

Piers, Bridges and Sheds: An architectural response to changing rural geographies and resortscapes  
(The case of Thornbury, Ontario)

by  
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**AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis including any final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.



## **Abstract**

Mass tourism is a critical agent of change, with a proven capacity of forging new landscapes and thoroughly modifying the internal structure of a community. Thornbury, a rural settlement located in South-western Ontario, is on the brink of such shift: With the emergence of a new culture of tourism and the introduction of 'upscale' resort developments, its physical conditions are rapidly being reconfigured and the character of its social landscape is on the precipice of being irrevocably altered.

These luxury vacation facilities occur in a dispersed fashion on the fringe – a condition which has not only initiated a radical modification and decentralization of social and economic activity, but has also resulted in the decline of traditional neighbourhood ties. Likewise, this occurrence has introduced an influx of newcomers who advance an identity and lifestyle clearly distinct from that of Thornbury's quiet community of rural citizens and retirees. In this context, these newly arrived inhabitants soon become dwellers of "limited liability"– those who reside within a community, but do not identify with it – as Thornbury lacks the infrastructure and amenities to support potential exchanges and direct interest to the qualities of traditional civic life.

As such, the thesis will examine the question of: **What is the role of architecture in sustaining local identity in an altered social fabric? Or, more specifically, how can social relations in a transformed community be advanced through the use and design of public spaces?** The work will attempt to outline the trajectory of urban change and understand the factors that account for present circumstances. The outcome of the research will generate a series of responsive designs that hinge upon the idea of **uplifting ordinary landscapes and everyday ruralism**. Essentially, the proposed strategy is one in which rurality is integral to the solution: Methods which harness rural assets and refashion them in a progressive manner will be utilized to inspire the formation of a new local culture while **establishing an interface between opposing population segments**. Overall, this study is intended to serve as a template to be used by communities in Ontario for mitigating the effects of changing rural geographies.

The concept of PIERS, BRIDGES & SHEDS is proposed as a place-specific design solution for Thornbury. In part, the aim is to express the notion of 'disappearance and renewal' by reviving the lost typology of community sheds and make visible aspects of local culture in a manner that is both reminiscent of the village's character and heritage. The intent is also to craft dynamic spaces that promote authentic community and integration which, by extension, will induce the revitalization and re-entry of the downtown core. This scheme will potentially enable this small tourist community to mediate, defend and propagate its traditional character and appeal under conditions of rapid change.



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**“The terrain of late childhood seems to penetrate our lives and memories most intensely”**  
- Dr. Yi-fu Tuan, geographer

Notions of place are inherently entwined with personal memory; in effect, British geographer Denis Cosgrove defines landscape as “the external world mediated through human subjective experience” (Lenters 1986).

As such, lived experience becomes central to the writing of the thesis and place relationships, particularly examined from a subjective viewpoint, are critical to the understanding of the overall subject. For this reason, I have opted to introduce the text with personal reflections on locality and detail the attributes of the community which stir within me deep visual and emotional attraction.

**Fig. 01** Photograph of myself at age 3 at the beach in Thornbury (opposite page)



*The town of Thornbury holds a very special place in my heart and it is for this reason that I have chosen to dedicate my thesis to this locale.*

*It was in this very place that I spent the larger part of my childhood summers - building friendships and forging some of my most cherished memories. For several months at a time, I had the opportunity to spend time with my extended family who, for the remainder of the year, lived their separate lives in Montreal, Toronto and Switzerland. In the initial years, we stayed at a timeshare in the Royal Harbour Club (crowded into an unsuitably small unit) though, soon after, my relatives purchased a two-storey townhouse, allowing our family to comfortably vacation for two to three months at a time.*

*When I think of Thornbury, I like to believe that I retain a vivid recollection of this wonderful little town ...I remember how the adults would take early morning strolls, returning just in time for breakfast with freshly baked bread from the local bakery - and, if we (the youngsters) were lucky, we would get a piece of apple crumble as well. Most of our days were spent at the beach, attempting to build sandcastles that could resist flooding, picking out coloured glass from amongst the cobblestones, jumping off the pier and randomly befriending other children. The rest of the time we would play tennis or go to Bayview Park where we took turns on swings made of used tires. In the early evening, if we were well-behaved, we were allowed a treat at the ice cream shop and deciding which flavour to choose was always a difficult matter. One day, my cousin discovered that we could simply create our own flavour by combining soft ice cream with the mulberries picked from the big 'ol tree outside- needless to say, this became, by far, the best tasting dessert.*

