NEXUS

A TACTICAL APPROACH TO URBAN AND POLITICAL CHANGE

By:

Matthew Beerman

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Azieli School of Architecture and Urbanism, Carleton University,
Ottawa, Ontario

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Matthew Beerman

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PROLOGUE

Frederic Law Olmsted believed that cities were becoming increasingly disconnected, not in which the way they are built, but the way in which the inhabitants interacted with them. In 1870 Olmsted was greatly concerned with “men who are bred in towns” and their tendency to merely avoid collision with one another. Olmsted stating, “Every day of their lives they have seen thousands of their fellow-men, have met them face to face, have brushed against them, and yet have had no experience of anything in common with them.” Peculiar, that Olmsted was realizing a pattern amongst urban dwellers that still holds true today. This then may not solely be an issue of the intricacies of the built-environment, rather, the way in which people connect with it.

This thesis journey began on this basis, seeking a better connection amongst /between inhabitants. Fellow citizens become eerily easy to ignore when the entirety of the world’s information is in a person’s back pocket or in the palm of their hand. From here, the written work and core ideas diverged, finding themselves rooted in the processes which bog down many of the world’s cities in legislative hurdles and political rhetoric. This thesis now takes a critical approach, analyzing processes and decisions made by the City, representing them through drawing in an effort to make them more digestible to the general public.

With the basis of Olmsted’s worries, the purpose of this work became a tactical effort of engagement with the city and its citizens. This experience is explored through citizens no longer accepting the rhetoric produced by the City, coming together to enact change.

Over my years of schooling, I have called Ottawa home and intend to continue to do so once completing my studies. It is for this reason that this thesis takes this stance, for the betterment of the city, for it to move from dwindling in its adolescent years to maturing into adult-hood.

This then is a critique of Ottawa’s past and a study of how it can be used to project its future.

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Abstract

// NEXUS

Since the height of its popularity in 1967, Sparks Street in Ottawa's downtown core has been steadily declining in its function as an engaging public space. The street was popularized with the rise of the department store, however, with the introduction of the Rideau Centre and suburban sprawl, the once bustling street fell into disrepair. Sitting steps from Parliament Hill, Sparks Street exists without much of an identity; once referred to as the Broadway of Ottawa, it is now devoid of character. Just as Sparks is slated for yet another urban renewal, so should the way the government and city perceive occupiable public space. The city is a testing ground for new ideas, not the introduction of old ones with a new appearance. This thesis will challenge the corporate attitude when it comes to planning Sparks Street and Ottawa as a whole. It seeks to reclaim the city through a series of satirical critiques, as the urbanite's stomping ground; proposing unique ideas of how urban space is interacted with, reaffirming Sparks as a public asset to the city.

WORK PRODUCED WITH RESISTANCE FROM:
FIG 1.2

CITY OF AUTOWA

NATIONAL CONFUSION COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CONFUSION NATIONALE

PREAMBLE

The aim of this document, and themes that I have been exploring look to the architect as an instructor, not always the creator. For this reason, the visual work showcased in this thesis is represented as alter egos of myself. The tone is intended to be counter to that of a megalomaniac, which architects have often been stereotyped as. That said, representing fictional scenarios and implying that they are the product of a citizen's imagination felt overly prescriptive. The alter egos follow my interests, fictionally representing 3-4 characters of the city. I enjoy cooking, therefore one of the views of how the City ought to develop Sparks Street is seen through the eyes of a chef. Model making and the reference to Lassitsky's Prouns, for the eyes of an artist/sculptor. The landscape designer, for the construction drawings and the recording of the existing conditions of the street and its furniture, and the set designer for the anti-drawings.

The architect in this scenario acts as narrator, less than designer or all-seeing figure. These visuals are not meant to put words into anyone's mouth, they are merely a hypothesis of how particular people groups within the city might think about designing a new and engaging public space.

The things that make cities interesting is the collection of people, from various backgrounds. A chef, a sculptor, a set designer, and a landscape designer all provide creative and fresh views on how something might be done, drawing from their particular backgrounds. This is why this approach was taken, exploring the idea of the citizen enacting meaningful change at the physical level, often times being held to the immaterial realm through feedback and public consultations. For a thesis that is exploring the city at the scale of the citizen, it is necessary to represent its transformation through their eyes.

INTRODUCTION

"The first order of business will be what might be called the "public images," the common mental pictures carried by large numbers of a city's inhabitants: areas of agreement which might be expected to appear in the interaction of a single physical reality, a common culture, and a basic physiological nature."

This thesis explores the iterative series of planning, architectural, and even strategic disservices at play against a once vibrant artery in Ottawa's downtown core. In 1967 Sparks Street was hailed as one of the city's greatest attractions and the first pedestrian only street. From its inception, the City initially invested heavily in the streetscape, causing the retailers along it to follow suit. The collaboration of the retailers and the City resulted in a dynamic and inviting attraction for people from all neighbourhoods. Over the past 30 years, the City's neglect has resulted in a drab and dilapidated streetscape; now existing as a constant reminder of the City's lack of foresight. Patch job after patch job of both the street surface and the general attitude towards problems along the street has given Sparks the reputation of being the tired street that the City has forgotten. How can we investigate the City's neglect — even intentional — of a once vibrant street which was once affectionately referred to as "The Broadway of Ottawa"?▲

How is it possible to structure an active stance on the way the City perceives public involvement on civic projects? Since the city is built for the people, should it not also be built and thoughtfully designed *by* the people also? What then would the implications of this be for a street like Sparks?

It is evident that the City is embarrassed of its years of mismanagement and neglect of the once vibrant artery, stating, "Many criticisms of Sparks Street over the years have been directly related to operations, maintenance and enforcement. Since the last major renewal of Sparks Street in 1989, the paver surfaces have been repaired with widespread asphalt patching, street lights and gateway elements have been inappropriately modified, mismatched streetscape elements have come and gone, many plants and trees have died, all fountains have been removed, many street elements have been repeatedly damaged through winter operations,

▲ FIG 2.1

Neon signs that originally lit up Sparks Street have all since gone, and with them, the atmosphere that made the street a desirable place.

Refer to Appendix A — Illustrations 5.1 - 5.9 (pg. 84-86) for a detailed location and analysis of Sparks Street.

dis-serv-ice

/ di(s) 'sɜrvəs /

// noun

~ A harmful action.

FIG 2.2

Sparks Street before and after the streets conversion. The initial design involved paving over the original street car tracks and a unique street paint pattern.

Refer to Appendix A — FIG 7.1 - 7.6 (pg 87-88) for more historic images of Sparks Street.

FIG 2.3 Failing street surface at the entrance to Block 01 from Elgin.

people continuously smoke in non-smoking zones and various forms of unauthorized commercial advertising continually pop-up in pedestrian clearzones and important view planes.⁷² Although the City points its finger to a lack of funding, the embarrassment still stands, raising the question; how is this embarrassment represented?

As a result of the City's neglect, the citizens have also turned their back on the street, leaving it relatively barren outside of the corporate working hours.[▲] Yet, the plans for yet another renewal of the street is in the works. The City claims that this time, all will be different, that it'll take more than simply repaving the street. The City has responded with a "Pilot Project" which puts low-quality furniture, along the street, aimed at engaging citizens, the project has been met with mixed reviews.[•] This raises yet another question; how does the City intend to make an informed and contextualized decision on the future of the street after years of inadvertence? If time has proven that legislative power cannot be trusted to make meaningful change, does it not become the citizen's duty to take back the street?

Exploring first the issues with the interpretation of the contemporary street with the historic street that formed its original identity, we will attempt to grasp the workings and issues associated with the street, looking at what drivers made it tick and what can be done to make it tick once again: tactically, strategically, and architecturally.

Yoshio Tanaguchi — a well known architect, who designed the MOMA in New York — once wrote, "Architecture is basically a container of something, I hope they (the people) will enjoy not so much the teacup, but the tea."⁷³ Elaborating on this, consideration will be taken into account in the exploration of the tea as the driving factor to how the teacup is formed. Since one is useless without the other, we

▲ FIG 2.4

Scouring Instagram with the hashtag "sparksstreet" turns back hundreds of images similar to this one; a barren streetscape post government working hours.

in-ad-ver-tence

// noun

~ a result of inattention : oversight.

• FIG 2.5

In reaction to the Sparks Street Pilot projects, Ottawans aren't convinced that it's enough to encourage the needed change along the street. Citizen Ingrid Navas remarked, "Considering all the cities I've been to where there's a pedestrian mall, this is the most pathetic I've seen."^a

For a glimpse of some of the proposed renderings and sections the city has produced for the Sparks Street Redevelopment, refer to Appendix B - FIG 8.4 - 8.11 (pg. 96-99).

FIG 2.6 A pylon has been used to fill a portion of a crumbling concrete step.

will suggest that a healthier relationship between City and citizen can be formed. Rather than a top-down approach, our investigations will begin at the ground plane, examining and orienting itself to the collective citizen.

Eventually, using Sparks Street as the vehicle, we will propose a series of unique images that are rooted within the City's planning guidelines and by-laws. These are done to enact change from the level of the citizen, engaging and encouraging them to take action into their own hands. This will all be done in an effort to redefine the way the citizen and the legislative powers at work think about developing the City of Ottawa; using scientific research where possible and real-world implementations of tactical urbanist movements being used to transform and connect people with urban spaces.

Chris Harris, a former Ottawa city councilor stated in an Ottawa Citizen article, "If people aren't careful, we're going to lose this street as a civic street, as an identity of Ottawa, ... This is going to become a pavilion for federal bureaucrats..."⁴ The time is now for Ottawa to shape its new identity, not when the governing power decides that they have missed their window of opportunity. In a city where things seem to get done years too late, it is imperative that the legislative powers consider alternate means of planning. An Ottawa Citizen article notes, "We've been sorry about the mall for decades, and we will be a lot sorer if the city spends millions of tax dollars in another futile fix-up."⁵

"New York's embrace of architecture has a dark side ... The majority of today's projects serve the interests of a small elite. And this trend is not likely to change any time soon. The slow death of the urban middle class, the rise of architecture as a marketing tool, the overweening influence of developers – all have helped to narrow architecture's social reach just as it begins to recapture the public imagination. From this perspective the wave of gorgeous new buildings can be read as a mere cultural diversion."⁶

- **Franco La Cecla**, *Against Architecture*

FIG 2.7 Layers of patch-work scar the original street surface.

COVID-Verse

In recent weeks — mid March — a new development has occurred, changing the way we interact with urban spaces. The novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) has forced populations across the world to remain in their homes, only permitted to leave for essentials like grocery shopping, picking up medicine or to exercise once a day. Images have been displayed across multiple countries showing the extent of the abandonment amongst normally bustling cities, now laid vacant. As a result, people are expected to; maintain a social distance of 2 metres from one another, communicate electronically, and to work from home where possible.

With this new, more barren view of cities, Sparks Street has largely remained the same. Images of abandonment along Sparks are not new to the people that live here. One street in a city serves as blight or an urban planning failure, but when all the city streets are empty, uneasy feelings creep in.

The following two images are a view of this phenomenon, one showing a Sparks Street prior to the global pandemic, and the other, during. While everything else is in disarray, Sparks continues on, business as usual, perpetually in a state of neglect, abandonment, and stagnation.

FIG 2.8 Sparks Street, business as usual. Image before or during the pandemic?

FIG 2.9 Sparks Street, business as usual. Image before or during the pandemic?

SITUATING THE STREET

"The revitalization of Sparks Street has been an exercise in futility for half a century. It remains one of the greatest failures of urban vision in Ottawa, and one hopes Mayor Jim Watson's vow to transform the pedestrian mall is not just more talk."¹

The City of Ottawa, just like Sparks Street's origins, emerges from humble beginnings. Stretching from the most western, to the most eastern end of the Central Business District (CBD), the busy street's conversion from being an automobile dominated artery to being pedestrian only was a process riddled with apprehension.

