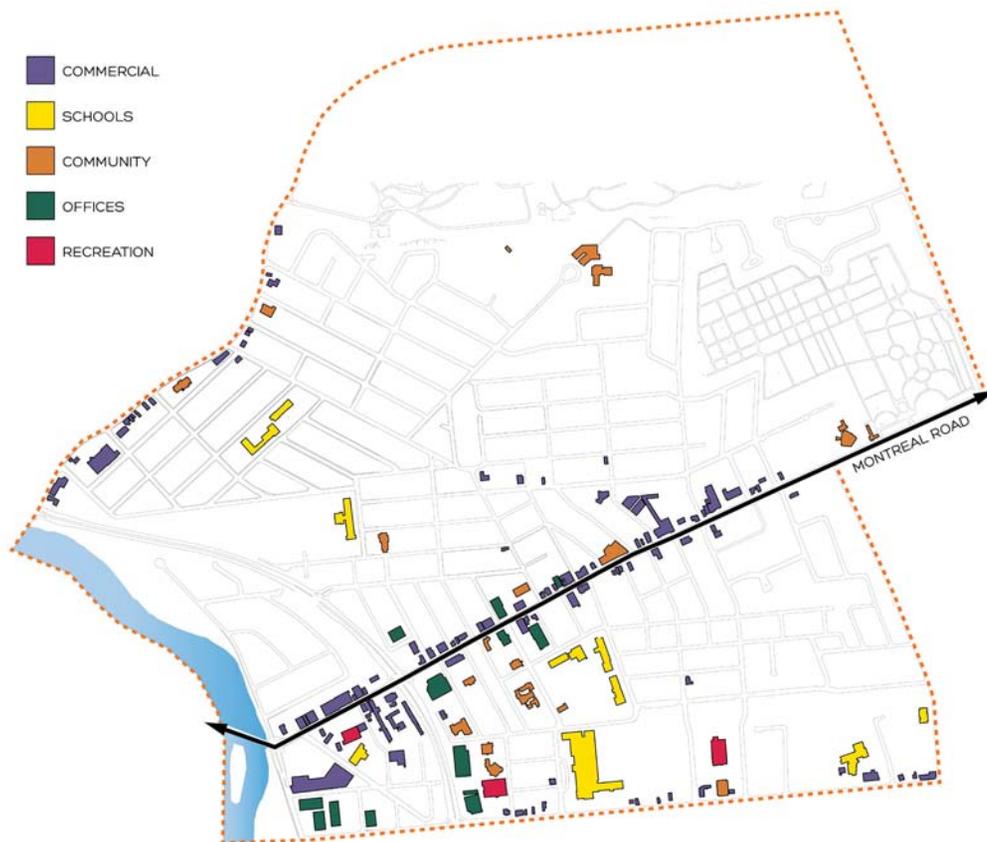
FIGURE 26 VANIER BOUNDARIES



4.2 SITE ANALYSIS

Vanier is located approximately two kilometers east of Parliament Hill, directly across the Rideau River. As noted earlier, its boundaries are the river to the west and St-Laurent Boulevard to the East. Its northern edge is marked by Beechwood Avenue, while McArthur Avenue separates it to the south from the community of Overbrooke. Vanier's main artery is Montreal Road, which developed with the Cummings Bridge. Looking at a map of non-residential uses in the neighbourhood shows that most

FIGURE 27 NON-RESIDENTIAL USES IN VANIER



of the commercial and institutional concentration takes place along the Montreal Road corridor.

Vanier has almost no pedestrian infrastructures or amenities to support small businesses, yet according to the “walk score” index, created by a Seattle company of the same name to rate the walkability of any address in North America, it is reasonable, coming in at 48³ points. Because of its

3 “Pedestrian Infrastructure and Amenities.” Ottawa Neighbourhood Study. January 1, 2011. Accessed December 1, 2014.

persistent self-sustaining small-town nature, commercial activity on the main street has remained relatively close to home. However, getting between different services is difficult because the pedestrian infrastructure is terribly inefficient and not aesthetically pleasing. In his book, *The Walkable City*, Speck describes that the walk must be comfortable and interesting, i.e. showing signs of humanity to get people to walk. In its current state, Vanier does little to encourage walkability.

A cycling infrastructure is also either lacking or in poor condition. The few existing city bike paths in the area are mainly recreational as they border the river and have no real circulatory function.

The Cummings Bridge “bike path” has also been problematic and dangerous. Its poor planning and lack of protection from cars has caused many accidents leading to the cycling community demanding change. As I was writing this thesis, a 36-year-old cyclist was the victim of a hit-

FIGURE 28 BIKE PATH NETWORK IN VANIER



and-run in broad daylight and was found unconscious at the base of the Cummings Bridge.⁴ “The cyclists don’t feel safe: A lot of people have stopped using this area,” said the victim’s brother, also a cyclist, when interviewed by the *Ottawa Citizen*.

4 Andrew Duffy. “Ottawa Family Seeks Answers to Bike Crash.” *The Ottawa Citizen*, November 7, 2014, Local sec. Accessed January 12, 2015. <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/ottawa-family-seeks-answers-to-bike-crash>.

FIGURE 29 STREET NETWORK AND NODES



4.3 AN URBAN SOLUTION

The intervention will create a network of primary and secondary roads by modifying the street sections of existing streets to connect important historical and cultural landmarks in Vanier.

FIGURE 30 MONTREAL ROAD SECTION



In this design, Montreal Road will go through what urbanists are calling a “road diet”. The road will be reduced to one narrow 10 foot lane for each direction. A unidirectional bike lane will be added to each side of the road and will be protected by a lane of alternating trees and parallel parking. The sidewalks will vary but should be a minimum of eight and a half feet in width.

Although counter intuitive, this strategy has been proven to work in cities such as Portland, which has followed this

model for over two decades. The Portland Bureau of Transportation provides data to support this seemingly radical way of designing streets. A 2014 study has shown that in streets that underwent a road diet, accidents have declined by an average of 37 percent and speeding declined by 9.8 percent. Traffic volume saw a similar 4.4% reduction. It is safe to conclude “that the safety and access improvements weren’t accompanied by major new burdens on

FIGURE 31: COLLECTOR STREET SECTION



drivers' mobility.”⁵

Residential collector streets, which originate from Montreal Road towards important cultural “nodes” within the neighbourhood, will also undergo a road diet. Like Montreal Road, narrow lanes will be flanked by a wide two-way bicycle lane. The road itself will be paved with a distinguishable paver, seen throughout

5 Michael Andersen. “For Less than \$500,000, 3 Portland Road Diets Are Preventing 37 Crashes Every Year.” Bike Portland, October 10, 2014. Accessed February 28, 2015. <http://bikeportland.org/2014/10/10/less-500000-three-road-diets-preventing-37-crashes-every-year-112049>.

the project to differentiate roads along this network from other residential streets.