*Our family would often take leisurely walks up and down Thornbury's modest, yet colourful Main Street, which was always terribly exciting to me. I remember sifting through the local bookstore, carefully selecting my summer reads. My favourite place was an antique shop named 'Pining 4U'; the owner was a gracious old man with two large dogs who soon became characters we looked forward to seeing whenever we passed by. I remember that there was a beautiful plate shaped like a pie that I coveted for years, I even vowed to save enough money until I could one day purchase it (which, incidentally, never happened). My aunts' favourite store was Saville Brothers - they found countless excuses to shop there, purchasing clothing items for their husbands while gossiping with the shopkeepers. Perhaps the memories I cherish most of all were the times spent with my grandmother, who would take me on strolls along Main Street when I became too tiresome for the other adults and recount the adventures she had fishing in the Beaver River with my uncle Victor.*



*Today, things are intensely different, all the while being exactly the same.  
The landscape of my childhood is at once the present and a memory.*

*I can no longer have tiger tail ice cream at the old ice cream window.  
Yet, there is a familiarity in jumping off the concrete pier, climbing back up (and repeat).*

*I no longer spend entire months in Thornbury but, rather, weeks interspaced.*

*And Main Street feels different.  
Change is imminent.  
The population construct has shifted.  
The outskirts are enlarging.*

*And now there are "two solitudes".*



## Prologue

The subject of the work centers on the idea of rurality being redefined, recreated and reimagined by resort-induced growth and increases in the number of tourists and migrants to rural areas (Moss 2006). Such circumstances constitute a global occurrence, becoming manifest both in developed and remote regions of the world (Moss 2006, 5). As such, the research pertaining to Thornbury, which will be elaborated upon throughout the text, will be anchored within this larger context.

The notion of resort-induced changes has been documented in various places, “from international [regions] (European Alps), [to] national (the United States) and large subnational regions (inland Australia) to the metropolitan peripheral (San Juan, Costa Rica), the remote (Bulkley Valley in Northern British Columbia) and the accessible (Santa Fe, New Mexico)” (Moss 2006, 44). To cite a contemporary Canadian example, the case of the British Columbian resort towns of Fernie, Golden, Kimberley and Reveltoke reflect a similar situation and can be characterized as “examples of early-stage rural gentrification” (Nepal and Jamal 2011, 11). Authors Sanjay Nepal and Tazim Jamal have concluded that these towns, which have traditionally relied upon extractive industries such as forestry and mining, have progressively transformed into resort towns, “fueled by the movement of amenity seekers, primarily from urban areas [and] resort development in mountain communities” (Nepal and Jamal 2011, 5).

Scholars broadly define this phenomenon as **amenity migration** – a term that can be understood as “the movement of people based on the draw of natural and/or cultural amenities” (Gosnell and Abrams 2009, 1). According to the literature, the presence of amenities plays a critical role in “[altering] the geographic distribution of social and economic activity” (Gosnell and Abrams 2009, 2). Secondary motivations such as “economic gain, personal safety and deeper urges [such as] ‘a simpler existence’ or ‘a higher quality of life’ further explain the concept of amenity migration (Moss 2006, 3).

To set the tone for the thesis, it is important to stipulate that the context of resort-induced growth has effectively triggered fundamental transformations in rural communities. For instance, “traditional land uses and associated employment fade under the influence of amenity migration, [whereas] new opportunities arise in response to the changing economic landscape” (Gosnell and Abrams 2009, 11). Laurence Moss, author of *The amenity migrants: Seeking and sustaining migrants and their cultures*, further describes how the “social identities of rural places become susceptible to redefinition as new social groups begin to occupy space once occupied by others” (Gosnell and Abrams 2009, 9).

An increase in seasonal population can further propel movements of “rural gentrification, a process that is gradually delineating physical as well as psychological boundaries between well-heeled recent migrants who own a second home at the resorts, and long-time local residents” (Nepal and Jamal 2011, 11) (Smith 2002, Philips 2004).

In sum, having anchored the subject within a global and scholarly context, the discussion on changing rural geographies in Southern Ontario can effectively be opened...