A Street once Hailed as "The Broadway of Ottawa"

First suggested by Jacques Gréber in 1958, it wasn't until 1960 that the street was partially closed to traffic, and by 1967 it was fully converted to a permanent pedestrian mall, from Elgin to Bank Street.² Prior to the conversion of the street, the City was skeptical about this new — and at the time — radical idea. The Ottawa Board of Trade flew some of their members as well as some of the municipal and federal officials to Toledo Ohio, to view the city's recently converted pedestrian shopping mall.³ The City of Ottawa, with much skepticism; set into place the necessary planning regulations and by-laws to make the pedestrian street a reality.⁴ Upon its opening, one member of the public noted, "What amazes me, are the trees, which are the most attractive feature... The mall is something new, and that's what we need in Ottawa."⁵

An excerpt from a 1976 report noted, "... Now the thoroughfare is one of the city's proudest tourist attractions... the jingle of cash registers confirms its original aim — to stimulate business — has been achieved... Because of the tranquil atmosphere, the mall is appreciated by both shoppers and office workers in the vicinity... Although it has been in operation for two decades, the Sparks Street Mall is still considered a model for other communities in North America."⁶

The street was the life-blood to the city, the only thing keeping the downtown core from being overly stale or corporately stuffy to potential shoppers. It was the driving

▲ FIG 3.1

Toledo Pedestrian mall, 1967. Two of the city's downtown streets were originally converted to pedestrian streets, the following year, only one remained. The project won numerous awards. The street today, has since been converted back to accommodate vehicular traffic. ^a

ba-nal

// adjective

~ so lacking in originality as to be obvious and boring.

"At every instant, there is more than the eye can see, more than the ear can hear, a setting or a view waiting to be explored. Nothing is experienced by itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it, the memory of past experiences." ^b

- Kevin Lynch, *Image of the City*

factor to revitalizing the downtown core's rigorous and oftentimes banal nature. The original design of the street broke up the entire length into "smaller, more identifiable areas".^{▲7} This planning technique gave the street a sense of identity, allowing for the feeling that their unique position on the street represented an identifiable moment. • This original planning principal has been acknowledged as a valuable quality in city streets. Kevin Lynch, an American Urban theorist states, "It must be granted that there is some value in mystification, labyrinth, or surprise in the environment."⁸ The original intent of the design of the street was something that urban designers still strive to create until this day, so what was the paradigm shift that caused it to fall into disrepair and more importantly, when did the city fall ill?

Everlasting Issues

A report conducted in 1986 found that some of the most pressing issues from retailers involved comments such as a need for; "more bistros, cafes, street repaving, better lighting and weather protection."⁹ Curious that these issues and complaints are still echoed today, more than 30 years later. Additionally, the report also relayed the fact that the street has become "over institutionalized."¹⁰ This then begins to set the stage of the City's lack of attention paid to the public and their reluctance to change and adapt to current needs and issues.

Since its conversion, some 53 trees that were originally planted have largely been turned into wood chips, leaving a measly collection of the original trees within block 05. The parametric canopies ■ that were designed by the Ottawa architect James Strutt, (1924-2008)¹¹ have all been removed, never to be seen again apart from their portrayal in historic images. The fountains, many of the benches and playgrounds that once existed on the street have all since been replaced by generic "out of a catalogue" urban street furniture. The fashion shows and concerts which once

▲ "This was achieved in 2 distinct ways:

1. By alternating the various design elements along the north and the south sides of the street, thereby interrupting the view along the street.
2. By introducing strong, visual barriers in the form of 7 foot high masonry screen walls. These walls broke up the "corridor" effect and aroused curiosity and anticipation about what they concealed."^c

• FIG 3.2

Sparks Street's original "identifiable" sections of the street. Colourful masonry walls conceal what might lie beyond.

■ FIG 3.3

Parametric Canopies designed by James Strutt.

engaged the street are no more.¹²

Narrative of Decline

This leaves us with obvious questions:

What happened to the city's most prized tourist and resident attraction? What set of decisions led to its demise? At what point did the sickness of neglect infiltrate the City collective?▲

The narrative of decline begins with the legislative bureaucracy's lack of foresight; the City's consideration of extremely flawed ideas like filling in the Rideau Canal and converting it into a freeway, or the re-urbanization of Lebreton flats more than 30 years ago — a site which remains a brownfield site until this day — to the resistance to the conversion of the Rideau Canal into the longest skating rink in the world.¹³ It serves as precedent then that over the years, the City as a governing body has lacked the ability to cleverly plan for the future of the urban realm. An LRT system delivered 1 year late but 20 years overdue, a CBD planned around automobile culture and seemingly endless conversations about a new inter-provincial bridge to connect two major employment hubs● all serve as ideas that have been "in the works" for too many years with little actually getting done. The City can boast all they want about the renewal of this or that street, or that they'll meet density targets for this neighbourhood, but until which time shovels are in the ground, getting the work done, these comments only exist as "verbal fluff". Yes, having the conversations about things that need to get done is all great and good, but a world with only conversations is only moving or inspiring for the duration of the conversations, quickly fleeting from the minds of those who have the power to make things happen.

▲ FIG 3.4

Instagram post that shows Sparks Street on a beautiful summer evening, mostly barren.

brownfield

// noun

~ a former industrial or commercial site where future use is affected by real or perceived environmental contamination.

● FIG 3.5

Ontario, Quebec and the NCC began the process in 2006 to build a new inter-provincial crossing to alleviate some of the rush-hour congestion experienced between the two cities. With the new federal budget released in 2019, the NCC has begun another study for the possibility of a new bridge.^d

Tactical Urbanism

Tactical Urbanism is a term used by urban designers, architects and forward-thinking urbanists. It can also be referred to as "Guerrilla Urbanism" for its hands-on approach to urban change. It involves the thoughtful and radical action of citizens conquering urban challenges and taking urban design into their own hands. In turn, this allows for them to curate neighbourhoods, streets, alleyways and so on, to serve their specific uses and needs. This is not a novel concept for Ottawa but a radical one and a needed one; particularly for a city that is attempting to ditch the association that stuck after columnist Allan Fotheringham dubbed it "the city that fun forgot".[▲] This in turn spurred people on to joke that the most exciting thing about Ottawa is the highway to Montreal.¹⁴

If anything is to be done in the city, a tactical approach is what is needed to convert spaces that are made for urbanites. The City of Ottawa's zoning website defines public space as, "equally open and available to all who choose, and does not denote ownership."¹⁵ Oddly enough, the City owns and maintains the lands on which public space exists, there is an element of ownership, and not public ownership at that, meaning that the City's interpretation of the term becomes contradictory. If a member of the public chooses to alter the "public space" in any way through paint or movement of fixtures, they face the threat of being fined or charged. Primarily, these acts of alteration are considered acts of vandalism, without the permission of the City. In 2016 a child's lemonade stand was shut down by the National Capital Commission (NCC) because they lacked a valid permit - on land zoned as "parks and open space,"[●] two things that one would expect to be considered open to the public.^{■16}

▲ FIG 3.6

Allen Fotheringham, the columnist that dubbed Ottawa "The City that Fun Forgot" in the 60's. The title has long since faded but still finds itself in conversations from time to time.

guer-ril-la

// noun

~ referring to actions or activities performed in an impromptu way, often without authorization.

ur-ban-ism

// noun

~ the development and planning of cities and towns.

pub-lic

// adjective

~ of or concerning the people as a whole.

● This info was confirmed through GeoOttawa's zoning website.

■ FIG 3.7

An NCC officer sits parked near the children's lemonade stand. It was later shut down, further representing another level of control of "public space".

Smartphone as Radical Tool

With the access to powerful technology in nearly every citizen's pocket, the tactical city becomes an increasingly possible reality. This means that most citizens have the power to instantly keep the City accountable, or to report directly to councilors. However, this is about as far as the change can go if the current system is maintained. Singapore has a population of over 5.5 million people, yet it is one of the most desirable, cleanest, and most attractive cities to live in.¹⁷ Joe Berridge, a master planner of cities, airports and universities attributes much of these qualities to the fact that, "Intelligent Singaporeans have not attached their identity to a nostalgic, backwards-looking culture. Quite the contrary. 'What next?' is their standard question."¹⁸ Why too can a North American city of a million not possess this same mindset?

The smartphone is often used for the purposes of distraction, our strategy here will purpose it for abstraction; changing the way people view the city building and urban renewal process.

SitTO is a tactical urban movement that seeks to bring more quality seating to the CBD of Toronto. The creators realized a need for better use of public space; the need for a place to sit and have a conversation. The hashtag is used to identify areas in need of more public seating, where users can add comments, images and get the discussion happening to engage the City.¹⁹ A group of coordinators ventures out, providing tables and chairs with the hashtag #SitTO spray-painted in pink on the backrest to make the movement documentable on social media.²⁰ Instead of relying on the City to respond to complaints and subsequently enforce change through a series of by-laws and legal documents adding up to frustrations and wasted time, the creators took a tactical approach.²¹ Social change rarely happens

▲ FIG 3.8

Spectators take in the sights of the urban landscape with the added option of urban seating.

FIG 3.9

"No person shall operate a motor driven model airplane, helicopter, rocket or boat except in an area designated by the Director for that purpose." ^e

- Ottawa City Parks and Facilities By-law

FIG 3.10

Blank storefronts along Sparks Street. How are they to expect citizens to engage with the street if there is nothing to see or do?

from the top down, rather the bottom up, and it just so happens that the power is directly available at a citizen's fingertips.

Government Occupation

One of the central reasons for Sparks' modern-day demise is the government occupation of many of the buildings along the street. The public servants who occupy these buildings reinforce the corporate nine-to-five attitude that dominates the government's outdated work-culture. Not only does this mean that the street is virtually lifeless in the evening, but it also means that many of the ground floor storefronts are closed to the public. In this specific scenario, the government has failed the city. Once vibrant storefronts are now plastered with vinyl wraps, advertising museums and other attractions around the capital.▲ In this case, the storefronts act as deflection space, guiding tourists to other potential attractions. This serves as an example of the City and the government realizing the manifestation of their actions but not taking initiative to change them, rather, covering them up with a layer of vinyl and calling it a day.

This serves as an argument that the government is ill-suited to act as a landlord. Would it not be more worthwhile for these storefronts to be rented out as pop-up shops or temporary galleries — similar to Montreal's Old Port — to reduce the financial strain of having them sit vacant? If these storefronts are technically owned by the government, does this not also mean that the "common taxpayer" also plays a part in their ownership?

▲ FIG 3.11

Storefront within block 02, plastered with a vinyl wrap, advertising for other attractions in the city. The city's neglect and miscre could not be avoided when taking this picture.

"The LTVP (Long Term Vision and Plan) Update will (...) provide a memorable visitor experience. This will include identifying designated universally accessible routes for the grounds and exploring opportunities for greater integration between Parliament Hill and surrounding areas, including support to the revitalization of Sparks Street and re-imagining Wellington Street to improve its aesthetic appeal and walkability."¹

- This report fails to mention improving the function of the street, outlining only a change to the aesthetics and walkability.

FIG 3.12

The Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) outlines Blocks 01 - 03 of Sparks Street as part of their property, and thus fills them with government employees.⁹

MISSION STATEMENT

L'ABsurde Design has volunteered for the hypothetical renewal of Sparks Street in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

L'ABsurde Design seeks to be lightly abrasive, just enough to exfoliate the stale thoughts and perceptions that hold back cities from developing into ideal places to work and, more importantly, live and interact.

Through thoughtful and oftentimes satirical work, our design group seeks to disturb the way in which we perceive public space. Taking an open-source approach, we look to the citizens to re-make their city into the place they want to live. We believe that the legislative powers at work are still necessary to the process of city building, but instead look for them to take a back seat to the design and creation process. Architects, designers and citizens are strangled by the city's overuse of bylaws resulting in the need to go through the approval process for permits to even engage in a public space even in the lightest manner, such as busking.

We call spaces like parks, plazas, or sporting fields public, yet they are controlled with multiple levels of red tape. The City outlines what is restricted and the punishments that will ensue if one is to fall out of line in respect to their use of such places. "Public" spaces that have no permitted impact from the citizen aren't public spaces; they're city spaces that are leased to the citizen if they choose to use it in the way the City intended.

L'ABsurde looks at these disservices done by the City and challenges its corporate thinking of the way one is "permitted" to act in a space. We strive to arm citizens with the necessary tools to become more competent in the realm of transforming urban space and reclaiming public space.

CRISIS REPORT

Since Spark's Streets first renewal, the streetscape has been in a constant state of decline. The City often speaks about the renewal of this street or that transportation corridor, however, the citizens typically don't see the work completed for another 5-10 years. Hesitation, short-sightedness and reluctance are the words that come to mind when considering the city's lack of action.