Although this change might seem radical, it is an idea supported by leading urban planners such as Jeff Speck and Alex Steffen who explain that “If within key neighborhood cores (or along important corridors), cities aggressively tip the balance toward making streets that are designed to slow traffic, limit cars, and make for wonderful pedestrian-focused places that are well served by

transit... many people will choose to get rid of their cars altogether, and most people will choose not to drive for most trips. That’s correct: Plan well and build quickly, and many people will simply use their cars less or get rid of them.”⁶

⁶ Alex Steffen. Carbon Zero. P.46

FIGURE 32 VANIER PARKWAY NODE

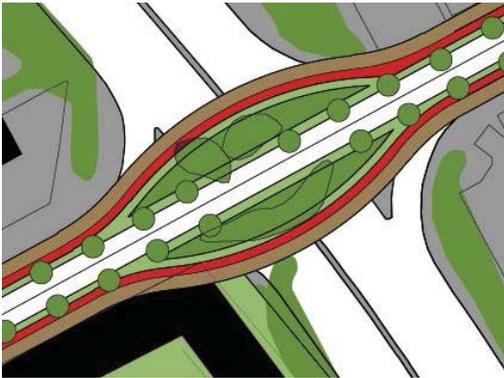
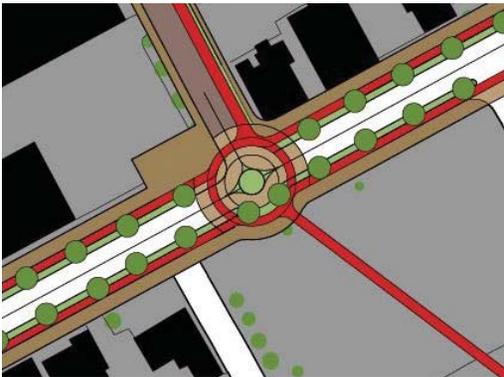


FIGURE 33 MARIER STREET NODE



4.4 THE NODES

Special nodes acting as vessels for art, history, and culture are located at important intersections of the primary and secondary streets. They are meant to mark a significant area for the neighbourhood. The intention of this thesis proposal is not to design every node but simply to suggest a course of actions and possibilities for the main ones; the primary site for this thesis is the base of the Cummings Bridge, which will however take cues from what is learned in locating these secondary nodes.

Below are a few examples of this approach. The intersection of Montreal Road and Vanier Parkway takes on a character relating to the old railroad line that connected Prescott Russell with Bytown in the early 20th century. These nodes are meant as modest landscape or public art displays that would rouse interest about the site's history without being too explicit.

The node at Montreal Road and Marier Street is also quite significant: it marks the Centre Francophone de Vanier, a

FIGURE 34 FILLE DE LA SAGESSE



Source: vaniermuseoparc.ca

FIGURE 35 RICHELIEU PARK SUGAR SHACK



Source: vaniermuseoparc.ca

staple for the francophone community for decades, as well as the first Desjardins Bank's location in Ontario, which still functions today.

Other nodes include the intersection of Lajoie, Jeanne-Mance, and Blake Boulevard that indicates the site of the first French high school in the area. The node along Lacasse Street and Montreal Road is meant to pay tribute to the eccentric character of that area in the sixties as a rowdy entertainment district filled with bars and hotels. The

significance of the church as the early foundation of a lot of these francophone institutions is located at the corner of Church Street and Montreal Road where the Notre-Dame-du-Lourde church is still used today, and the 'Filles de la Sagesse', who pioneered the Montfort Hospital, across the street. Perhaps the most important node, however, is the one located at Richelieu Park. It houses the Vanier Museum, the first francophone museum outside of Quebec, which has the mandate to protect the large park

FIGURE 36 BIBLIOTHÈQUE VANIER LIBRARY



Source: vaniermuseoparc.ca

rich in sugar maples that houses Canada's only fully functional urban sugar shack. It is also the location of the Vanier Public Library, which was built in the 1950s in the style of the now demolished White Father's Scholasticate that stood beside it.

FIGURE 37 CHOSEN SITE



4.5 INTO THE SITE

FIGURE 38 MONTGOMERY STREET ALTERATION



FIGURE 39 NEW SITE DIVISION



The primary site chosen for the project spans from North River Road to Vanier Parkway and reclaims space for housing and community space, as well as a variety of public parks, gardens and pathways. Office space is also added to act as a buffer between the much higher existing Vanier Towers government building directly south of the site. In order to differentiate the two major uses, and to divert traffic away from Montreal Road, Montgomery Street is altered from its current location to align with the

Cummings Bridge. Doing so will detour any vehicular traffic to McArthur Avenue, rendering Montreal Road a slower, pedestrian-friendly street rather than a thoroughfare to the East. Presently, the site is extremely low density. With only 18 single-family dwellings, a few row houses and duplexes, the current site houses approximately 65 people on 2.9 hectares. The main concentrations of homes along Palace Street are in terrible condition. The street has no sidewalks and older homes appear to be adhering

FIGURE 40: ABANDONED HOUSES ALONG GARDNER STREET



Source: google maps

FIGURE 41: DECREPIT HOUSING ALONG PALACE STREET



Source: google maps

to no form of zoning, resulting in a very unpleasant, cramped atmosphere.

In some cases, the houses are completely abandoned and set for demolition by the city because they are in a complete state of disrepair and unsafe.

In total, the site contains a density of 22 people per hectare. This falls short of the city's target density of 500 in Central areas, or even major mixed-use centers of 250, by 2031. Businesses that would be displaced by my interventions upon this site would include various small retail

FIGURE 42: NEW MASTER PLAN AERIAL



FIGURE 43: NEW MASTER PLAN



FIGURE 44: FIRST SCHOOL IN EASTVIEW



outlets in the Eastview Plaza. The eastern part of the site is mostly covered by a surface parking lot serving a decrepit, crime-ridden motel, a bingo hall, two gas stations, and a transmission shop.

The existing school, which was the first in Vanier, is to remain in place and become the central community hub in the design. Adjacent to the school will be located a community center with communal woodshop, child care facilities, public kitchens, meeting rooms, and a space to play bingo to replace the

beloved Friend's Bingo Hall. It is to act as a new home for the Centre Francophone de Vanier. To its right will be located a large public garden surrounded by open green space that doubles as the school's yard.