Authorities on the development of rural populations, Gerald Hodge and Mohammed Quadeer, believe that “towns and villages have always been an important part of the settlement fabric of Canada – From the earliest Newfoundland fishing villages, to the Indian encampments of the interior, and the trading posts, grain towns, minetowns, and milltowns, we find the foundations of [our country’s] present settlement pattern” (Hodge and Quadeer 1983, 1). Today, over 19% of the Canadian population live in rural areas; yet, despite the importance of outlying communities, little is known about contemporary rural issues, present conditions, and, even less, the future of such places (Statistics Canada 2006).

### **Introduction (Thesis approach)**

In this work, the context under consideration is that of Ontario’s changing countryside – namely, rural landscapes which have recently emerged as popular vacation domains for city dwellers. Prompted by a growing demand for vacation properties by non-local purchasers, such areas have been undergoing increasing change resulting in drastic alterations of land uses and social patterns and, ultimately, in the formation of competing landscapes. This phenomenon further signals a move from a traditional rural tourism to a “post-cottaging” era, or resort-based tourism, which relies heavily on processes of upscale suburbanization. As will be explained in the thesis, the outcome of this occurrence has contributed to building a dramatically different social composition which threatens to engulf traditional ruralism.

First of all, in studying rural geographies, it is critical to acknowledge the ways in which the terrain of study is distinct from urban areas. In many respects, villages and small towns require special attention, as differences in standards of living, settlement patterns, social relationships, ideals of community and identity are pronounced and must be taken into account in order to fashion appropriate responses. Furthermore, to add to the delicacy of the subject, small communities are generally fragile in the face of change, as local culture and identity is made discernible in the quality of social relationships and therefore only loosely substantiated in the physical landscape.

The thesis further recognizes the complexity and broadness of the issue at hand and has opted to focus on one particular cross-section of the matter: **the separation in geographic and social space between newcomers and rural citizens**. In particular, it attempts to study the impacts of such segregation and the extent of local transformations by pursuing an in-depth examination of the two population subgroups and their individual characteristics.



The thesis proposes that architecture can play a role in reforming the prevailing culture of tourism (or “resort-based” tourism) within rural communities in Ontario, which is characterized by a widespread appeal for developer-made amenities that are virtually disassociated from local characteristics. The text will argue that this can be achieved by fostering responsive designs that strengthen local culture while establishing an interface between opposing population segments.

As such, the overall thesis will be centered on the following research question: **What is the role of architecture in sustaining local identity in an altered social fabric? Or, more specifically, how can social relations in a transformed community be advanced through the use and design of public spaces?**

In terms of the architectural response, the design intent will be twofold: first, to offset the fragile nature of rural identity and, second, to utilize newfound spaces to promote community and interaction amongst the various subgroups, thereby enhancing local culture and moderating destructive tendencies. The thesis proposes that the overarching strategy for achieving such aims be centered on methods of **uplifting everyday ruralism and ordinary landscapes by design**. For one, uniqueness exists in the qualities of rural institutions and the traditions of a locality and, ultimately, the aim is to render such aspects visible. Perhaps, in this manner, ‘rurality’ can act as the new basis for tourism in such that newcomers can be drawn in by local traditions, begin to appropriate common spaces and become socially invested in collective interests. Furthermore, the importance of Main Street as a receptacle for local culture, identity and connectedness is underlined throughout the text; for this reason, the proposed model consists of inserting a series informal, modest, design solutions that perform as social catalysts for Main Street. The idea is to reinvigorate this area through secondary mechanisms i.e. **by inspiring larger processes and indirectly stimulating revitalization at the core**. This approach promotes organic development as a method for building healthy, sustainable communities and can be considered a realistically implementable solution for small towns. Ultimately, the project will attempt to achieve such goals through the vehicle of PIERS, BRIDGES & SHEDS – by reviving lost archetypes and re-introducing disappeared typologies in order to create authentic environments anchored in local heritage and tourist appeal.

In sum, there appears to be a need for such research, as there is little supporting literature addressing architectural responses and methods of cultural sustenance in a changing culture of rural tourism. There further exists the necessity to investigate alternative solutions for remediation which challenge the tendency to simply resort to main street revitalization in small towns.