As previously mentioned, the City clearly states:

- many of the pavers along the street have been haphazardly repaired with asphalt
- street lights and monuments have been inappropriately modified
- mismatched street elements now clash with one another
- much of the foliage that occupied the street has either died or been removed, fountains included
- many street fixtures have been damaged due to miscare when conducting winter operations
- various forms of advertising fixtures continue to appear in important view planes and sight lines

The impression of "Best of Town" appears to be absent to passersby and largely points to the lack of adequate resources being clearly defined and assigned. (Sparks Street Public Realm Plan, Pg. 70)

What action will the City take? Given their past track record, the average citizen can expect proactivity only when it is a few years too late. Responsibility therefore lies in the hands of the collective citizen to take action. The attached set of drawings are meant to inspire and drive the citizens of Ottawa to come out of hiding and make a lasting, hands-on impact on the health of the public realm of the city.

For years, the City has gotten away with the misuse of the term "public space". What the City interprets as public space is an outdoor plot such as a park, plaza, courtyard or sports field that is free to use by anyone. Although this all sounds great and good, the moment a citizen attempts to put their own mark on it through expressions of art or to set up an event, the City bogs down the situation with red tape. How then is anyone to pass off calling this "public space", if the public is not "permitted" to change it or have an impact on it in any way? It is for the benefit of the citizens that they wake up, put down their low-fat soy milk, light roast coffee with Splenda and trade it in for a full-fat milk, triple shot cappuccino.

re-luc-tance

//noun:

~ unwillingness or disinclination to do something.

short-sight-ed

//adjective:

~ lacking imagination or foresight.

METHOD

Counter-Current // The eyes of the Landscape designer

To situate the street visually, an index of street features that contribute to the street's physical neglect has been included. These things range from electrical boxes to generic, out-of-the catalogue picnic tables. This work was done to give context and a deeper understanding of the City's current view towards the neglected street-scape. This exposes the exclusionary nature of signage along the street, largely stating what can't be done in specific zones, rather than suggesting activities that could be done along the street.

Additionally, a series of construction drawings were produced to document the street and plan for the future. These are referred to as "counter-construction" methods of representation. The drawings take into consideration all the things that the City puts emphasis on such as: the affordability of the project; remaining within a set budget; making use of existing street elements; and proposing plantings that the City has used in urban areas for years. These elements and more were all considered in the proposal for the street's redesign.

The purpose of this drawing is to again expose the planned versus as-built reality of the guidelines and regulations the City puts forward. Many deciduous trees die within the first 2 years of being planted, snow is piled up in inconvenient places, and elements are cut from projects for budgetary reasons. These are the realities the City puts forward. They can plan and set legislation all they want, but the physical reality of things are what matters most, since that's what the citizen will experience.

Closely read the notation, construction notes, and general detailing of the "counter-construction" drawings. These elements are important to understanding the intentions behind this proposal for Sparks Street.

<p>BANK OF CANADA PLAZA</p> <p>Smoking designated areas dictate where people can and cannot smoke. Keeping spaces directly in front of building entrances clear of cigarette smoke is a good regulation to put in place, however, this sign represents one way in which the government and city attempt to control public space.</p>	<p>BANK OF CANADA PLAZA</p> <p>Smoking designated areas dictate where people can and cannot smoke. Keeping spaces directly in front of building entrances clear of cigarette smoke is a good regulation to put in place, however, this sign represents one way in which the government and city attempt to control public space.</p>	<p>BANK OF CANADA PLAZA</p> <p>Respecting the property entails a strict control of the ground plane, according to property owners. Things like restricting littering or areas of smoking are good initiatives in making for better public environments, however, it gives a visitor the impression that their movements and activity is being monitored.</p>	<p>300 SPARKS</p> <p>This sign represents one of the key planning issues that have led to the street's neglect and abandonment. Along the street are moments where indoor malls house shops, acting internally as opposed to interacting with the original mall itself.</p>	<p>PLACE DE VILLE</p> <p>This serves as another example of the buildings along the street acting inwardly as opposed to engaging with the street scape. It's almost as if the architects planning some of these buildings realized that the street has been undesirable for years and have planned around it, only reinforcing the abandonment of the street's atmosphere.</p>	<p>BLOCK 04 EASTERN ENTRANCE</p> <p>A necessary part of the street, indicating to firefighters where they can access different fire suppression systems along the street. This sign does not interfere with the nature or atmosphere of the street scape, but this sign is plastered in a monument at the gateway to Sparks Street.</p>	<p>PLACE DE VILLE</p> <p>Placed in a more secluded location, this sign also provides fire fighters with valuable info on suppression systems within the street or adjacent buildings.</p>	<p>RESTAURANT PATIO</p> <p>This sign sits within a patio that is fenced off, enclosed with a metal gate. Although the patio space is owned by the restaurant. Most seating spaces should be accessible to the public. This sign makes for a more hostile environment to passersby; giving them the feeling that they might not be welcome within that patio if they don't plan on consuming something.</p>	<p>BLOCK 04 EASTERN ENTRANCE</p> <p>Engraved into one of the gateway monuments to Sparks, the signage clearly identifies the street. This is one of the only bits of signage along the street that does not look tired and worn out, thanks to the fact that it is engraved in stone.</p>
<p>BLOCK 02</p> <p>A sign restricting vehicular use along Sparks requires that vehicles occupying the street outside of the permitted hours will require a permit. A step in the right direction for the city, but means nothing if regulations are not enforced.</p>	<p>NATE'S DELI</p> <p>Another tired looking sign designating a no smoking area. Further enforcing the legislative control over the street. One more way in which the city overlays a multitude of control policies onto the public realm.</p>	<p>BLOCK 05</p> <p>A sign depicting the Zone for Ontario Safe Access to Abortion Services. This sign is a signifier that protesters of abortion services cannot occupy the area beyond the sign. Although there are no known abortion clinics on the street itself, the sign provides unexpected insight into another level of control of the street.</p>	<p>BLOCK 02</p> <p>A no parking sign depicts where a fire access route exists. A strange sight for a pedestrian street, but the sign likely exists because of a previous incident. Regardless, the city could have thought of a more inventive way to represent a zone that is occupied by a fire-route.</p>	<p>PLACE DE VILLE</p> <p>It would seem odd that signs like these would be posted on a major pedestrian street. This is likely the cause of the bike parking being hidden away underneath the back of the building. Keeping the parking segregated to a dark, covered area seems to be counter-intuitive. Why not let the eyes on the street act as some sort of security measures?</p>	<p>BLOCK 01 SCULPTURE PLAQUE</p> <p>A plaque on the "Joy" sculpture credits both the Sparks St. Mall Authority and the citizens of Ottawa for its commission. However, it is a wonder if citizens really did play a significant role in its commission. This might serve as yet another example of the city crediting the citizens to save face once again.</p>	<p>BARBER SHOP SIGNAGE</p> <p>A sign board advertises necessary citizen services in an effort to pull in business from adjacent feeder streets. This is one of the necessary businesses that will keep the area alive as it is a service for the common citizen. However, with little to no citizens living on the street, the sign serves a cry for help rather than a driver to a healthy business.</p>	<p>ESTHETICS BY LUCIE</p> <p>Sparks has an awkward mix of restaurants, banks, nail & hair salons, specialty stores, suviniere shops and gyms. Eyebrow threading and waxing is a luxury service as opposed to a necessary one. However, the business seems to be thriving compared to others along the street, likely due to their advertising and instagram presence.</p>	<p>GRECO GYM</p> <p>A gym signboard invites potential customers. However, their "public" space comes across as less inviting. The tables at the entrance to the gym have signs on them that read "reserved, have you ordered your smoothie yet?" This alienates anyone walking down to street without the intention of going to this gym. This reads as an attempt to privatize public space.</p>
<p>BLOCK 01 CONSTRUCTION SIGNAGE</p> <p>The consistent state of "under construction" Sparks Street had prompted custom made construction signs. Representing the dire state that the street is regularly in. The sign represents the city's continual dependence on car culture; leaving the road open to traffic but the sidewalk closed to pedestrians.</p>	<p>BLOCK 01 EASTERN ENTRANCE</p> <p>Motorists need to be reminded that they cannot freely drive or park along Sparks. This exposes two fallacies; Sparks has been so barren that vehicles are confused that the street might not be for them, and drivers feel as though they are entitled to drive down and park on anything that resembles a street.</p>	<p>LORD STANLEY MEMORIAL</p> <p>A plaque that describes Lord Stanley's "gift" that sits at the entrance to Sparks Street, directly off of Wellington. It feels more than out of place on the street, blocking one's view all the way down to the Western periphery of downtown. The Mall Authority's attempt to create individual moments along the street, once again comes short.</p>	<p>300 SPARKS</p> <p>An "out of the catalogue" planter sits with neglected foliage. Wild weeds and cigarettes are about the only thing that occupies these concrete planters. Other, more maintained planters exist on the street but these ones continue to sit as street clutter on the periphery.</p>	<p>RE RESIDENCES</p> <p>A common site on the street, but rarely appearing where it's needed most: to point out the failing street surface. This piece of construction equipment sits as a constant reminder of the state of construction along Sparks.</p>	<p>BLOCK 04</p> <p>Sitting on top of a tree stump, this pylon represents many of the embedded issues with the city along the street. A tree was cut down, and instead of dedicating money to replanting a new tree or removing the stump, the city decided to reinforce the street's derelict atmosphere and merely cover it up with a construction pylon.</p>	<p>BLOCK 04 WESTERN ENTRANCE</p> <p>A piece of what should be construction equipment has been permanently formed in asphalt to the street's surface. The broken piece of pavement was tarred over and the sign was embedded within it. On a pedestrian, public street, the city is still making an effort to dictate where citizens can and can't walk.</p>	<p>BANK OF CANADA PLAZA</p> <p>Part of the city's new pilot project, the bright red resin Muskoka chairs often reside in front of areas that already have integrated seating. The seem to be placed without much care or consideration to their context leaving for a disjointed or chaotic overall atmosphere.</p>	<p>BLOCK 03 WESTERN ENTRANCE</p> <p>Another "out of the catalogue" feature along the street, a resin and steel bench sitting in front of a concrete retaining wall that could in itself act as a place of seating. Unfortunately that the city missed another mark on the street's seating choices.</p>
<p>BANK OF CANADA PLAZA</p> <p>A bistro table and chairs sits empty only with someone's discarded waste left behind. Many of the same table and chairs down the street were left empty, likely not because they're inherently bad, but poorly placed in unimaginative areas.</p>	<p>BANK OF CANADA PLAZA</p> <p>A leftover from some of the street's early planning, the outlet receptacles sit as bollards, which would make sense if they were not placed within elevated planter beds. Could these features not have integrated lighting within them?</p>	<p>PLACE DE VILLE</p> <p>Cigarette butts need to go somewhere, why not make the place of disposal discreet? This plastic container is placed out of sight of the main street, and for good reason. It serves as an eyesore as well as yet another example of the patchwork of "improvements" along the street.</p>	<p>BANK OF CANADA PLAZA</p> <p>Another part of the Mall Authority's "pilot project" consists of these modular seating arrangements. They're cheaply made out of plywood and a few of them along the street are already showing their age as they've already become damaged. Modular seating is a good idea, but the city's execution leaves something to be desired.</p>	<p>BLOCK 06 WESTERN ENTRANCE</p> <p>The pedestrian mall is littered with these plastic garbage cans, serving as a hangover of the street's 70's vibe where plastic was the "new space-age material". If the city truly wants to turn Sparks Street around, they have to invest in its uniqueness and embrace it with their street furnishings. "Out of the catalogue" street furniture simply won't do.</p>	<p>Place De Ville</p> <p>A plaque on the "Joy" sculpture credits both the Sparks St. Mall Authority and the citizens of Ottawa for its commission. However, it is a wonder if citizens really did play a significant role in its commission. This might serve as yet another example of the city crediting the citizens to save face once again.</p>	<p>BANK OF CANADA</p> <p>This concrete barrier sits between some of the failed landscaped seating along the front of the Bank of Canada building. For whatever reason, the seating which also acts as a barrier to the edge of the garden has in recent years been chipped and is currently falling apart.</p>	<p>BLOCK 02 EASTERN ENTRANCE</p> <p>A Canada Post Drop box sits as the lone mailbox along the street. Yes, direct mail deliver into the building is convenient, but it also acts as yet another driver to keeping people within their buildings, interacting with the same people day in and day out. Something as simple as a mail box can spark unique interactions with strangers on the street.</p>	<p>BLOCK 02</p> <p>A Kiosk left over from the original redesign of the street now houses a sign indicating the street and an unused and outdated pay-phone. Something as simple as a pay-phone can instantly age a street, that's not to say they shouldn't exist, but it certainly shouldn't be worthy of a sculptural monument.</p>
<p>BANK OF CANADA PLAZA</p> <p>Another piece of the city's "Pilot project"; a lending library. This makes sense in a healthy pedestrian neighbourhood, but for office workers looking to take a smoke break, the take-a-book-leave-a-book lending library sits more as a display case for unwanted books.</p>	<p>CANADA'S FOUR CORNERS</p> <p>One of the only indicators that Sparks has in the past been heralded as a tourist attraction. A postcard stand sits idle outside of a souvenir shop, patiently waiting to serve some sort of purpose.</p>	<p>300 SPARKS</p> <p>Yet another concrete planter bed with some off-the-shelf annual plants in it. These planters indicate that nature should be on display as opposed to integrated. This again is an outdated concept in regards to how urbanites perceive nature within the fabric of the city.</p>	<p>GRECO FITNESS</p> <p>A picnic table, reminiscent of one that might be seen in a high school cafeteria occupies a section of blocks 2 and 3. Painted in red and adorned with an umbrella with the Sparks Street Branding on it ensures that it sticks out just as much as all the other mis-matched street furniture.</p>	<p>119 SPARKS</p> <p>A current necessity to the streets condition; a bright yellow salt-box for continually eroding the already battered street surface. These eyesores, for logistical reasons need to be placed in sight of the public realm to be easily accessible to those clearing the streets. A heated surface would mitigate the need for such a piece of furniture, further de-cluttering the street.</p>	<p>GOODLIFE FITNESS</p> <p>An electrical box sits directly in front of a store window, naturally, as there really isn't anywhere else to put it. What is peculiar is the fact that no one has made any measures to even attempt to cover it up or conceal it.</p>	<p>BLOCK 04 EASTERN ENTRANCE</p> <p>An unknown plywood locked box sits where Bank crosses Sparks. What it holds is unknown, but what is known is its derelict presence.</p>	<p>BLOCK 04</p> <p>Three different paving options occupy this one section of the street, showing the carelessness attitude the city has taken towards the urban surface. Although obvious that some electrical work underground has been done in the past, little to no care has been taken into account to maintain the street's appearance.</p>	<p>BLOCK 01 EASTERN ENTRANCE</p> <p>Cobble stone is charming in old streets and city alleyways, however, here there is no history of cobble stone. The failing concrete has, in a sad attempt been glorified through the "thoughtful" paving pattern surrounding it.</p>
<p>BLOCK 02</p> <p>A sewer grate sits amid a concrete pad, surrounded by sloppy asphalt paving. Instead of mitigating the appearance of infrastructural failure on the street, the city seems to instead highlight it.</p>	<p>BLOCK 02</p> <p>A steel plate sits amongst crumbling concrete. Sloppy asphalt paving, again finds its way into this scenario as well.</p>	<p>BLOCK 03</p> <p>A manhole cover sits spray-painted in blue for unknown reasons. A likely explanation is that the city works will get to "repairing" the area surrounding it in a few weeks to a couple of years time.</p>	<p>BLOCK 03 WESTERN ENTRANCE</p> <p>Another manhole cover reading "Danger, Ottawa". Not only acting as a tripping hazard but also an eyesore, the failing concrete square surrounding it once again exposes the lack of precision in the repair process of the surrounding infrastructure.</p>	<p>BLOCK 03</p> <p>At least at this point, city works made an effort to work within the lines of the failed paving units.</p>	<p>BLOCK 01</p> <p>Failing concrete sits hedged in by brick pavers. Its almost as if the city is intentionally highlighting their negligence of the street.</p>	<p>BLOCK 03</p> <p>Sunken asphalt patchwork sits not only as an eyesore but also a tripping hazard, as does much of the failed street surface.</p>	<p>BLOCK 02</p> <p>Maintenance work done on an electrical outlet has left its permanent mark on the street. Here, there wasn't even an effort to patch the area surrounding the small metal cap.</p>	<p>BLOCK 03 WESTERN ENTRANCE</p> <p>Yet another instance where the paving surrounding a manhole has left into disrepair. The manhole cover reads "danger", this should serve as enough of a warning to passersby that the paving surrounding it is a tripping hazard.</p>