FIGURE 45: NEW MASTER PLAN - MAIN AXIS

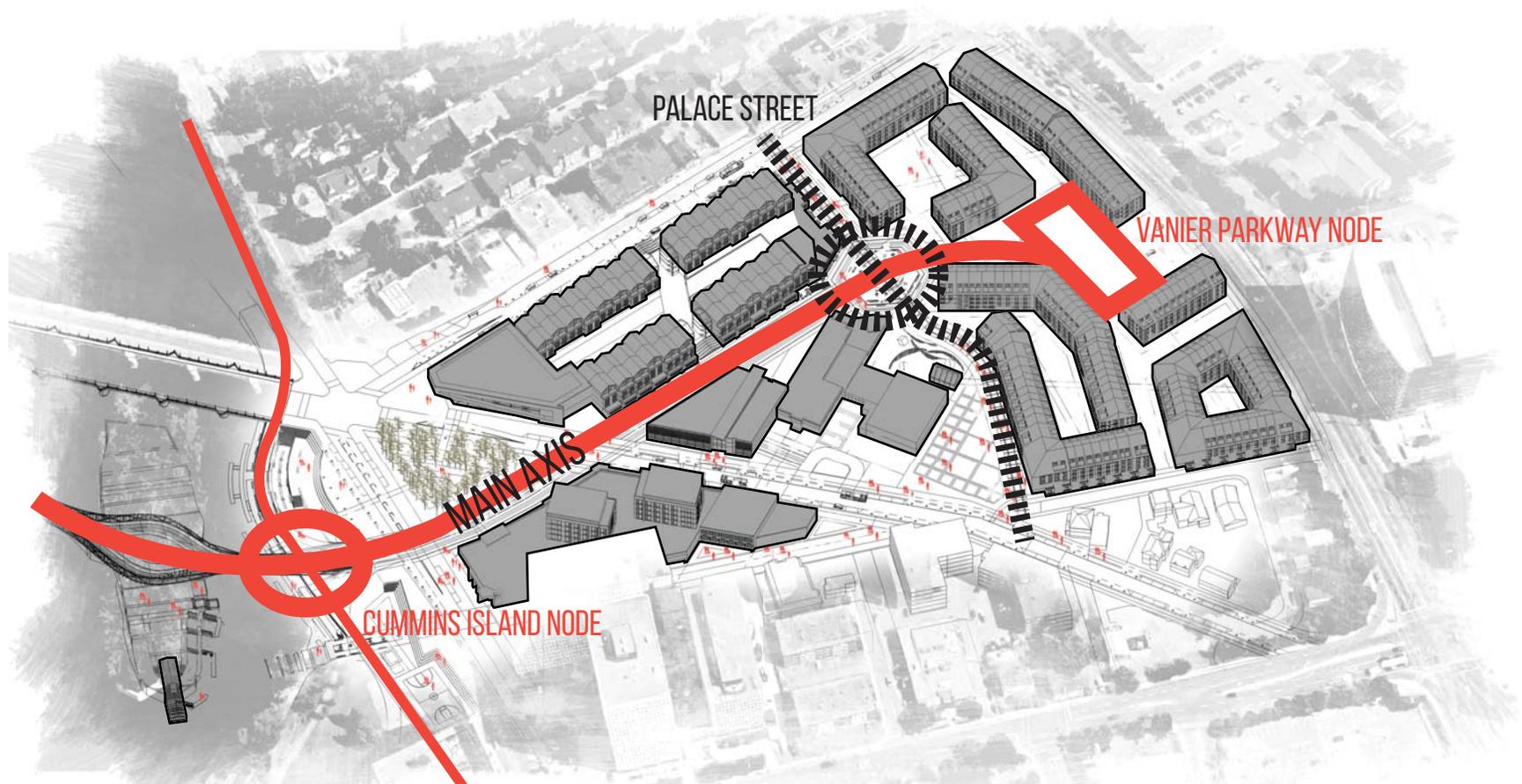
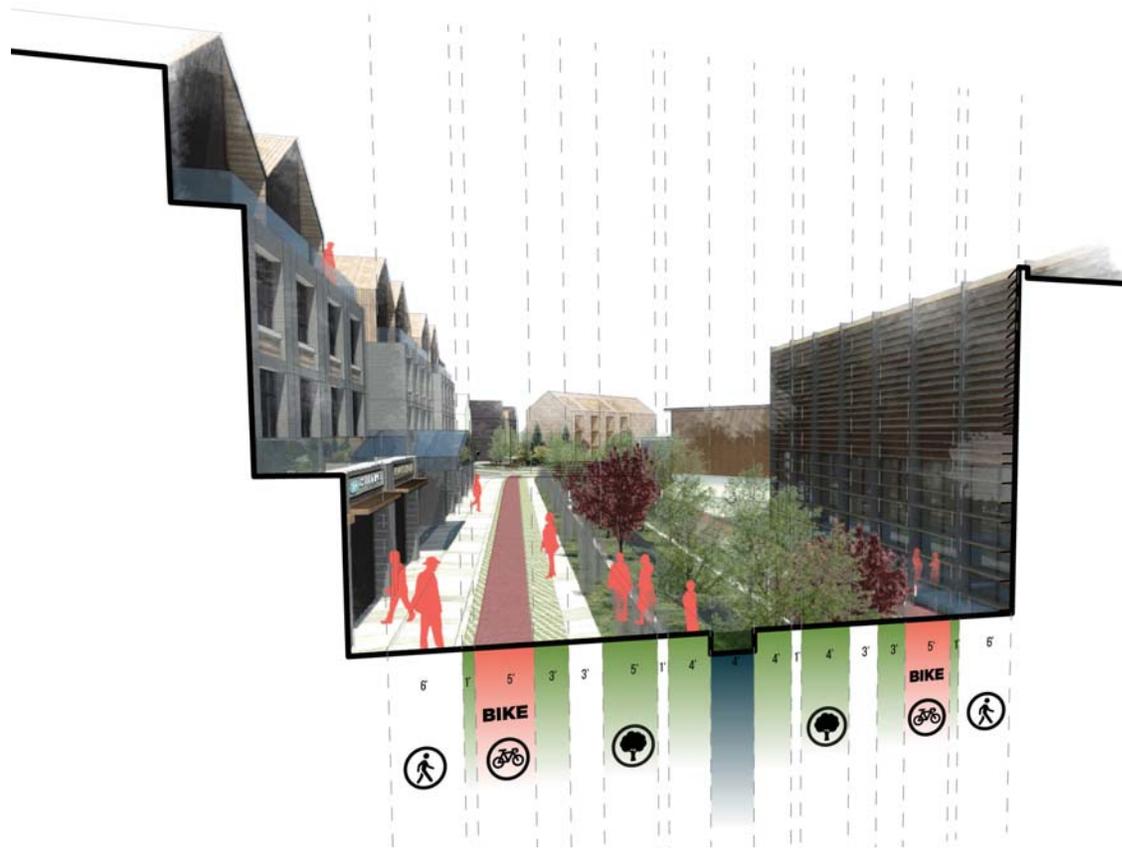
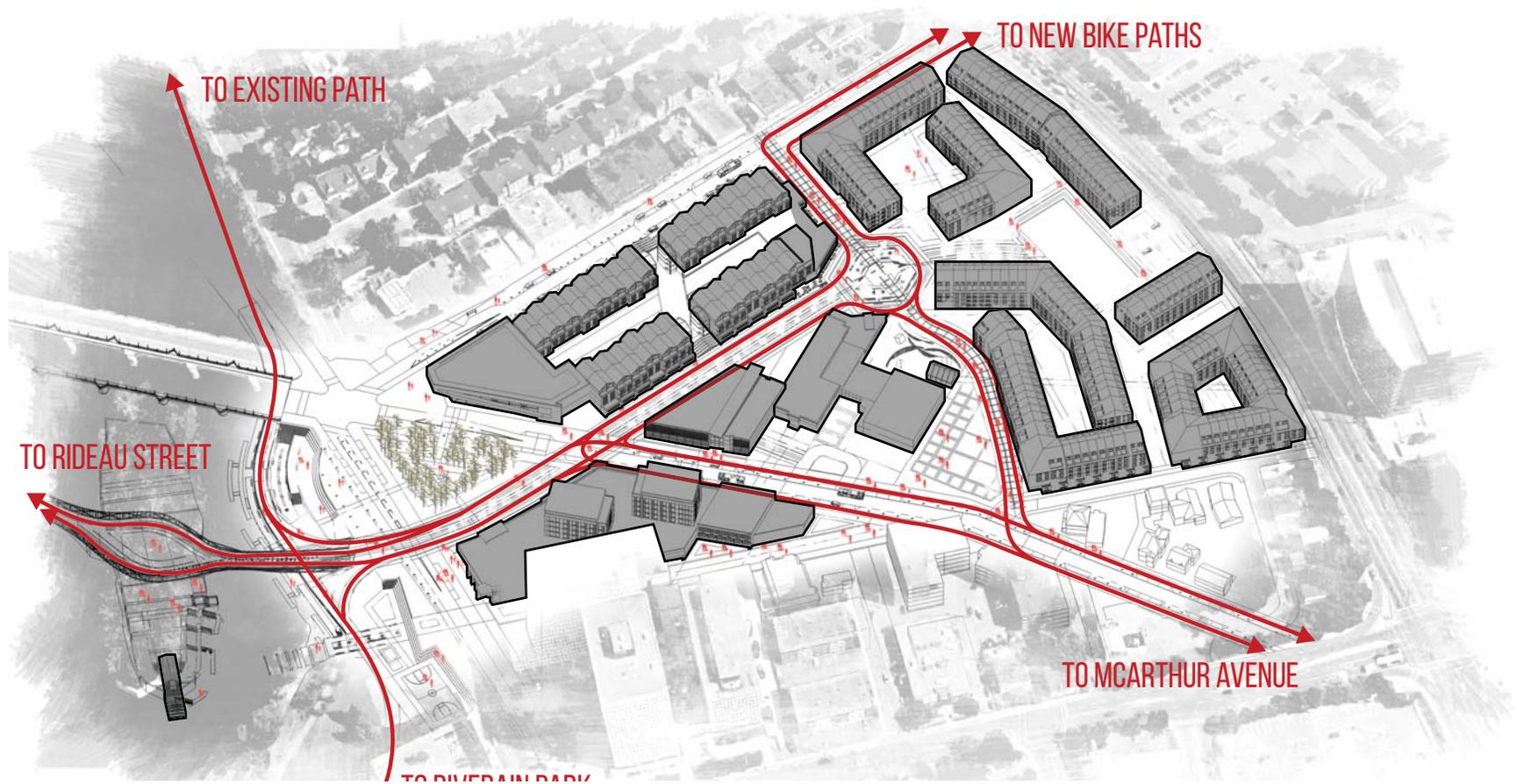