Thornbury, Ontario, characteristically exhibits the dichotomy between the tourist and the local resident and is particularly interesting from a sociological standpoint due to the fact that the community is **on the precipice** of major structural changes. For this reason, it has been selected as a case study. Moreover, while the community advances a unique identity, its heritage remains unsubstantiated in the physical landscape and the town further lacks the infrastructure to support potential exchanges with newcomers. As such, there would appear to be a need for architecture to mitigate the effects of transformative processes.

## RURAL

### Lexicon

In attempting to define the term “rural”, the literature has focused on aspects of physical or spatial settings, using empirical data based on population-density or ratios of non-farm development (Halseth 1998, 40). Paul J. Cloke, author of *The countryside: development, conservation and an increasingly marketable commodity*, attempts to bridge the empirical and social definitions of ‘rural’ by proposing that “the rural system is characterized by extensive land uses, small and generally low-order settlements and a way of life that recognizes the environmental and behavioural qualities of living as part of an extensive landscape” (Cloke 1992).

Likewise, authors Hodge & Quadeer provide a loose definition of the term and have formulated the following criteria for defining the ‘rural’:

1. the area occupied by the town is small in size
2. the density of development is low
3. there is considerable vacant land
4. there is usually a single dominant commercial area
5. there is a juxtaposition of land uses (Hodge and Quadeer 1983, 154)

Meanwhile, the OMAFRA (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs) simply considers rural Ontario to be that area of the province which is outside of:

- The City of Hamilton
- The City of Ottawa
- The City of London
- The City of Windsor
- The Greater Toronto Area
- The Region of Niagara
- The Region of Waterloo
- The City of Thunder Bay
- The City of Greater Sudbury

Note: Within these nine areas, municipalities with a population of less than 100,000 are also considered rural (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture 2006).

The contrast between “newcomers” and “rural residents” will be employed throughout the thesis as a tool for understanding the recent changes in rural geographies. Their definitions are as follows:

## NEWCOMERS

*(visitors/part-time residents/seasonal dwellers/non-locals):* These terms will be used interchangeably to describe urban populations who have recently established rural locations as their vacation domain and who exhibit a periodic (or seasonal) pattern of occupancy.

## RURAL CITIZENS

Residents who are well-established within the community and who live on a permanent basis, year round, in rural areas.

The definitions of the following terms will be employed throughout the text to describe the shift from traditional rural tourism to a “post-cottaging” or “resort-based” tourism.

## COTTAGE

The seasonally occupied dwelling or retreat.

## RESORT

“A resort is a full-service lodging facility that provides access to or offers a range of amenities and recreation facilities to emphasize a leisure experience. [They] are characteristically located in vacation-oriented settings” (The University of Memphis Center for Resort and Hospitality Business 2009). The term ‘resort’ will be used to characterize the new residential developments that are the subject of this thesis. In effect, such projects are designed as enclosed compounds and marketed to emphasize a retreat or leisure ambience and environment while offering a range of upscale amenities.



### **Structure of the text**

Overall, the text will be formatted in the following sequence: first, the internal attributes of the community will be assessed vis-à-vis those transformations engendered by a critical mass of affluent outsiders. Then, having unearthed the extent of the social and physical implications, a logical design solution will emerge that can mediate these conditions. Parallel to this study, a conceptual framework will be developed to ensure that those notions advanced by the thesis are fully supported by the literature.

#### **PART1**

In this chapter, ideas of community and rural identity will be researched, as well as their determinant factors. This is followed by a section whose primary interest is to understand the nature of communal life and local identity in Thornbury, particularly with respect to the definitions provided earlier. To this effect, an analysis of its layered locations – i.e. those riddled with historical narratives, emotional undertones, human experiences and memories – will be performed, combined with a look at social networks and community events. Finally, the fragile nature of Thornbury's identity, particularly in the face of change, will be exposed by documenting the loss of significant spaces and institutions through time. An account of local activities and the participation patterns of residents will also be discussed as these institutions are highly indicative of the scale of citizen commitment to the local community.

#### **PART2**

In this portion of the text, the documented impacts of fast-paced, suburbanized developments upon aspects of community identity will be discussed. Then, Thornbury's initial population structure and traditional tourist visitation will be studied with regards to incoming populations and a modified culture of tourism. Altered landscapes and the various agents of change will be explored to unearth the extent of the transformations underway. Additionally, upscale suburbanization processes and their effects on social networks and patterns of movement and consumption will be analyzed.