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▲ ● ■ Azrieli School of
Architecture & Urbanism

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Illustration 1.3

Chapter 01 // BLINDNESS

How the city has chosen to pull the wool over its eyes, time and time again.

“ With an extensive greening and programming mandate for Sparks Street, cycling will continue to be prohibited and cyclists will be expected to lock or walk their bikes during busy pedestrian periods. Design interventions will be utilized to reinforce pedestrian priority and reinforce the visual presence of Sparks Street at intersections. Parking will continue to be provided on surrounding streets and private parking facilities but not on Sparks Street itself. ”

- City of Ottawa // *Sparks Street Public Realm Plan*, Pg.161

Illustration 2.1

BLINDNESS

...In this city... "There is pressure to have a poverty of ambition."¹

One of the sole issues with getting anything interesting done in the City of Ottawa seems to be the fact that Ottawans don't feel ownership of their city. The government's presence means that people move here to make a living, not to find a method of living.² Lack of ownership within a city holds the potential to be the demise of it. Without people feeling as though they belong within a particular place, little is done proactively to make it better. This opinion of a complacent citizen culture was more relevant back in 2014 when the documentary *The City That Fun Forgot?* was released. Ottawa's creative subculture is still hidden beneath the layers of rigour and staleness in which the federal government shrouds the city. As precedent; a part of the *Toronto Road Mural Project* has encouraged citizens to leave their mark on designated public spaces.^{▲2} Dave Meslin, an urbanist, writer and community organizer in Toronto stated, "public space should be just that - the community should have the opportunity to alter it... the trick is to give people a sense of collective ownership, and once they get a sense that it's theirs, they'll make it better."³ Without citizens feeling ownership over parts of the city, people will complain about City decisions but take little to no physical initiative to promote meaningful change.

Transit Blunders

During the OC-Transpo bus strike in 2009, citizens were left for nearly 51 days without access to public transit, in the middle of a brutal winter.^{●4} A series of political dealings and failed commitments led to the transit system's failure. Andrew Cohen, a Journalist recalling the phenomenon mentioned, "In the winter for 7 weeks the buses were shut down. In other cities they would be rioting in the streets. Ottawans? Well, they just accept it, they say, 'oh, we'll just walk, in the dead of winter.' I think politicians know that Ottawans will accept just about anything, and that's what they get; just about anything."⁵ In situations where there is no

▲ FIG 4.1
Kensington Street painted by the surrounding community.

● FIG 4.2
Clipping from a newspaper during the transit strike in 2009.

"With no pedestrian culture, there were no opportunities for the chance encounters that turn into friendships."^a

- Jeff Speck, *Walkable City*

push-back from citizens, the City will often opt to use the lack of criticism to their advantage, reassuring themselves that everything is functioning just as it should. Acknowledging that 2009 was a different time, we look forward to a more recent OC-Transpo blunder; the new Confederation LRT line that opened in September 2019.

Within its first 53 days of operations the brand new 2.1 billion dollar project, there was a cumulative total of 21.5 hours in service delays.⁶ This and several other issues such as a raw sewage leak in Parliament station and an array of multi-million dollar lawsuits against the line's builder, Rideau Transit Group (RTG), expose the mismanagement and the "turn a blind eye until it becomes a problem" attitude of City officials. It's easy to understand the public's frustrations with the line when the project's Transit Boss, John Manconi repeatedly stated during construction, "We are in the relentless pursuit of perfection."⁷ These delays and issues add up to the people who are intended to use the system daily being late for work, or to pick up their kids from school. In fact, riders are considering taking action against the City, with rumours of a class action lawsuit being in the works.⁸ Additionally, there has been a problem with the height of the train's grab-bars for some people. Many tweeted and sent in formal requests to the transit provider asking that strap hangers be installed on the trains. Nearly two months later, still no sign of them. Citizens responded with a "scarf protest", documenting the phenomenon on social media platforms.⁹ Citizens have realized how broken the city's transit system is and they have begun to take action to protest it. All this to serve as precedent that since the transit strike of 2009, 10 years later, citizens have begun to take a significant amount of ownership over their city. Citizens have even taken action to create a website called "Occasional Transport", where it relies on transit users to report when the train is down, to act as a notification system as the experience with OC-Transpo's delay notifications have been in the past, spotty to say the least.¹⁰

▲ FIG 4.3

A citizen using their scarf to hold on to the grab-bar that has been out of reach since the line's launch.

● FIG 4.4

The front page of the "occasional" transport web-page. "We report fast. The Mayor reports furious," is in relation to a comment that mayor Jim Watson made when he was being bombarded by complaints from citizens about the broken system. He's been a running joke since, due to his lack of action taken against the issue.¹¹

Technology as Protest

This then serves as a form of protest to a broken system, citizens taking the initiative into their own hands to encourage change. A suburb called Canada Bay of Sydney, Australia has seen a form of digital protest as the neighbourhood becomes architecturally gentrified.¹¹ Citizens have taken to the curation of timelines to protest what the City has decided should be done to this once suburban neighbourhood. Instead of photographing the new glassy high-rise, international style buildings, they have decided to build their timelines around the character-defining single-family suburban homes that remain.¹² Although this plays on the concept of the Australian Dream, deeper connotations lie within. Both citizen and city have become blind to each other's point of view. Author, Megan Hicks mentions in the article that, "With the encouragement of their Instagram followers and 'likers,' they are creating a past out of the present. As they select decontextualized houses to photograph and post, they suspend them in an unreality."¹³ Social media and the technological state that modern-day citizens find themselves within can enforce a certain level of "blindness" to both the city and citizen, however, if used with the proper intentions, it can be an incredibly informative and useful tool.

Illustration 2.1 was completed with the intent of calling out the city on their inability to forward-think when it comes to the redesign of Sparks Street. This and other title page "anti-drawings" speak to the larger issues with the City's numerous documents produced to inform citizens and more importantly, stakeholders of the work that may or may not eventually get done. Informing citizens is a necessary step when it comes to re-designing public space, however, the amount of time wasted in public consultations, the curation of Urban Design Review Panel documents (UDRP's), design briefs and so on, often leaves people more confused and angry than anything else. For these reasons and more, a tactical approach is needed in

▲ FIG 4.5

"thehomesinwhichwelve" Instagram page chronicles many of the suburban homes that are being torn down to make way for modern, decontextualized developments.

gen-tri-fi-ca-tion

// noun

~ the process of making a person or activity more refined or polite.

Moreover, the process of changing the character of a neighbourhood.

From the City of Ottawa's website:

"Ottawa's Urban Design Review Panel is an independent advisory panel of volunteer professionals who provide an objective peer review of both capital and private sector development projects throughout the City's Design Priority Areas. The Panel is an important addition to the City's formal design review process and is intended to enhance the City's capabilities in achieving architectural and urban design excellence."^c

the redevelopment of Sparks Street, inherently altering the way in which areas within the city are redeveloped. The people of Ottawa have changed over the years, and with its steadily growing population, it shows no signs of stopping; unless of course, the City chooses to slow it down by keeping to their old ways.

FIG 4.7

"No person shall engage in any horse race or ride a horse in a park in an area not designated for that purpose by the Director."^d

- Ottawa City Parks and Facilities By-law

METHOD

Counter-Current // The eyes of the Set Designer

This thesis follows a narrative of proposals and counter-arguments. This has deliberately been done to conform to the City's flow of work; architects, designers, engineers, etc., propose a project or concept to the City through a set of construction drawings and the City counters by providing comments on the work. These comments are often written to conform the design to the surrounding context, essentially watering down the original concept, ultimately detracting from the design. There is no doubt that projects proposed to the City will need comments and feedback to conform to the bylaws and plans the City has outlined. The issue is that oftentimes, these constrictive bylaws are what make projects less engaging thus forcing them to conform to the surrounding urban fabric.

As previously mentioned, the chapter heading illustrations and other proposals created for this thesis act as anti-arguments to some of the rhetoric produced in City documents. These drawings pose a series of "what-if?" scenarios, responding to the plethora of written work released to the public, much of which will never take the time to read in-depth. The purpose of this work is to expose the levels of restriction that the City imposes by writing such exhaustive guidelines. These obscure or outlandish drawings are meant to encourage action at the level of the citizen, engaging them with the street. If an idea is destined to be boiled down to its most basic form, then we ought to begin with something incredibly complex or obscure. So when it gets boiled down, it enters the realm of realism, while holding on to the stories and elements that brought it to that place.