FIGURE 46: MAIN AXIS SECTION



The main axis running through the site is a large pedestrian thoroughfare bisected by a narrow channel of water that runs the length of the site, suggesting that anyone can have access to the water, as opposed to just a select few that previously prospered and enjoyed the river. Like the bridge, this main axis is made up of a solid walkway, made of individual pavers on its exterior, but its permeable stones begins to symbolically dissolve as it nears the channel of water, allowing for trees, plants, grasses, and the

FIGURE 47: NEW MASTER PLAN BIKE PATHS



diversion of rainwater into the central channel.

This “grande allée” welcomes pedestrians and cyclists as they leave the bridge, hinting at activity within the site. The space at the corner of Montreal Road is a small forest of towering white pines. Like early settlers, it is the first thing seen by pedestrians as well as vehicles from the existing Cummings Bridge, (which remains but which would no longer be used by pedestrians nor cyclists). White pines covered the banks of the Rideau

River but were decimated by the lumber industry to put food on the table for many families. However, this small corner is meant to look untouched, and gives a nod to the historical reality whereby Vanier was a city within a city; the grove of trees is surrounded but still manages to differentiate and sustain themselves. At different times of the year its needles cover the ground around it, and needle by needle, the traces are carried by the wind all over Vanier. A small walkway from the main axis leads into the center

FIGURE 48: WHITE PINE GROVE

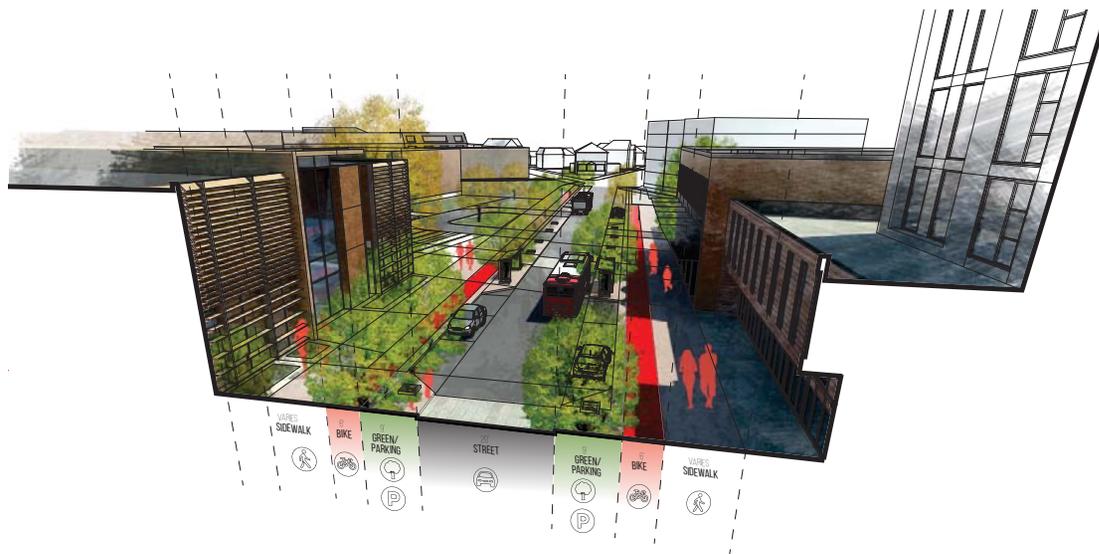


of the forest, and displays various public art sculptures that can be admired in an intimate, quiet environment.

FIGURE 49: RENDERING INSIDE THE WHITE PINE GROVE



FIGURE 50: MONTGOMERY STREET SECTION



Montgomery Street has a similar section to Montreal Road, with a slightly wider right-of-way of 75 feet, which makes it scaled appropriately to the four story community center and podium and open cantilevered podium of the new office complex.

This office space is designed to fit small businesses where spatial dividers can offer rental space that will accommodate artists' studios, workshops, and startup businesses. In the main "podium" these spaces can be combined as offices grow.

FIGURE 51: ENTRANCES TO OFFICE BUILDING



FIGURE 52: 1962 STEINBERG GROCERY



Source: Mike Steinhauer -vaniernow.blogspot.ca

As businesses grow and require more space, they can move to the taller, stepped back portion of the building that is designed as a more solid, established block.

Similar to the park, as buildings touch down on public space, their facades and structure should appear lighter and more inviting. As with the new pedestrian/cycling bridge, every part of the design should be built with a human sized unit: bricks rather than poured concrete, planks rather than sheet materials, a

concrete or stone pavers rather than asphalt, and landscape must include trees and (blades of) grass. The building facades are treated the same whereby they are modulated so as to make their overall size appear as an assortment of smaller structures. The semi-circular entrance canopy to the buildings take the shape of the old Steinberg's building that remains on the site. To create a dialogue the entrance itself is clad in red brick to reflect the school it mirrors.

FIGURE 53: AUSTRALIAN WOONERF



Source: citygreen.com

Further east, past the community center, the main axis intersects Palace Street, which is now a pedestrian street in the manner of a Dutch woonerf. Essentially, a woonerf is a street with some vehicle access for drop-offs and emergency vehicles, but the main circulation is for pedestrians and cyclists. There are no distinct sidewalks or curbs, only different paving to create some spatial distinction. Its paving texture is meant to distinguish Palace Street from any other street on the site, highlighting

its significance in the history of Vanier as the home of the first City Hall. Grass “pavers” are interrupted by a rough wooden plank in a rhythm that evokes the character of railroad ties, alluding to the tracks that ran the length of what is now the Vanier Parkway, which were crucial to the early development in the area. The intersection between the main pedestrian boulevard and Palace Street reuses the concept of the node by placing a small water feature that marks the transition between the school, the

FIGURE 54: PALACE STREET NODE



commercial space, and the housing.

Further along this axis, as the main axis comes to an end and reaches the Vanier Parkway, a large park space, doubling as a courtyard for the new housing acts as a gateway to the site for the east. This gateway, to contrast the white pines that welcome you on the western edge, is filled with sugar maples, like the ones in Richelieu Park, surrounding a large community pool, which in the winter becomes a recognized Canadian icon: an ice rink.