#### **PART3**

In this section, the downtowns and Main Streets of rural communities will be assessed in terms of their social functions and abilities to sustain community sentiment under conditions of rapid change. Traditional methods for Main Street revitalization will also be researched via a study of precedents. Such information will initiate further reflections on alternative modes of initiating renewal of the core. Finally, the thesis will elaborate upon some design guidelines to this effect.

#### **PART4**

In the final portion of the thesis, the design intents and final proposal will be described through the medium of drawings, diagrams and models.





# PART 0

Thornbury, Ontario





Fig. 02 An overview of Thornbury  
(© Rebecca Lu 2011)



**Fig. 03** General map of Thornbury  
Base drawing source; (Elections Canada 2011)

## 0.1 An introduction to the study area

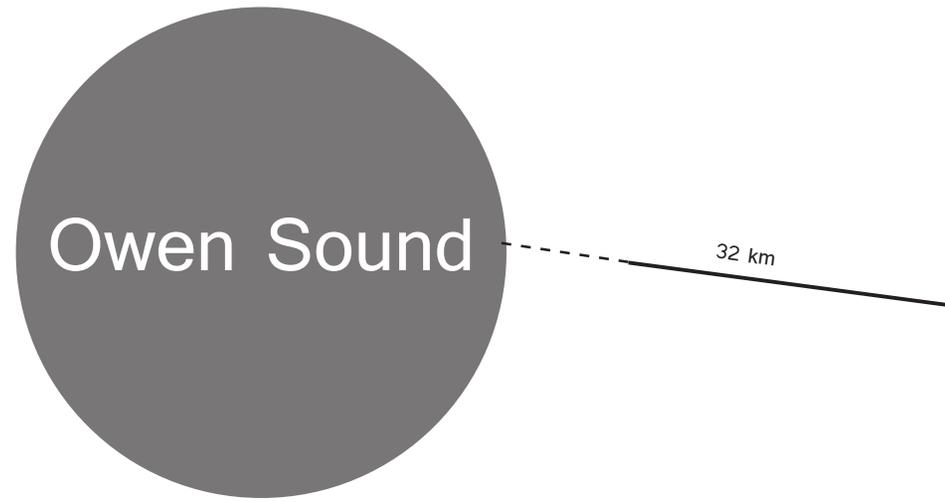
Thornbury is a small community in South-western Ontario of approximately 2,400 residents that is located in a region known as the “Georgian Triangle”. It comprises an area of 4.16 km<sup>2</sup> and is situated on the shores of the Nottawasaga Bay – an inlet in the extreme southern portion of Georgian Bay. Thornbury lies between the larger urban centre of Collingwood to the east, Meaford, to the west and Clarksburg to the south and is administratively linked to the Town of the Blue Mountains, in Grey County.

Highway 26 is a thoroughfare which runs along the Georgian Bay coastline and links Thornbury to nearby urban centres; it also connects to Highway 400, rendering the village accessible to millions of Ontarians (see Fig.08). This small tourist community is located within a 2-hour driving distance of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo and, more importantly, of Metropolitan Toronto.