These illustrations have been drawn from my interest in theatre and set design, proposing that these particular moments on the street can be viewed and represented through the eyes of a Set Designer. With the white line drawing and gray card acting as the set backdrop, there emerges a character on the coloured stage set within the scene. Bleeding beyond the boundaries of the drawing brings the image further into the reader's space as it appears not only to be bound by two dimensions. Each scene could be viewed as a scene within the same play - the play that is the City's incompetence to plan for the future.

This phenomenon is explored at multiple scales; the scale of the street, the scale of the bench and the scale of the teacup. These are meant to investigate the streetscape as the Set Designer would, much more in-depth than the City would when planning the street. The current plan for Sparks fails to incorporate elements at the human scale, beyond the bench or table. The Set Designer incorporates all elements of the human experience along an urban street, showcasing the unexpected and unpredictable.

Scale of the Street // The eyes of the Set Designer

" In the short-term, Sparks Street is expected to experience increased pedestrian traffic from the newly opened LRT stations on Queen Street, a new STO stop at Lyon Street and several nearby bike lanes planned for construction in the next few years. "

- City of Ottawa // Sparks Street Public Realm Plan, Pg. 10

Illustration 2.2

" The LTVP (Long-Term Vision and Plan) update will take a campus approach for a modern parliament, considering all buildings and lands north of Wellington Street, as well as the three blocks south of Wellington (between Elgin Street, Bank Street, and north of Sparks Street) as a single, inclusive campus to facilitate more effective planning and development, and to support efficient Parliamentary operations. "

- Government of Canada // *Parliamentary Precinct Plan*

Illustration 2.3

“ While there are many aspects of this plan that will need to be timed and coordinated with major renewal of adjacent properties, particularly those planned by PSPC for blocks 1, 2 and 3 over the next 10-15 years, there are many actions and recommendations that can be advanced immediately and regardless of the timing of any comprehensive renewal or road works. ”

- City of Ottawa // Sparks Street Public Realm Plan, Pg. 73

Illustration 2.4

Scale of the Bench // The eyes of the Set Designer

- City of Ottawa // Sparks Street Public Realm Plan, Pg. 70

Illustration 2.5

“ No person shall engage in any horse race or ride a horse in a park in an area not designated for that purpose by the Director. ”

- City of Ottawa // Parks and Facilities By-law : By-law No. 2004-276, Pg. 5

Illustration 2.6

“ No person being the owner or having care and custody of an animal shall permit such animal to be in a park without the written approval of the Director. ”

- City of Ottawa // Parks and Facilities By-law : By-law No. 2004-276, Pg. 5

Illustration 2.7

Scale of the Teacup // The eyes of the Set Designer

These particular drawings draw from the work produced by the Landscape Designer's sections — namely, the detail drawings along the right side of the drawing (Refer to page 28). This is a moment of overlap between professions, one being more knowledgeable on certain subjects than the other. To the City, this would be a scenario where an architect would hire an external consultant. Here the consultant to the landscape architect turns out to be a Set Designer.

4 BICYCLE RING

1:50

2 RAISED PLANTER - SQUARE

1:25

3 RAISED PLANTER - RECTANGULAR

1:25

Chapter 02 // NEGLECT

How the City has intentionally let areas decay over time.

“ The demolition or transformation of several significant heritage buildings and their replacement with newer buildings changed the scale and character of the street. In 1989, the street underwent a major redesign. Many components of that project remain today, including portions of paving and structures marking street intersections, but many elements have disappeared, such as pavilions and fountains. ”

- City of Ottawa // *Sparks Street Public Realm Plan*, Pg 7

Illustration 3.1

NEGLECT

"We tend to only pay attention when it becomes critical."¹

Walking down Sparks Street at anytime during the year, it becomes immediately apparent that the surface and the shops adjacent have long been neglected, even forgotten by the citizen and the City. The crumbling concrete, the patchwork of different paver styles, the tired and outdated street furniture all lead one to believe that the City might have omitted the fact that it even owns the street in the first place. It would then appear, walking around downtown, that on various streets and avenues that there is an underlying culture of neglect. The winter takes its toll on the hard surfaces throughout the urban core, but that serves as no excuse to allow it to continually degrade over time.

Rideau Street's Everlasting "Renewal"

Skimming the most southern fringe of one of Ottawa's largest tourist attractions, The Byward Market, Rideau Street seems to be in a constant state of construction since the city's inception. Thanks to the LRT, the concept of renewing the area began in 2016, and work isn't slated to start until at least the Spring of 2020.^{▲2} With the Rideau Centre renovations wrapping up in 2018 and the LRT opening in 2019, the City boasts that this section is a major transit and pedestrian connection to the Market. Why then have they allowed the streetscape to degrade? Should this not have been of the utmost importance to the City with the hub of activity surrounding the area? The City's "temporary" solution was to take some concrete parking curbs to create a makeshift edge to the sidewalk and fill the walkable space in with a patchy, messy layer of asphalt.[●] This is the view that many getting off the train or walking just 5-10 minutes from Parliament Hill will encounter. Where then is the same attention to detail that is paid to Wellington and Sussex Streets? On the City of Ottawa's website, it outlines a preliminary construction schedule for the Rideau Street renewal. The City remains steadfast in its hesitation to setting anything into place and promptly getting the work done. Regardless of the city's state of perpetual development, it

Preliminary construction schedule for Rideau Street

Project tendered	Winter 2020
Contract award	Winter 2020
Construction commencement	Spring 2020
Construction season	April to December 2020

▲ FIG 5.2

The preliminary construction schedule for Rideau Street's renewal.

● FIG 5.1

Rideau Street looking towards Dalhousie, the existing curb can be seen at the center of the image with a patchwork of asphalt surrounding it.

FIG 5.3

"No person shall, in a park and without a permit issued by the Director: a) sell, or offer, expose or advertise for sale any: i) food or drink; ii) newspaper, magazine or publication; iii) goods, wares or merchandise; iv) art, skill or service."[▲]

- Ottawa City Parks and Facilities By-law

serves as little excuse to allow the urban realm to continue to degrade.

Gardiner Expressway as Human Scale Experiment

The Gardiner Expressway is an elevated ribbon of asphalt that runs directly through Toronto's downtown core.[▲] Long serving as an icon to the automobile, it today exists as a blightful scar slashed across Toronto's CBD. With Toronto's modern day condo and construction renaissance, balconies or condo units that overlook the auto-route are undesirable. More recently, the highway has been creating a greater level of havoc to the city through its seasonal shedding of concrete parking onto streets and vehicles below.³ To most people the ideal thing to do would be to immediately tear down the highway. In fact, the City has considered demolishing a 1.7km stretch of the highway just East of the Don River, a plan which might very well still be in the works.^{•4} With no surprise to anyone, the City has looked at this issue in dollars rather than the implied social impacts.

Yet, the City should not be completely painted as the villain in this story. In fact, a new pilot project has been in the works to convert the usable and valuable space below the highway. The Bentway seeks to claim back space stolen by the Gardiner over the years of its existence. Waterfront Toronto speaks of it in this way, "The Bentway will create a series of rooms formed by the spaces between columns, re-imagining the area beneath the expressway as a place for people."⁵ Due to its linear nature and the rhythm of its columns, as one moves along the corridor, the expressway now serves as a collective for people from all walks of life. Functioning as a skating trail in the winter and public event space and walking trails in the summer. Here, the city has successfully adapted a problem into a solution. Instead of an object that divides the city, the expressway has been altered to connect neighbourhoods and people from varying locations within the core. This example proves that changing a

▲ FIG 5.4

The Gardiner Expressway running through downtown Toronto, largely cutting the city off from accessing the waterfront.

• FIG 5.5

The city and the provincial government have entertained the idea of partially or fully demolishing the expressway to better free-up waterfront property.

■ FIG 5.6

"Sunday Social" event with cold drinks, music and friends now serves as a place for the people below a space that was made for the machine.⁸

place doesn't mean beginning anew, but rather, realigning one's perspective. Why then does it seem that city officials in Ottawa do not possess this same ideology?

Oslo as Capital Precedent

Oslo's urban rejuvenation is an ambitious one, but its first aim is to reclaim the downtown area for the people, pushing vehicles to the periphery, where they belong.⁶ Appropriately dubbed; *The Car-Free Livability Programme*, the report seeks to give justification to the citizens, explaining why the City is investing millions of dollars into "undoing" urban planning fumbles of the past. Much like Canada's capital, Norway's capital was also gripped by the development of the post-war automobile. "From being a place where balls were held on the cobblestones in the 1950s, car traffic took over and it became a six lane thoroughfare from east to west, in addition to railway goods traffic."⁷ Where Ottawa and Oslo differ is that Oslo has fully embraced the planning mistakes of the past and is now taking the steps to "undo"▲ these things which have proven themselves detrimental to city life. Ottawa has yet to think radically to consider a shift away from automobile dependence or at least, it doesn't show.

Just because a city is the capital of the country, does not mean that it is destined to be bogged down with the politics that take place within its urban borders.● Oslo serves as precedent that if the councilors in charge have an openness and willingness to change and adapt, that great things can come of it. In a recent CBC article, Shawn Menard, an urban Ottawa City councilor stated in a report on the City's snow handling system, that, "Winter maintenance operations, much like the city in general, requires a significant paradigm shift."⁸ Select councilors, unfortunately do not speak for the governing city body as a whole. Although councilor Menard recognizes the need for a change of viewpoints amongst the City officials, it doesn't

▲ FIG 5.7

A map representing the intended improvements in the central urban area of Oslo.

The "From Parking to City Life" section states, "The city's streets and urban spaces are important meeting places and democratic spaces. There is more room for city life, cyclists and pedestrians, seating areas and greenery in the future city."⁹

- Why does it seem that North American cities have such a hard time adopting this same mentality?

Refer to Appendix B - FIG 8.1 (pg. 92) for larger scale map.

● FIG 5.8

Streetscape converted in Oslo's center. The converted space is enticing because of the people, not the street design or furniture.

mean that the rest feel inclined to agree. For this reason, it becomes the task of the citizens to catapult this change forward, and is therefore necessary to push residents to reach a point of frustration with the City in order to enact meaningful change.

The City of Ottawa has put forth documents outlining their goal of becoming Canada's most livable city by 2030.⁹ The purpose of their document, named, *Ottawa Next and Beyond 2036*, is to outline policies that will influence the new Official Plan — an extensive document that controls the way in which the city develops — which is set to be released in the coming years. This document, also states that, "More people are working from home, at large employment nodes, and at high-rise complexes near transit stations leading to a significant decline in the local public sphere, and less value is placed on public spaces and services." Furthermore, "Community cohesion is not strong but there are no significant hot button issues amongst communities in Ottawa, as community is being defined more and more by online relationships and networks as opposed to neighbourhoods or ethnic backgrounds."¹⁰ It would appear that the City is far removed from the average citizen, as people still look for social, in-person engagement. The larger issue is that citizens don't feel like public spaces are actually designed for them to use. With the level of legislation and restrictions placed on public spaces, people expect that for any event or gathering they would require a permit to participate in such activities. This represents the City's skewed perception of its citizen's needs. The misunderstanding is not due to the fact that people are working more remotely, ▲ rather, the larger issue comes down to the levels of control that are placed on "public spaces" by the City and its multiple levels of confusing bureaucracy.

Banner mounted on Sparks Street / Bannière montée sur la rue Sparks
Source: City of Ottawa / Ville d'Ottawa

FIG 5.9

In a report put out by the City on the rejuvenation of Sparks Street, the document presented this scene as being a moment along Sparks Street. This is the city's new Nicholas Square next to the Rideau Centre on the eastern side of downtown, near the Byward Market.

▲ Studies show that working from home can actually increase productivity and job satisfaction, but this action needs to be paired with still interacting with others one-on-one and maintaining a social life to reap these benefits.^b

"A significant rise in feelings of isolation and depression may occur in the absence of options for residents to feel part of, and included in, the life of the city." ^c

- This statement holds validity, but the City assumes little responsibility in light of this, the issue is largely left up to the citizen to figure out. It could very well be argued that the City contributes to these feelings with their over-regulation of public spaces.