FIGURE 55 VANIER PARKWAY ICE RINK

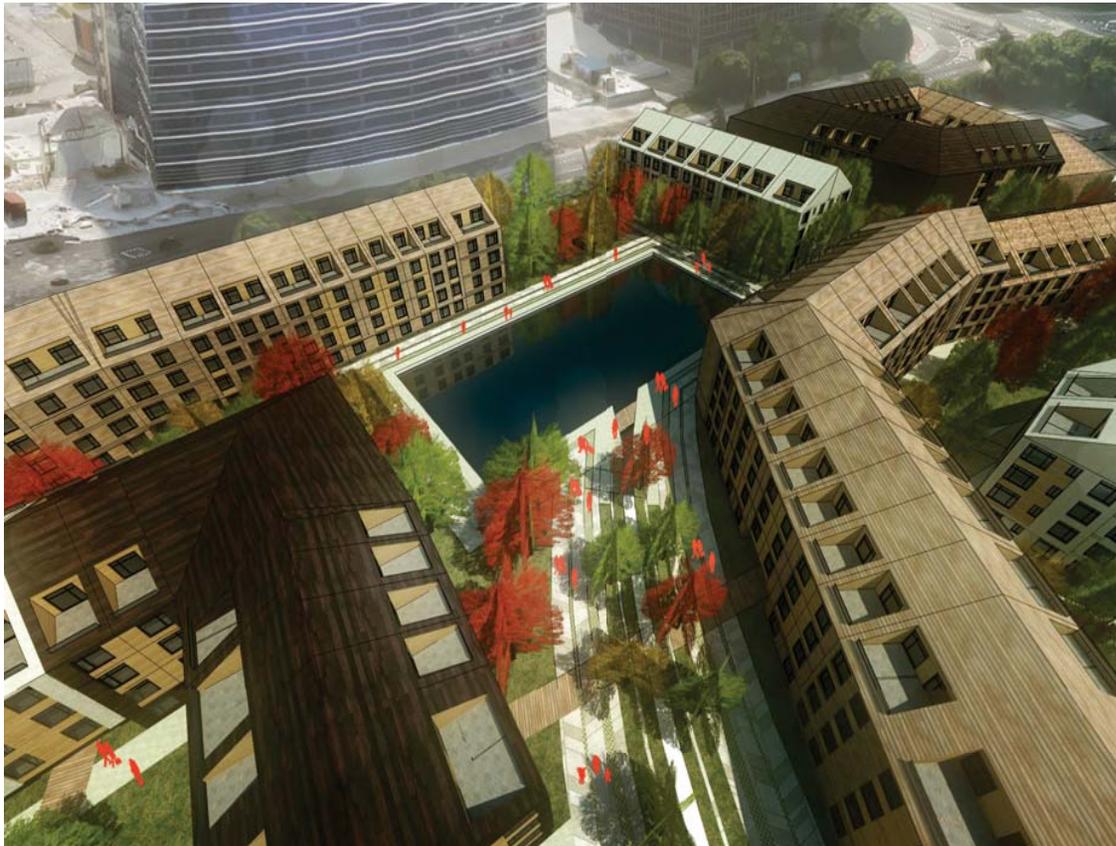
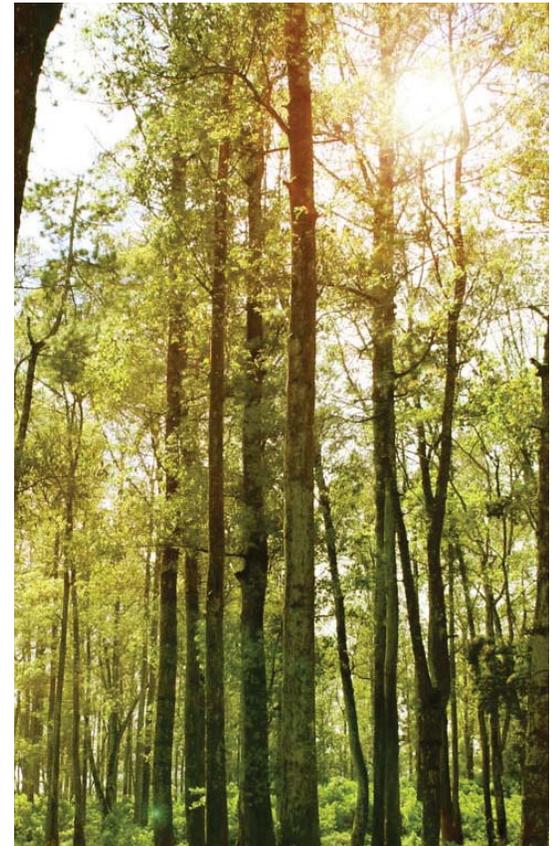


FIGURE 56: RICHELIEU PARK MAPLE TREES



Source: museoparc.ca

4.6 THE MAIN NODE - RECLAIMING CUMMINGS ISLAND

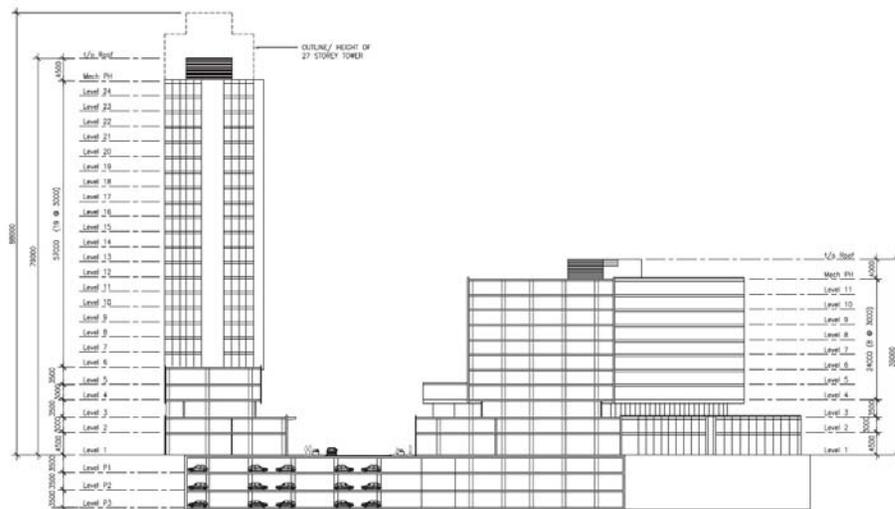
The design of the main node, where the Cummings Bridge meets Montreal Road, is meant to dissolve into a greater site and inform a design language that reflects Vanier's history and everything it could be in the future; the design seeks to tap into Vanier's genius loci in order to "... both embrace history and transcend it"⁷. By creating a park that will reconnect Cummings Island via a pedestrian and cycling bridge that will

connect to the greater network, the site will tell a narrative that would stand in contrast to the generic proposals being presented today by the City of Ottawa. Those proposals which include nine new condominium towers reaching heights of 27 stories, would yield only urban 'placelessness'. Not only do they have little consideration for the context, but they are very expensive. Based on similar developments on Beechwood Avenue in Vanier, these would cost up to 450\$ per