METHOD

Counter-Institutional // The eyes of the Artist/ Sculptor

Through the eyes of the sculptor, the street can be interpreted in many different ways. This scenario poses varying moments along the street and captures unique moments that an architect may not be able to represent in a set of construction drawings following the industry's best practices. These allow for us to view opportunities for interaction along the street, and to interpret where the most activity is given the current state of the street. Embracing the fact that all professions bring forth certain expertise, the work produced for this section furthers the idea that city building should be a more collaborative process amongst a range of individuals, from varying backgrounds.

This exercise explored El Lissitzky's "Prouns," to reveal things about the street that might not be immediately identifiable. These models were created to inform architectural elements that could be disassembled and remade into unique street furniture. This, in turn, allows for the citizen to leave their mark on the streetscape, encouraging modularity that meets their own specific needs, instead of looking to the City to hypothesize what might work for the citizens. These installations along the street would be free to be manipulated by the citizens — acting as a sculpture when fully assembled, but then acting as individual elements, such as windcreens or benches when disassembled and rearranged by the users — to accommodate for events or social gatherings.

These drawings can serve as plans, axonometrics, and even sections at particular moments along the street. Since the drawing conventions of plan, section, and axonometrics are already abstract drawings, the Artist is able to interpret a looser version of such instructions.

Elgin Street Entrance

One of the most dynamic sections of the street is where Sparks Street meets Elgin Street. Acting as a converging point, this composition incorporates portions that compliment the area's character; branching elements, to draw people in to the central gathering place. Some areas collecting more people than others, scaled appropriately, these sculptural pieces begin to act as a way-finding, tactile elements.

Queen Street Connection

One relatively unknown connection connects bustling Queen street with Sparks Street via a pass-through along the wall of buildings that line the street. Vertical planes represent the walkway one must pass through between two buildings to ascend the staircase to Sparks Street, located along the gray band at the top of the composition.

Metcalfe Intersection

At one of the six points along the street where cars meet pedestrians, priority is often given to the passing vehicular traffic. This moment represents the boundary of the adjacent buildings, and the impact caused on the street through the act of waiting. Cutting through the waiting node, are the people who cross without waiting for the walk signal.

Seating and Interaction at Bank

Another activity node along the street is the seating created by the concrete retaining walls at the Bank Street intersection. Here is where most people interact, enjoying their lunches or having a smoke. This is where some of the buildings pull back from the street and allow for some sun to bathe the seating area allowing for a more comfortable atmosphere to sit and visit.

Deflection Space at 208 Sparks

Spaces that should be dedicated to storefronts have begun to act inwardly, creating an interior mall within 208 Sparks. Instead of storefronts, this face of the building is simply a glass and concrete wall, deflecting a potentially unique relationship between building and street.

Convergence at Place de Ville

Place de Ville serves as another moment along the street where a secondary alleyway connects to the street. Many businesspeople pass through the area, leading to moments of activity on this regularly barren portion of the street. Some cut through the activity, others slow or stop to enjoy the atmosphere of the place along the street.

METHOD

Counter-Institutional // The eyes of the Artist/ Sculptor

The two-dimensional plans of the street are brought to life through a modeling process that investigates materials and contrast. The curved wooden portions can imply a windscreen to mitigate the wind tunnel effect along the street, whereas the large circular portion could serve as public washrooms, small kiosk-type pop-up shops or exhibition space. The modeled elements are meant to be interpreted loosely and citizens are expected to draw their own meaning and uses out of the elements within the models.

Chapter 03 // SHROUDED

How the city has made dealings behind closed doors, keeping citizens in the dark.

“Ensure all business-oriented facade elements such as signage and awnings are respectful of the heritage context, proportioned facades, of high quality, clean, in good repair and free of faded colours. Maintain interior elements visible to public to the same standard.”

- City of Ottawa // Sparks Street Public Realm Plan, Pg. 25

Illustration 4.1

SHROUDED

"We want to transform Ottawa into an enabling city, a city that catalyzes and supports and connects, and doesn't shy away from trying new things, models or approaches. We need to play more in this city."¹

When questioned, the City often forms a response that is shrouded in ambiguity, particularly when questioned as to what exactly happened with the LRT procurement process for Stage 2. The engineering and construction group (SNC-Lavalin) was commissioned to build the first phase of the line, stretching 13 stations and approximately 12.5 kilometers.² Traveling through a tunnel underneath the downtown core, the line was destined to alter the way people get around Ottawa, shifting a large number of bus routes and removing many that had for many years added to the problem of congestion in the downtown core. Stage 2 is set to add 24 new stations and nearly 44 kilometers of rail to the line in the East, West and South.^{▲3} It appeared as though the moment the Phase 1 portion of the system opened, shovels were already in the ground, preparing for Stage 2. To some, this would appear to be the City being proactive and properly managing the project, preventing a slow down of the construction process as a result of legal red tape. It was later revealed that SNC-Lavalin (SNC) failed the "technical evaluation of the written submissions, which detailed how each bidder planned to build and run the Trillium Line extension," and to add insult to injury, the new system (Phase 1) continues to be plagued with daily issues.^{•4} Within their application, SNC-Lavalin referred to the existing trains that run along the North-South Trillium line as being electric — they're currently diesel trains.⁵ The bid also "didn't include a signaling or train control system, didn't address how to incorporate the city's existing trains into the expansion — an omission the team called a "fatal flaw" — and that the bid referred to equipment for an electric light rail system."⁶ Moreover, the evaluators gave SNC a measly score of 63, where the passing grade was 70.⁷ The city evaluators revisited the scores and encouraged the bidders to defend their scores and to resubmit their bids. SNC scored a 67, all other bidders passed for a second time. The redeeming quality to SNC being the price, they put their bid hundreds of millions of dollars below the competing bidders. In the end, the City chose to pull the wool

▲ FIG 6.1
Existing and proposed extensions to the East, West and South LRT line.
Refer to Appendix B - FIG 8.2 (pg. 93) for a full-size map.

• FIG 6.2
A queue of 17 R-1 busses eagerly await the next breakdown of the LRT in mid February, nearly 5 months after the line's launch.

"They (architects) are convinced that they are putting their hands on the city, but their works are swallowed up by the indifference of shopping and the magnificent voraciousness of the collective unconscious (which rarely comes in the form that the architects imagine, inexpert as they are in the complexity of the symbolic system that unites city and inhabitants)."⁸

- Franco La Cecla, *Against Architecture*

over its own eyes, choosing the lowest-scoring yet cheapest bid. Only recently, an investigation has been launched to investigate the bidding process, to understand just what happened with SNC's bid.⁸ Speculation would suggest that there are some duplicitous dealings occurring in the background of the City's transit department, and with a system that continually proves to be unreliable, citizens are demanding answers.

Political Grudges Altering City Building

Since the City was amalgamated in 2000, the 12 largely suburban municipalities that became a part of the larger urban area have caused political divides amongst those elected.⁹ Ottawa's problem with amalgamation is that the municipalities that exist outside of the greenbelt have as much of a voice on the issues within the greenbelt.¹⁰ This causes frictions amongst City staff as these suburban municipalities aren't subjected to the same levies, taxes and density restrictions as their urban counterparts.¹¹ What results is a disconnect when voting on important issues - suburban councilors' votes may be swayed one way or another so they can remain on the Mayor's good side, causing issues within the urban core that may not affect them directly. A recent example of this is demonstrated by a recent vote for the controversial Château Laurier addition.[▲]

A project that has been in the works for years, going through countless redesigns, the Château's addition was presented to the public and was met with loud opposition and disdain. Many wondered how their city government could fall so far, with a planning committee allowing for a historic landmark to be essentially defaced. A vote was put forward to appease the public, which would essentially veto all comments and feedback given about the design to the owner of the Château — Larco Investments — sending them back to the drawing board for an alternate

▲ FIG 6.3

Image presented by Barry Padolski Architects, an Ottawa architectural practice that works with many heritage projects in the city. He provided this image to represent the impact that the addition would have on Major's Hill Park, essentially ruining the picturesque views of the Château that are enjoyed by many.

FIG 6.4

A map showing the municipalities that voted to take legal action to revoke the Château's addition. Red represents municipalities in favour of beginning the process to take the project back to the drawing board, whereas the yellow represents councilors in favour of letting the project go ahead as planned. This paints a vivid image of the polarizing opinions of the urban versus the suburban councilors.

design for the addition. What resulted was many of the suburban councilors voting "no" and the urban councilors voting "yes", to the proposition. The mayor having also voted "no", leads one to believe that many councillors were simply following suit. Here lies a distinct divide — possibly driven by political relationships — between the original city, and the amalgamated, expanded city. Mayor Jim Watson's perceived clique aside, with recent shuffles in city council, it became evident that political relationships — and grudges — have formed. "Despite pleas from downtown area Ottawa city councilors for better urban representation on the city's powerful finance and economic development committee (FEDCO), a mini municipal shuffle saw none of them nominated for available leadership roles on FEDCO."¹² Those who follow the going's on of city hall understand that there is a subculture of "yes-men (and women)" whose voting decisions will be based on a "scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" basis. It serves as little wonder that the City can barely maintain a once thriving pedestrian street if decisions are based on who gets along with whom. It would serve as plausible that any form of radical thinking by the collective city government gets bogged down in politics and political relationships.

Montreal's Corruption Cycles

David Hanna, a professor of urban studies at UQAM in Montreal, when faced with the question of what the "dark-side" to Montreal is, responds with "Ha, corruption!"¹³ He goes on to say that, "we have a corruption cycle here. The population's apathetic, doesn't want to hear about it. Then suddenly, it just goes over the top and the public wakes up. 'Holy cow! What's going on here?' Then they want commissions of inquiry and prosecutions. And bingo! We go through three years of intense inquiries and everybody's shocked. Oh my gosh. Then we get the reform period. It goes on for about two or three more years. A lot of reforms put in, new inspectors, new laws and all that. And then we get the sweet spot. We get about fifteen years of good

▲ FIG 6.5

FEDCO map, where the green portions represent the councilors who are a part of FEDCO and the red being areas of councilors that are not on FEDCO. "No councilors representing wards in Ottawa's urban core have served on FEDCO since the current council was elected in late 2018, a fact criticized by some as an effort by the mayor to fill key positions with councilors who tend to support his direction and aren't as openly critical of his policies."^b

Refer to Appendix B- FIG 8.3 (pg. 94-95) to see the letter Urban Councilor Katherine Mckenney sent to city council in relation to the shuffling of city councilors.

"When asked if the mayor has a grudge against urban councilors, Jeff Leiper (an urban councilor) said it was 'difficult to escape that conclusion.'"^c

FIG 6.6

David Hannah, speaks openly and honestly about the issues with the governance of the city. Accepting that some of these things are what make the city interesting and unique. David has a passion for what he does and the city he calls home.

government."¹⁴ Hannah mentions that pretty much every neighbourhood has about one or two intimate commercial arteries, all which survived the arrival of the automobile and shopping malls, he says, which can be accredited to careful municipal care.¹⁵ Despite the seemingly cyclical presence of corruption in Montreal, the City still maintains the assets — such as the commercial arteries that define many neighbourhoods — that make it a desirable place to live and visit. Why then has Ottawa allowed for its own slow descent into mediocrity?

Construction Despite Corruption

La Pépinière of Montreal seeks to bring neighbourhoods together through inexpensive and often rudimentary means. Violaine St-Cyr is the project manager of *Village au Pied-du-Courant*, an impromptu beach placed on a site that serves as a snow-dump in the winter along a section of Montreal's waterfront.¹⁶ She states, "people aren't yet used to just being a part of something in a public space. Its like you have to be invited or told what to do."¹⁷ Every year the team brings in the sand, wood and other materials needed to get the project up and running for the summer. They then reach out to designers, artists, architects and the general public in a call for proposals to transform the space.¹⁸ Not only does this get the community engaged in the project, and to feel as though they have a hand in shaping the city, but it also allows for variations in the types of installations and experiences on the site, from year to year. It then serves as no excuse to Ottawans that their government is tired, outdated or makes shady deals behind the public's back, as Montreal has fared just fine regardless of its issues. The people at *La Pépinière* didn't wait for the City to make the proper legislative moves to allow for them to begin working on such imaginative projects; they took it upon themselves to take action. For a team who's projects range from an alley market to a large garden centre with the Olympic stadium as the backdrop, the organization's imagination seems limitless.