⁷ Lawrence A. Return to the Center

FIGURE 57: OGGSGOODE DEVELOPMENTS 27 STOREY CONDOMINIUM

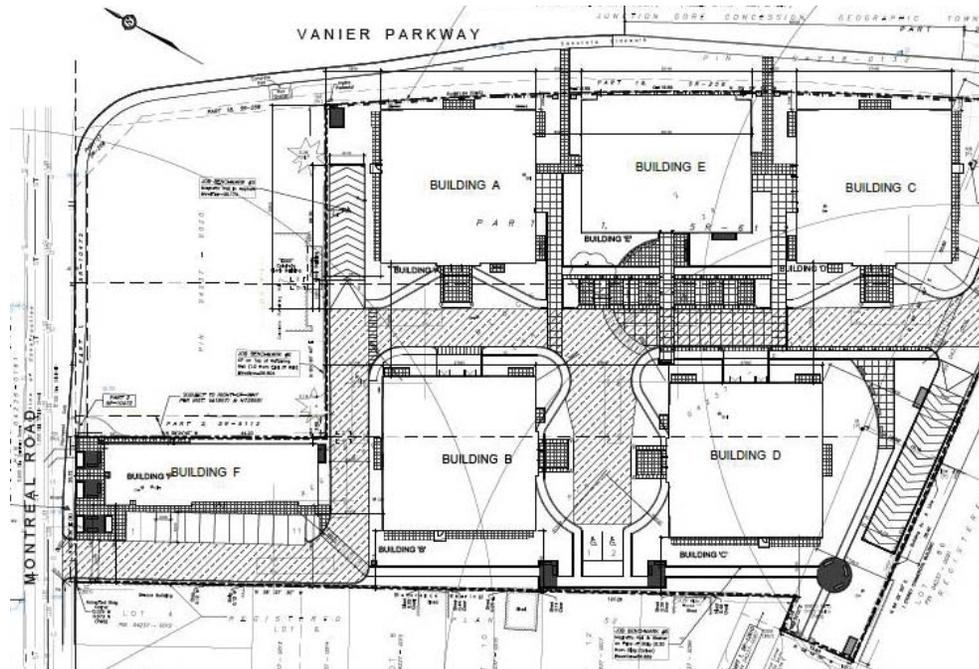


Source: ottawa.ca

square foot pre-construction.⁸

8 "The Avon." MintoBeechWood - Collections - New Edinburgh Condos, Ottawa | Minto. January 10, 2013. Accessed March 9, 2015. Domicile Developments Inc. "Web Price List." The Kavanaugh on Beechwood. March 13, 2015. Accessed March 15, 2015.

FIGURE 58: UNKNOWN DEVELOPER 5 TOWERS PLAN



Source: ottawa.ca

FIGURE 59: UNKNOWN DEVELOPER 5 TOWERS ELEVATION



Source: ottawa.ca

The original Cummings Bridge connected this suburb via the Cummings Island, which has long been abandoned after the construction of a new bridge.

The design of the proposed pedestrian and cycling bridge attempts to pay tribute to the traditionally under educated, blue-collar, Francophone tradesmen that made up the area by giving the impression that each piece of the bridge could be carried by one man. The strength of this structure lies in the collective supported by the individual structural role of each piece:

each as important as the next; yet useless by itself. Historically, crossing the river offered a certain freedom associated with unsettled land acting as a contrast to the rigid boundaries of the city. This bridge attempts to evoke the feeling of openness, and dissolving of rigidity that came with crossing this natural divider.

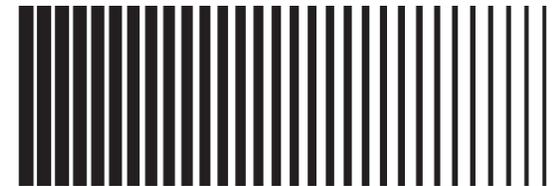


FIGURE 60: ELEVATION SKETCHES FOR NEW BRIDGE

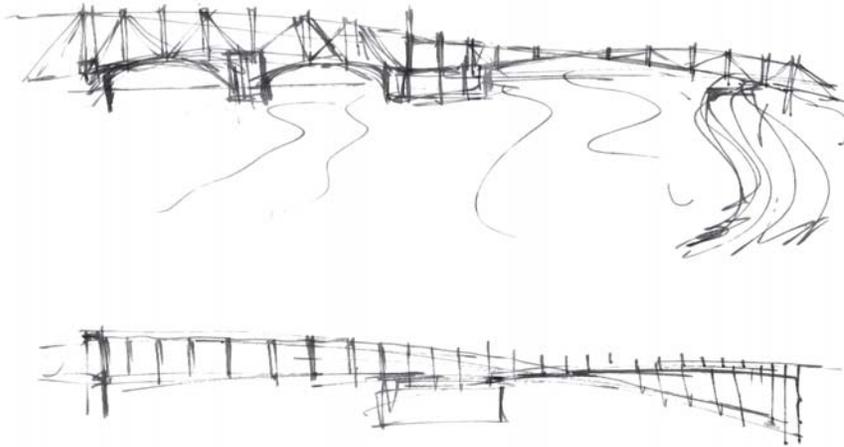


FIGURE 61: AXO SKETCHES FOR NEW BRIDGE

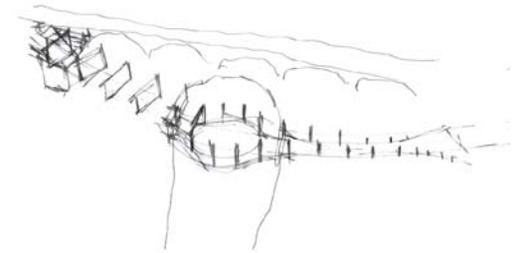


FIGURE 62: RENDERED VIEW FROM THE VANIER SHORE TOWARDS SANDY HILL



It represents the accessibility that Vanier still offers today. Where the new bridge connects to the Ottawa side, the structure is visually solid; it appears heavy due to the narrow spacing of members to support the wood truss frame above it. As the bridge crosses over the river it gradually transforms into a much lighter suspension bridge embracing its relationship with the water and nature, a commentary upon the raw resources that that were the underpinnings of Vanier's economy.

FIGURE 63 NEW PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE ELEVATION

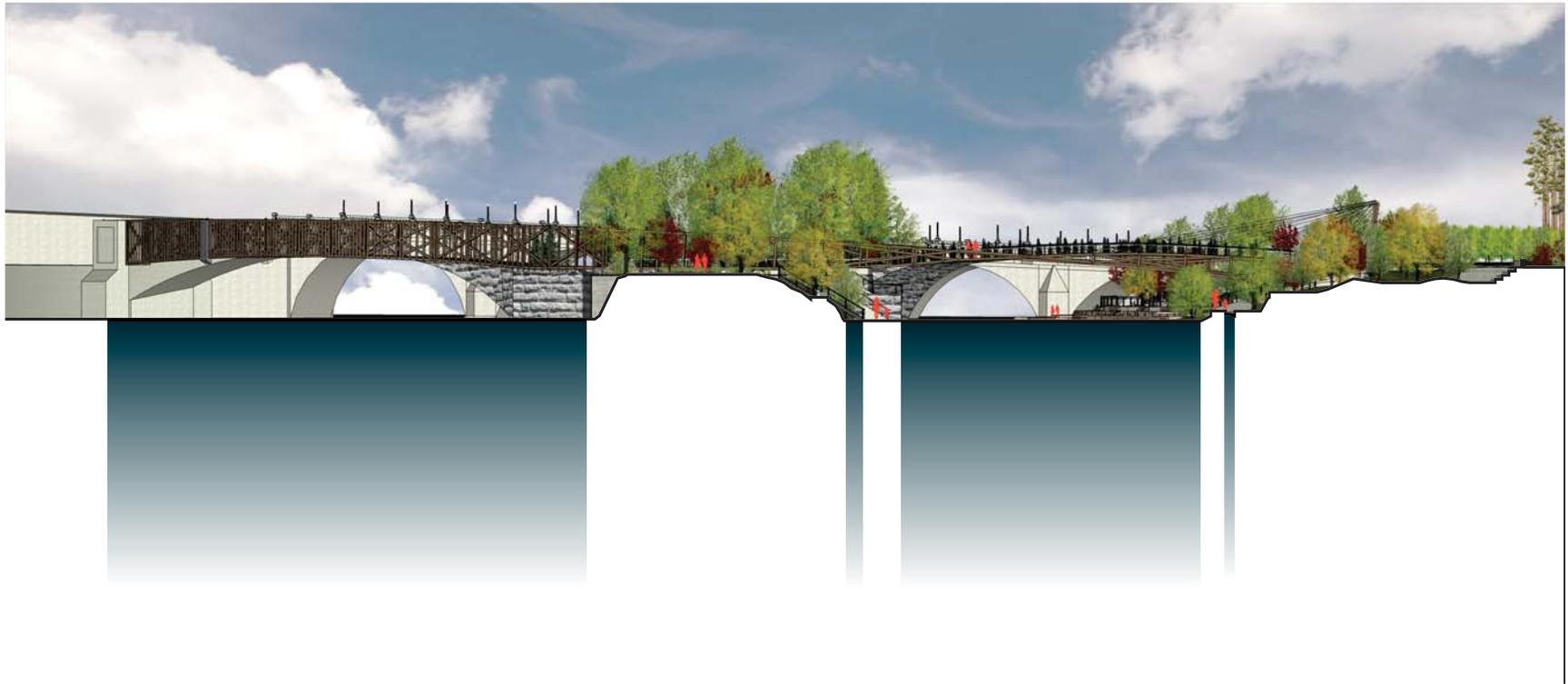
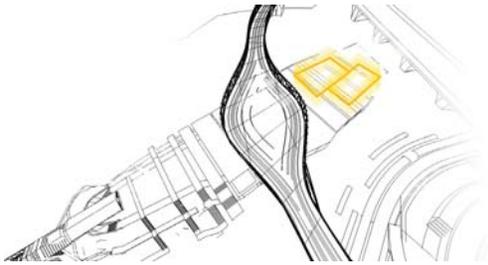


FIGURE 64: NEW PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE AERIAL



FIGURE 65: FOOTPRINT OF CUMMINGS GENERAL STORE



As the Bridge touches Cummings Island it will seem to dissolve into that landscape. Towards the center of the island, the old stone retaining walls, remnants of the original Cummings Bridge, will remain. Strips of stone paving, starting out wide and heavy will start to be laid with more and more distance between them, allowing the existing greenery to overtake the hardscape surfaces of the central island. The only disruption to this pattern will be a strip of flowering tall grass in the footprint of where the

original Cummings General Store once stood, as a metaphor of what can yet blossom from the remains of the past. This gradual opening of space also occurs in elevation where wooden paths start to break apart into individual floating docks. The long and thin floating docks are meant to resemble floating logs travelled down the river for the lumber industry for years. As people approach the surface of the water, they will be able to rest and dip their feet in the river.

FIGURE 66: NEW DOCKS AROUND CUMMINGS ISLAND



FIGURE 67: CUMMINGS ISLAND CROSS SECTION



On the south side of the island, visitors descend into a semi-sunken pavilion designed to reflect a logging shanty such as those that once lined the banks of the Rideau River. Its cantilevered placement upon the large stone supporting wall opens views to the sky and down river.

FIGURE 68: CUMMINGS ISLAND PAVILLION



FIGURE 69: OTTAWA VALLEY SHANTY



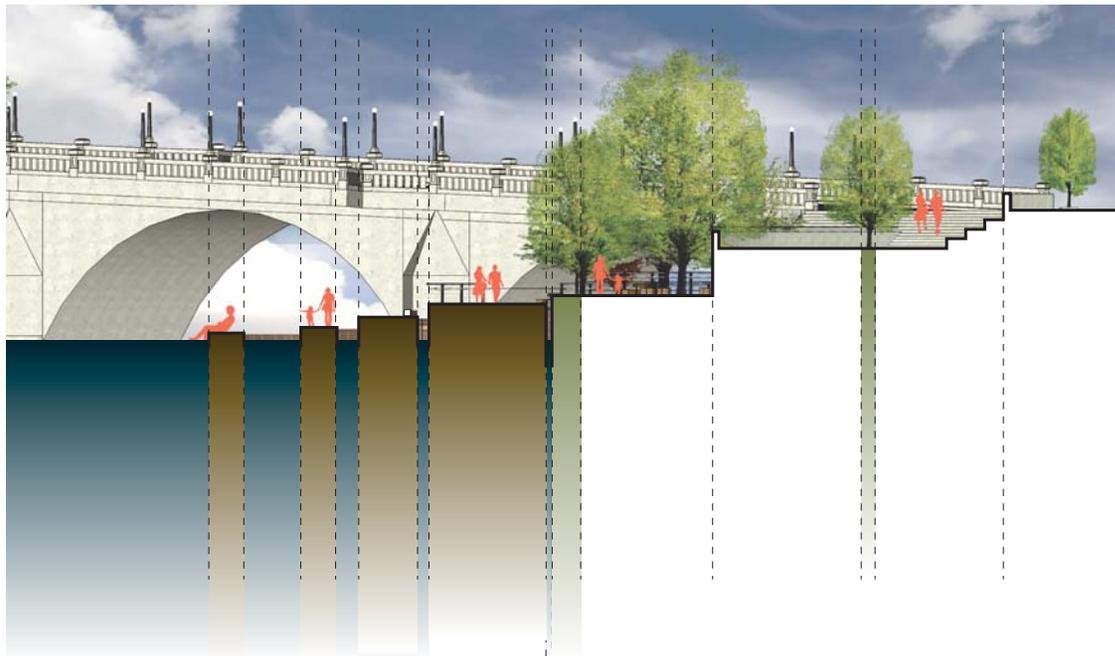
Source: ottawa.ca

FIGURE 70: OTTAWA VALLEY SHANTY



Source: greatermadawaska.com

FIGURE 71: NEW PARK PLATFORMS SECTION



The Park in the location where the bridge touches down is designed with the same architectural language and aesthetic as the island. A series of large seating platforms are created. As happens on the island, plantings replace hardscapes as the park nears the river creating the effect of softening the existing classical architecture.

Classically styled, uniformly spaced, massive stairs come down from the existing Cummings Bridge, and level by level the design language takes on a

certain looseness and freedom alluding to the liberty granted to the pioneers who crossed the river in search of their own small piece of the world. South of the new bridge, the park connects with the existing sports fields that have served the surrounding community for years. The existing bike path coming from Riverrain Park detours through the site close to the river on a wooden boardwalk that travels under the Cummings Bridge and rejoins the path on North River Road. Two ramps provide the path with a gentle slope to

guide it onto the new development that leads to the new cycling network.

The park is cut perpendicularly by two axes, one being the continuation of a long linear plaza that serves the existing offices housed in the Vanier Towers, the other is the main pedestrian axis that acts as a spine for the housing adjacent to the site. Utilizing the concept that “landscape has the ability to connect the past, present, and future. The sense of time and process that sees landscape is an ever-present state of becoming...” the

FIGURE 72: NEW PARK PLAN



park extends into its surroundings and begins a dialogue.

FIGURE 73: NEW PARK AERIAL



FIGURE 74: BRIDGE RENDERING



FIGURE 75: PARK RENDERING



4.7 RETHINKING HOUSING

*At this point, “The answer to the problem is simple: Build more housing. The simple truth is that if you want home prices to drop, or even just level off, the only way to do this is to build more housing. Every known policy aimed at limiting housing costs—from rent control to tenants’ rights to development moratoria—has failed to stop the rise in housing costs. ...none can do anything about the central dynamic, which is that in a city with extreme housing pressures, every sale of a property drives out a lower-income family and replaces them with a higher-income family; if that city has added little new housing supply, the lower-income family’s only option is to move out of the city to where housing is cheaper. Desirable cities in growing regions either add housing rapidly or become unaffordable and socially inequitable. It’s that simple. **Limited housing supply is what drives out***

the poor.”⁹

So how do we add the density needed without building vertically? The answer is to build smart, and small. By previously adding so many public amenities such as child care, laundry facilities, gym, and beautiful public spaces, the private realm is re-apportioned and integrates with the public realm. A study by Urban Land Institute, an nonprofit research and education organization with the mandate

9 Alex Steffen: The shareable future of cities
p.44

to create better urban places, shows that in many cities these affordable ‘micro-units’ are outselling conventional condos.¹⁰ They show that in order for these developments to succeed, they must be close to public amenities, the most important being a grocery store, which in the case of this site, is no more than 300m away, a comfortable walking distance.