▲ FIG 6.7

Pied-du-Courant includes a makeshift stage, open space for yoga and other activities, as well as food vendors, yard games, and lounge space.

La Pépinière Mission/Vision:

"The Nursery | *Espaces Collectifs* is a non-profit organization that recreates unifying public spaces in the heart of our towns and villages. Our projects are imagined, developed and supported, so that the inhabitants fully re-appropriate the city and their living environment. The very strong participation and mobilization around *La Pépinière* initiatives demonstrate the will and desire for a collective commitment for greener, more inclusive cities." ^d

FIG 6.8

The Gamelin Gardens project uses recycled materials, such as wooden pallets, for seating and urban farming bins. This has created a safe haven within the downtown core, to relax or see a concert/ performance. ^e

Additionally, The Better Block Initiative, formed by a group of urban activists in the United States, creates “recipes” for urbanites to change things within their city from the ground up. ^{▲19} Things like Bocce Ball courts, Parklettes, and bike lanes all have their own separate recipe and makeup, for citizens all over the world to take initiative in altering their public spaces. Many of these spaces have transformed small towns and cities throughout the U.S., similar to how the food truck movement altered the way people perceive grabbing a bite to eat for lunch. The idea of creating a recipe for citizens to recreate removes a large part of the logistics that come along with planning engaging public spaces. A Better Block in a Box has the potential to transform even the most undervalued plots of land within the city.

What, then, is holding Ottawa back from experimenting with some of these same — or at the very least, similar — concepts? If the City needs to see proof that these things work, just like their original study of Toledo Ohio's pedestrian street, why have they not tried similar things or put the legislation in place to allow such creative solutions? Once again, it goes to show that citizens cannot expect the City to perpetuate the necessary changes. They need to take things into their own hands — just as La Pépinière, or The Better Block Initiative, did with many of their projects — in order to enact change and a sense of ownership from the ground up.

▲ FIG 4.6

Better Block - in a box. A shipping container holds all of the necessary elements to encourage interaction amongst citizens.

METHOD

Counter-Cyclical // The eyes of the Chef

This section looks at the street through the eyes of the Chef, by using the process of building, which architects and the City tend to follow, as different meals and recipes throughout the day. These recipes are merely small examples of how issues with the city could be interpreted, hence why dinner has not been included. Breakfast follows the process of schematic design; lunch, design development; dinner, construction; and dessert, landscaping and finishing touches. As Chefs tend to be pushing the envelope of what follows the status quo, this section, just as the other/previous sections, is meant to challenge the way we've always done things. Just because these things have become habitual, it doesn't mean it is the correct, most efficient, nor the way that/which produces the best results.

This section, along with the others produced through this thesis, is meant to take a different spin/approach on the ways in which we perceive developing the city, both on the side of Architect and of City planners.

This proposal could be put together as a cook book, complete with recipes that could be enjoyed on their own - in different parts of the city - or as an entire meal - with Sparks Street serving as the dinner table to the gathering. This section follows a consultant relationship just as the Landscape Designer and Set Designer, this collaborates with the Artist, using the work to assemble recipes, further enacting public engagement amongst citizens from varying backgrounds.

INTENT

The intention of this section is to provide an antidote to the unhealthy lifestyle the City has created for itself, and more importantly, created for Sparks Street. The proposal will identify multiple areas in which the City has contributed to Sparks Street's current unhealthy state. To these urban ailments, a "recipe" has been provided in an effort to combat the sickness that the city finds itself in. These recipes can be made and enjoyed on their own, or as a complete meal, where Sparks serves as the dinner table to the city.

With each urban "recipe" there are associated health benefits, outlined below. The intention of these recipes is to benefit the people within the city through a hands-on approach via fellow urbanites. Going out for dinner is a nice treat here and there, but these recipes allow for people to make their own meals, right here, at home in the City of Ottawa. After all, home-cooked meals typically hold more nostalgic value, do they not?

To the left are the parts of the human experience that can be positively affected by the recipes that follow within the proposal.

HEART

- ① Elements/ events that prompt an emotional response
- ② Encourage movement

BONES

- ① Structured and inviting places
- ② Uniquely incorporates necessary infrastructure

DIGESTION

- ① Uniquely identifiable spaces
- ② Spaces that have immediately recognizable uses

SKIN, HAIR & NAILS

- ① Places that mitigate the "wind tunnel" effect
- ② Places that beautify and activate the street

MIND

- ① Places that stimulate the senses
- ② Places that encourage social engagement

FATIGUE

- ① Places for rest
- ② Places that provide visual relief from the monotony of the downtown core
- ③ Places for a break from work

Children

- ① Spaces for play
- ② Learning and Engaging Spaces

Adults

- ① Spaces for Families
- ② Entertainment Spaces for young adults

Seniors

- ① Accessible places and installments
- ② Universally inclusive and social places

BREAKFAST

Illustration 4.2

Boasted as being the most important meal of the day, the history of Sparks Street is pivotal to ensuring that all other meals that follow compliment it. Breakfast is the meal most people skip throughout the day, so seems as though the City has also skipped the breakfast that is Sparks Street. As with anything, without the proper context and foundation to getting a day going, the rest of the day that follows can seem like a daunting task.

These small breakfasts are meant to ensure that the meals that the following meals are easily digested, thus reinforcing the importance of the breakfast.

This is the schematic portion of the project, general ideas are floating around, the digestive system is getting going for the day, and some of the most productive and efficient work is being

LUNCH

Also incredibly important, lunch serves as a means to getting one through the day. Preceding dinner, a lunch usually consists of light, healthy ingredients; things that are meant to fuel the person in order to accomplish the remainder of their daily tasks. Sparks Street has unfortunately skipped lunch, causing a midday burn-out.

This section will propose a collection of recipes to begin the process of re-energizing Sparks Street by building up the momentum to then power through the rest of the day and onward. Lunch serves as the portion of the day where most of the work is well underway. In the context of Sparks Street, this is when specific materials would be selected: planters are arranged and construction is well underway.

Illustration 4.3

BARBEQUE'S FOR RIB FEST

Multiple BBQ's allow for a large gathering, bringing together people from all walks of life together, with one common goal: to eat some great food.

SERVES: 10 - 100+ people, triple recipe for a group gathering.

TIME: Prep: 1 - 2 hr
Enjoy: 10 mins at a time or more

GOOD FOR: Heart ②
Bones ① ②
Digestion ②
Hair, Skin, Nails ① ②
Mind ①
Adults ① ②
Seniors ① ②

1. Locate Pavilion 01 on Sparks Street. This should be located at the Elgin entrance to the Pedestrian Mall.
2. Harvest black band from street installation. This should be marked P-04.
3. Using a clean, level surface, divide band into 3000 mm by 1000 mm sections. Ensure you're using a sharp knife, for best results.
4. Arrange newly divided BBQ's into a line for optimal results. Code suggests that they be 1000 mm apart for the purpose of circulation.
5. Invite some BBQ enthusiasts to fire up the grills - ensure they provide their own meats.
6. Make an event out of it such as the famous "Rib Fest" which takes place every June.
7. Enjoy with good company, friends, and kind strangers alike.

Illustration 4.4

Illustration 4.5

WOOD FOR SCAFFOLDING

Scaffolding will once again find its way back onto Sparks Street. Why not take advantage of it by converting it into a stage or a place to relax?

SERVES: 1-10 people, we recommend that this activity be enjoyed in small, intimate groups.

TIME:

Prep: 1 - 2 hr

Enjoy: 10 mins at a time or more

GOOD FOR:

Heart	②
Bones	① ②
Digestion	②
Hair, Skin, Nails	① ②
Mind	②
Children	① ②
Adults	① ②
Seniors	②

1. Locate Pavilion 01 on Sparks Street. This should be located at the Elgin entrance to the Pedestrian Mall.

2. Harvest curved wooden screen from street installation. This should be marked P-02.

3. In a group of 2-3, ensure that there are enough boards on the screen to allow for the desired project. As a rule of thumb, each scaffolding bay will take about 10 wooden boards, so keep this in mind with your planning.

4. Section and remove boards from screen, if unsure, refer to the “tactical skills” section of the book as a refresher.

5. Lay boards down on scaffolding base and secure accordingly. Feel free to create stairs or ramps to get to other levels of the structure.

6. Garnish with hammocks, plants, chairs or blankets.

7. Bask in the collective glory of you and your fellow urbanites' accomplishments.

8. Grab a drink, and relax!

Illustration 4.6

Illustration 4.7

CONCLUSION

"We want to transform Ottawa into an enabling city, a city that catalyzes and supports and connects, and doesn't shy away from trying new things, models or approaches. We need to play more in this city."

This thesis has explored the citizen's understanding of place and the implications of legislation layered on that place. It has proven valuable to the work produced and to my own understanding to look at the counter relationships between planned infrastructures set out by the City and the realities that follow once the plans manifest themselves into the urban realm. These things are also vitally important for the public to understand, to improve their own understanding of the processes that go on behind closed doors. It has served as beneficial to my own understanding that I use my own alter egos to experience what it might be like to redesign the street through the eyes of a Landscape Architect, a Set Designer, an Artist or a Chef.

This critique of the City's view on public space has not been done in an effort to act as petulant or in bad faith, rather, it has been done to challenge the legislative actions that many people in the city oppose yet simply accept as fact. Ottawa's citizens have long been associated with a tendency to roll-over and simply accept the consequences that result from the over-regulation of public spaces and the fetishization of city by-laws and mandatory permits. OC-Transpo's strike in 2009 serves as an example of the citizens simply giving up and accepting the mediocrity that they received. In other cities, governing powers would expect riots, or at the very least some form of push-back.

Time after time, the City of Ottawa and its legislative powers fall short of people's expectations, from the planning and bidding process of the LRT, to its refusal to allow for urban councilors to participate in FEDCO. Although this thesis began as an inquiry into how to intelligently refocus the planning of Sparks Street's redesign, it became a larger discussion around the flawed inner workings of these planning structures that have been set up to repeatedly leave citizens looking for more. The City has since been working on releasing a new Official Plan within the coming

years — which will shape the way new development moves forward — the one its replacing dated back to sometime in the 1990's. Can we continue to trust the City to plan for our future if they repeatedly prove that they can't plan for the present? Within it they boast that they will be creating 15-minute neighbourhoods — that all necessities (and amenities) can be within a 15-minute walk or bike ride of people's homes. Many of the other ideas that the city is putting forward for this new plan also sound exciting, but until they are enacted and prove to be reliable and beneficial to citizens, we ought to withhold our hope and excitement. Even so, should we not begin to create our own realities first?

Although the topic of flawed governments can be discussed and debated ad nauseam, this thesis has looked at ways in which architects and designers can indirectly enact change, by utilizing the City's planning process as an essential tool in their already cluttered tool belt. The purpose of this work is to enact citizen change, to do away with excuses and instead look to how the city — that is its people — can enact change through tactical urbanism. This thesis has looked at the architect as an instructor, as it isn't always the job of the architect to be a designer.

Other cities have enacted meaningful change, even when being dealt a lousy hand, such as Toronto's Gardiner Expressway or Montreal's corruption Cycles. It would appear as though the first step to changing the urban planning fumbles of the past would be by accepting them as problems, and thinking differently about the spaces in question, to then seeing their true potential. The City of Ottawa has looked at Sparks Street as a yet another renewal, following the rhythm of design, procurement and construction. Examples within the text have proven that this isn't the only method of changing spaces, rather the grunt-work can actually be done by the citizens, making for a more engaged and satisfied population.

It is then pivotal that we ought to take a step back and evaluate the way we perceive city building and the future of our public spaces.

Just as the city is in a perpetual state of improvement, so too ought the way in which we think about city building. Cities are largely expected to be at the forefront of innovation and forward thinking, could it not be infinitely more beneficial to allow this of its citizens?

Postscript

Reflecting on the defense, there is a collection of takeaways from the feedback given. Some of the key comments from the defense are paired with responses, as follows;

1. Frame the thesis and the presentation so that it doesn't appear to be fake, reveal that the entire thing is hypothetical only at the end. This thought plays on the idea of the gullible if framed in the proper context. The idea is that it is a cynical view of the City's workings that is meant to pull apart the conventions of the way we perceive the act of city building.