These units can range from 200sqft with

a shared kitchen, bathrooms to larger 500sqft units or more depending on the number of bedrooms. The average price for a one bedroom in Vanier is currently 840\$ per month according to the CMHC, which is about 100\$ less than the average rent in Ottawa. New housing coming into the market must remain affordable. This design will offer affordable housing but include a large number of subsidized units to help the more than 9000 households on the waitlist for social housing in Ottawa. It will also reduce the strain on

¹⁰ Trisha Riggs. “Thinking Bigger about Micro Units.” URBANLAND, December 18, 2014.

FIGURE 76: TYPICAL BACHELOR UNIT SECTION



the almost 8000 households in Rideau-Vanier spending more than 30% of their income on shelter-related expenses.

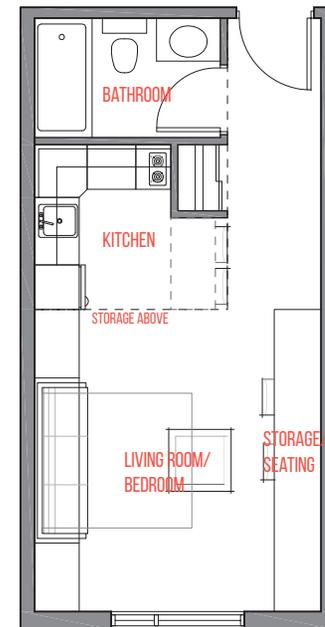
“The only way to press the reset button and get affordability back is to make units small,” Says David Wex, a partner with the Developer, Urban Capital, who is bringing the first micro units to Ottawa. “If you’re going to make units small, you have to make them smart.”¹¹. Like the Beaver Barracks, the housing component

11 David Sali. “Micro-condos Make Big Splash.” Ottawa Business Journal, October 16, 2014.

FIGURE 77: TYPICAL BACHELOR UNIT RENDERING



FIGURE 78: TYPICAL BACHELOR UNIT PLAN



295 SQ. FT.

scale: 1/8" = 1'

FIGURE 79: TYPICAL ONE BEDROOM UNIT

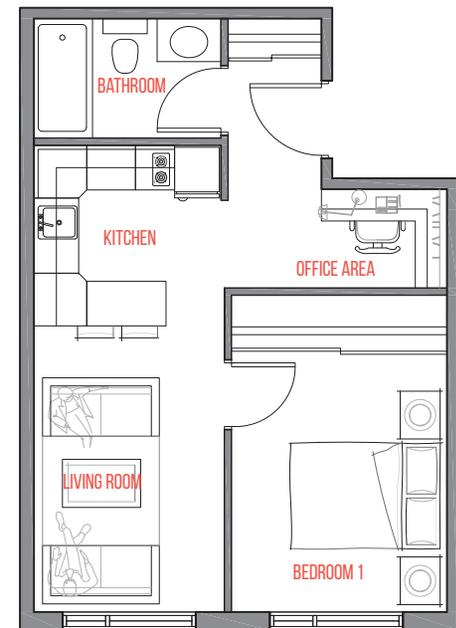


will be comprised of 20% subsidized units, 40% below market rent (small subsidy), and 40% at market rent. Along Montreal road, the units will be ownership, giving people the potential to eventually buy in a community that they have learned to love and have become attached to.

FIGURE 80: TYPICAL ONE BEDROOM UNIT RENDERING



FIGURE 81: TYPICAL ONE BEDROOM UNIT PLAN



390 SQ. FT.

scale: 1/8" = 1'

FIGURE 82: TYPICAL TWO BEDROOM



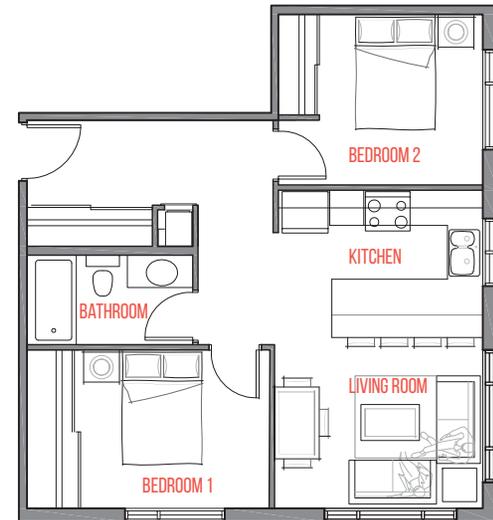
Even though this development aims to help families meet their housing needs by providing many comfortable two and three bedroom units, it also reflects the fact that more and more people are living alone. In 2011, Census data showed an increase of 9% from 2006 of one person households – nearing 30% of Ottawa’s population. People are waiting longer to get married, or are getting divorced and the number of kids people are having are decreasing.¹²

12 “National Household Survey (NHS).”

FIGURE 83: TYPICAL TWO BEDROOM RENDERING



FIGURE 84: TYPICAL TWO BEDROOM PLAN



600 SQ. FT.

scale: 3/32" = 1'

FIGURE 85: TYPICAL HOUSING BLOCK PLAN



The goal is that, maybe, this way of life can change people's overall commitment to urban Ottawa. It should promote a minimalist lifestyle that induces its habitants to reprioritize what is important. This lifestyle includes their families, their friends, memories they create and not the things they store in their garages never to be seen again. Hopefully, this would extend to an ethos whereby this community would shop local and to be more sustainable as became the case with Beaver Barracks.

FIGURE 86: HOUSING AERIAL



Like the Beaver Barracks, a high density was achieved without the use of great heights. The towers proposed on this site by Osgoode Developements, designed by BBB Architects Inc totaled around 740 people per hectare, whereas the Beaver Barracks achieved 670 people per hectare.

The City of Ottawa's target for inner urban zones by 2031 is 500 people per hectare, which both projects far exceed. This project creates approximately 1500 new affordable housing units on a 2.9

hectare site resulting in a density of around 675 people per hectare without exceeding five stories. Furthermore, this number does not take the new jobs created in this area into account, which would increase the density target. This housing exercise proved that highrise density can be achieved by smart planning to maintain a human scale.

FIGURE 87: MIXED-USE ALONG MONTREAL ROAD



CONCLUSION

As Steffen tells us in his book, *Carbon Zero*

“Successful urban regions, however, will grow more rapidly than ever before, seeing their populations swell by hundreds of thousands, even millions, of new residents in just the next few decades. All those people will need homes, workplaces, hospitals, schools— and transit to connect these venues. Cities and regions that embrace the opportunity and make smart choices about where and how to build will have a once-in-a-century chance to reweave their urban fabrics.”¹

Vanier is in a critical part of its history where the decisions we make will have

a great impact on its future. As one who grew up in Vanier and still lives there, I want to champion ways in which my small part of the world can become a better place for those who remain there as I did, but also for the peoples still arriving there, most of whom are francophone immigrants with very limited financial means. The way forward for Vanier is not solely linked to increased spending upon its new infrastructure; the way forward requires much greater, thoughtful nuances. In the words of the writer Paolo

¹ Alex Steffen. *Carbon Zero*. P.42

Coelho, “Nous avons toujours tendance à valoriser ce qui vient de loin, sans jamais reconnaître toute la beauté qui nous entourne”, which translates to, “We have a tendency to value things which come from far away without ever recognizing the beauty that surrounds us”²

² Paulo Coelho. Aleph. Paris: Flammarion, 2011.

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