The idea that you could be fed multiple different stories, altering your view of the City and life, as you may know them, it is an interesting thought to me. An alternative way of viewing the thesis and the final defense presentation could follow an intentionally misleading narrative. Framing the entire thesis as being non-fictional and waiting until the end to reveal that it is indeed fictional allowing the reader to better interpret their own meaning and to draw their own conclusions from the information they have been fed. This would follow the same theme of some of the work the City produces and expects citizens to simply accept as fact.

2. Another observation was that the work was presented as acts in a play, staging the presentation as a series of scenes or sets.

Reflecting on this thought, it would be valuable to establish an audience, as well as defining who the actors are in the play. The actors were originally meant to be the "action shots" of citizens taking to the streets and making changes with their own hands. However, this also meant that the audience members were citizens, but those who wanted change at the level of the City but have yet to take radical action to make the change, as this thesis is about tactical urbanism through radical action. Additionally, through the work, two voices are brought forward, the architect's

and the citizens'. However, when revisiting the structure of the thesis, four distinct personalities emerged, hence the Landscape Architect, Set Designer, Artist and the Chef, all of whom pose a different take on the ways in which the city could be reinterpreted.

3. One of the most important questions that emerged from the defense was; What are you hoping to get out of this, where to next?

Although this thesis has laid a good foundation for the effort to enact urban change tactically. There is still an incredible amount of work and research that can be done to further explore these concepts. Tactical urban lifestyles have begun to emerge with greater voracity in recent years and are often viewed as forward-thinking in regard to city building. The docuseries *Life-sized Cities* on TVO follows urbanist, Mikael Colville-Anderson, as he explores cities where citizens are taking the act of city building into their own hands; many of whom are converting their cities into more engaging and forward-thinking places.

I think this thesis will project on my future, guiding my professional career, altering the way I practice. Approaching projects that focus on the citizens or clients as the designers or manipulators of their own spaces tends to be a theme that is commonly overlooked or simply not practiced within the profession. Taking a more open-source approach to architecture and urban planning will play a role in the way I practice, and thus lead to more enlightening projects and client dynamics.

Amongst the plethora of other lessons I've learned while creating this thesis, one of the most prominent is not to simply accept the status quo. Just because something has been done one way for years, does not mean that it is the most efficient way to complete a task. As architects, we are expected to constantly be pushing the boundaries of what is possible, I plan to take this concept forward with me into my professional career.

APPENDIX - A //

Documenting the Street

Illustration 5.1 - Location of Sparks Street within the CBD.

Illustration 5.2

THEN // Aligned Activity

Many of the original buildings along Sparks Street were planned to engage with the sidewalk and those on it, drawing people into the building and upwards into elevated spaces that overlook the street. These moments are incredibly valuable to citizen life, engaging with the street is an incredibly valuable quality in progressive cities.

Illustration 5.3

NOW // Government Occupation

Many of the upper levels of the buildings along Sparks are now dominated by office use and government workers. This dichotomy paints a stark contrast to the original intent of the street's interaction with the built form. This division within the architecture bleeds into the mentality and atmosphere, creating a disconnect between people and architecture.

Illustration 5.4

THEN // Planned Infrastructure

The tree canopy of the some 53 trees originally planted gave the street a sense of place and more importantly, scale. Cooling the street in the summer and mitigating the wind tunnel effect in the winter, the trees served many purposes in perpetuating the street as an ideal place to be. Classical planning identifies trees as being one of the components to creating interesting streetscapes.

Illustration 5.5

NOW // Failing Infrastructure

Crumbling paving and form work now dominate the street. The City has seen it as fitting to allow for the physical infrastructure to decay as time goes on. Something as simple as a crumbling stair can greatly detract from the atmosphere of a place. In this case it only reinforces the street's derelict reputation.

Illustration 5.6

THEN // Living Street

The original design intent for the street was to break up the corridor into identifiable and uniquely individual nodes. This allowed for the walk to feel more like a series of urban discoveries, stopping and pausing when encountering interesting nodes. This allowed for engagement amongst inhabitants at the street level, as people preferred to stop and talk.

Illustration 5.7

NOW // Legislative Failure

When the City becomes the one who is re-designing and imagining a space, contextual considerations sometimes get overlooked. In this case, the City's attempt to create an "outdoor living room" falls flat. Identical seating lies just beyond the rearrangeable seating, this part of the City's "pilot project" serves no purpose to the rehabilitation of the contemporary street.

Illustration 5.8

THEN // Enticing Streetfronts

Since Sparks was originally anchored by the introduction of the department store, window displays were the norm to attract consumers. Although this scenario preys on consumer culture, it made for a unique connection between outdoor and indoor space. This ephemeral or "architectural gray space" makes streets and storefronts unique and desirable.

Illustration 5.9

NOW // Deflection Space

Many of the storefronts that have gone out of business or that have been occupied by government offices have now been plastered with vinyl advertisements for other activities and attractions around the city. This is representative of the City turning its back on the once vibrant streetscape. These windowfronts now act as moments of deflection as opposed to creating urban attraction and intrigue.

FIG. 7.1 - A circus once paraded down Sparks Street, enlivening spaces even four stories up.

FIG. 7.2 - In the heat of the department store craze, Saxe's and Zellers can both be seen along Sparks Street.

FIG. 7.3 - Planting and Landscaping which used to occupy the street to give a sense of place.

FIG. 7.4 - Looking East towards Elgin where Sparks crosses Metcalfe, trees and canopies can be seen in the distance.

FIG. 7.5 - The playground and picnic tables that occupied the center of the street with geometric mural can be seen, giving this section of the street a unique identity, separate from the rest.

FIG. 7.6 - Parametric outdoor canopies designed by Ottawa architect James Strutt.

FIG. 7.7

EXHIBIT 8.14: IMPACTS ON SALES PER SQUARE FOOT OF RIDEAU CENTRE
AND REDEVELOPMENT ON SPARKS STREET

FIG. 7.8

APPENDIX - B //

Supplementary Content

FIG. 8.1

FIG. 8.2

Dear City Clerk,

The City of Ottawa's urban Councillors—and by extension, the residents we represent—have been locked out of key positions within City Council. This lack of representation is most acutely manifested in the current make-up of the Finance and Economic Development Committee.

FEDCO—arguably the most powerful city committee—is comprised of zero urban Councillors and few from within the greenbelt. The image to the right demonstrates which general areas of the city have their interests represented at FEDCO. The red centre—demonstrating the lack of representation from central, urban wards—is a fitting visual representation of the democratic deficit at City Hall.

With the recent openings on city committees and boards—resulting, in part, from the rejection of Councillor Jeff Leiper to fill the vacancy of Transportation Chair (and, by extension, FEDCO)—we are presented with an opportunity for the mayor, the Nominating Committee and City Council to correct this matter and embrace representative democracy, providing all residents with their fair say in the workings of our city.

To begin to mitigate the situation that has occurred thus far, we are presenting the following choices for the current and upcoming vacancies on city committees and boards:

(Standing Committee) Finance and Economic Development Committee, Member-at-Large: Cllr. Catherine McKenney

(Standing Committee) Planning Committee, Add Member: Cllr. Shawn Menard and move current Member Jeff Leiper into role of Vice Chair

Ottawa Public Library Board, Chair: Cllr. Riley Brockington

Built Heritage Sub-Committee, Chair: Cllr. Rawlson King

Shaw Centre Board of Directors: Cllr. Mathieu Fleury as local Councillor

Aside from the matter of proper representation on city committees, we are also troubled by the lack of governance procedure to ensure standing committee members decide on their respective chair. We submit that should a standing committee chair step down, and assuming quorum is maintained, the Vice Chair should assume the role of Chair, where feasible.

Residents expect better from a democratically elected government. They expect that a diverse amalgamated city like Ottawa would respect and include representatives from all areas on decision making committees—suburban, rural and urban.

This is an opportunity for us to do right by residents and enhance diversity of debate. We implore the Mayor, the Nominating Committee and City Council to respect and embrace democracy by bringing a small modicum of balance to the city's boards and committees.

Further, we will be seeking modifications to the city's governance structure and processes during the mid-term governance review. We must fix our governance structure to ensure that proper representative government is maintained consistently. We look forward to working with your office on this important matter.

City of Ottawa Urban Councillors

The image shows several handwritten signatures in black ink. On the left, there are two large, stylized signatures. Below them is a smaller signature. On the right, there are three more signatures, including one that appears to be 'R.O.' followed by a large flourish, and another that looks like 'Murray'.

Fig. 48 3D Perspective Rendering of Block 1 (Curvilinear Option)
Source: Van + Civill

FIG. 8.4

Fig. 70 3D Perspective Rendering of Block 2 (Geometric Option)
Source: Van + Civill

FIG. 8.5

Fig. 72 3D Perspective Rendering of Block 3 (Curvilinear Option)
Source: Vian + oviati

FIG. 8.6

Fig. 74 3D Perspective Rendering of Block 4 (Geometric Option)
Source: Vian + oviati

FIG. 8.7

Fig. 76 3D Perspective Rendering of Block 5 (Curvilinear Option)
Source: Vian + civilli

FIG. 8.8

Fig. 77 Block 1 - Section
Source: Vian + civilli

FIG. 8.9

Fig. 78 Block 3 - Section
Source: Vlan + civiltà

FIG. 8.10

Fig. 79 Block 5 - Section
Source: Vlan + civiltà

FIG. 8.11

APPENDIX - C //

Inspirational work that formed the basis
of this thesis

FIG. 9.1 (TOP) KONTINUUM // Projecting Ottawa's future

Moment Factory

Kontinuum was a light and sound show that took place in two of the — at the time under construction — new light rail stations in Ottawa's core. Not only did this project get people excited for the new light rail project that was set to change the way people get around the city, but it also showed Ottawans that their city doesn't need to be overly stuffy just because it's associated with being a "government town".

FIG. 9.2 (LEFT) OLYMPIC FENCING // Stories of the Mundane

Tim Lahan

Tim Lahan creates fictional stories about chain link fences. This might seem mundane or pointless, but it goes to show that every aspect of the city can be altered by people. Though these may come across as acts of vandalism, they serve more as evidence of human interaction or manipulation.

FIG 9.3 (TOP) SURROUNDED ISLANDS // Cyclical Cities

Christo + Jeanne Claude

Much of this thesis' content draws from Christo + Jeanne Claude's work. On mega scales, they perpetuate acts of thought-provoking rebellion. This work can be interpreted as the City's resistance to change, remaining on an island of thought and process. Without a connection to other places, the cycle repeats itself.

FIG 9.4 (LEFT) IKEA DISOBEDIENTS // Outdoor Living Room

Andrés Jaque - Office for Political Innovation

Ikea's modular furniture can be converted to serve unintended uses, Andrés Jaque describes the work in this way, "IKEA Disobedients is a response to the world's most important architectural actor, IKEA, and its promotion of homes as 'independent republics' made of comfort and familiarity. Comprising alternative pop-up showrooms around the world, online-distributed movies, and the hacking of IKEA products; IKEA Disobedients reappropriates IKEA's transmedia strategy to empower alternative domesticities, where otherness and engagement are encountered."

FIG. 9.5 (TOP) LONG LIVE GHOSTS // Street - Individuality

Petr Maťašeje

Petr Maťašeje's work was chosen to represent individuality within the street as it captures both the collective movement of people and centers in on singularities along the street. This is an important aspect to the street's development, as it should serve as a place to stay, but also as a place of transition or movement.

FIG. 9.6 (LEFT) NEAR CHAOS IN DRAWINGS FROM ANALOGUE MACHINES // Reactivating the Analogue City

Jack Tait

Jack Tait's drawings represent the analogue action of drawing with the help of technology and mechanisms. Sparks has been left only as the analogue street over the years, the new plan ought to embrace contemporary culture, without a focus on turning it into a digital street of individuals.

FIG. 9.7 (TOP) SPECTRUM // Entertainment - Individuality

Joris Voorn

Joris Voorn's work looks at an entertainment lifestyle and the power of colour and light. Things as simple as adding unique lighting to the street and colour could be enough to build the momentum to get businesses back on the street and draw interest from the city's citizens.

FIG. 9.8 (LEFT) SPACIAL ENVIRONMENT IN RED LIGHT // Linearity

Lucio Fontana

Lucio Fontana's Spacial Environment in Red Light represents the linearity of the street and the restrictive nature of its current design, slipping people into one route or another. People either go there to eat their lunch, have a smoke break, or simply use it to get to another location across the downtown core. There aren't opportunities to stop and enjoy, people are largely funneled through to their destination.

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