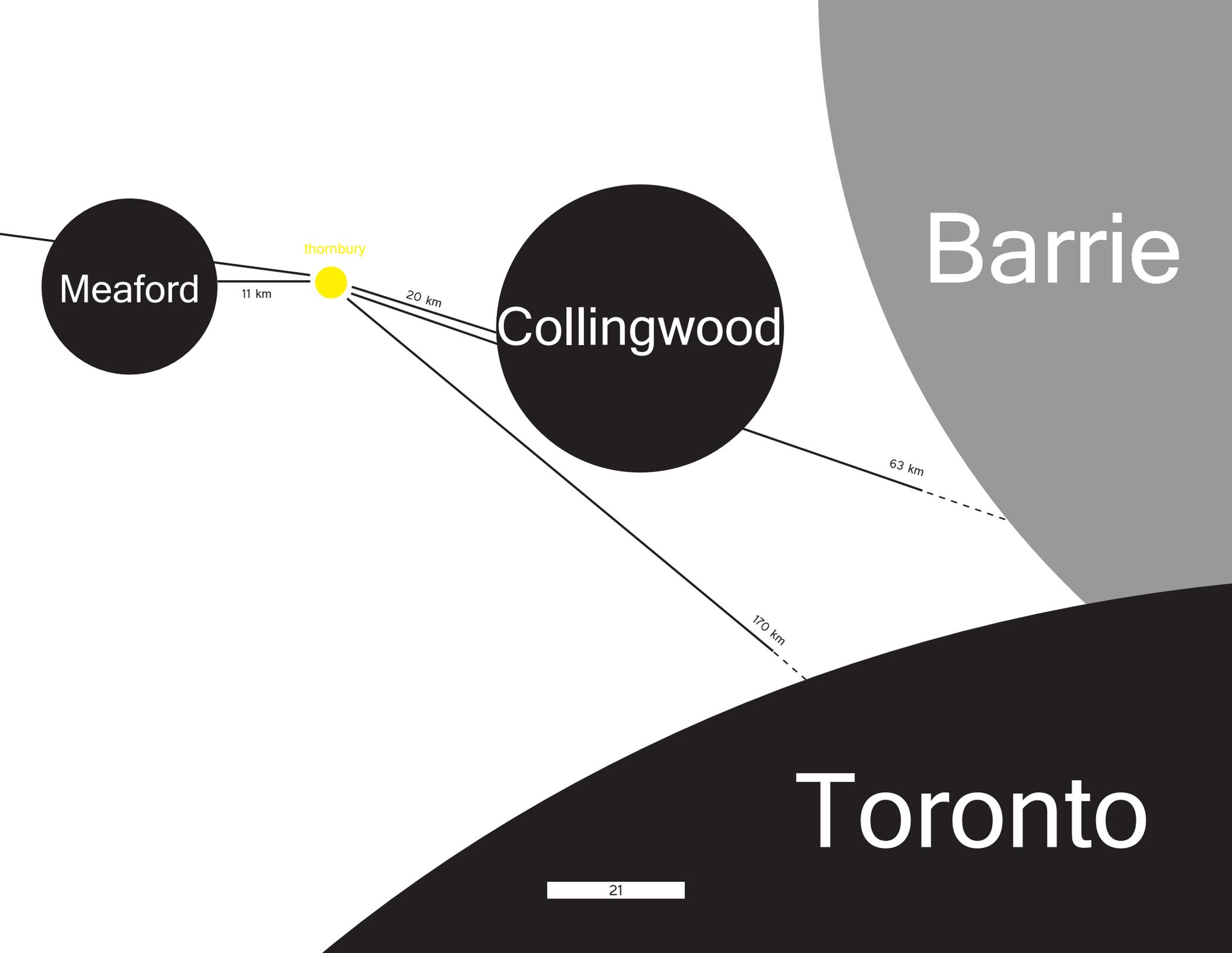
Thornbury is situated at the mouth of the Beaver River, which flows through the Niagara Escarpment and empties into the southern tip of the Georgian Bay. This river is flanked on both sides by the Beaver Valley, which is essentially a deep indentation in the Niagara escarpment that “sweeps majestically south from Tobomory through most of the townships south of the bay” (Dahms 1998, 303). The highest and one of the most picturesque parts of the escarpment is the Blue Mountain, which has a height of 575m. The outstanding views from the valley has not only transformed the Blue Mountain ski area into a premier tourist attraction, but has also solidified the South Georgian Bay region’s reputation as one of the ‘most scenic areas’ of the province. The descriptions of the Beaver Valley provided by L.J. Chapman and D.F. Putnam, authors of *The physiography of Southern Ontario*, further allude to this fact:

“The greenish blue waters of the Georgian Bay, the orchards near the shore, the mosaic of fields upon the gentler slope and forest belts upon the valley floor, and the steeper slopes just below the dolostone crags, all combine to form a geographic personality and a natural beauty which one seen is not soon forgotten” (Chapman and Putnam 1984, 124)

Thus, Thornbury’s scenic location, combined with the ease of accessibility, has been a catalyst for the local tourism industry for decades.



**Fig. 04** A graphic representation of Thornbury's location vis-a-vis neighbouring places



Meaford

thornbury

11 km

20 km

Collingwood

Barrie

63 km

170 km

Toronto



Fig. 05 (top): Main Street - East side (© Rebecca Lu 2011)  
 Fig. 06 (bottom): Main Street - West side (© Rebecca Lu 2011)

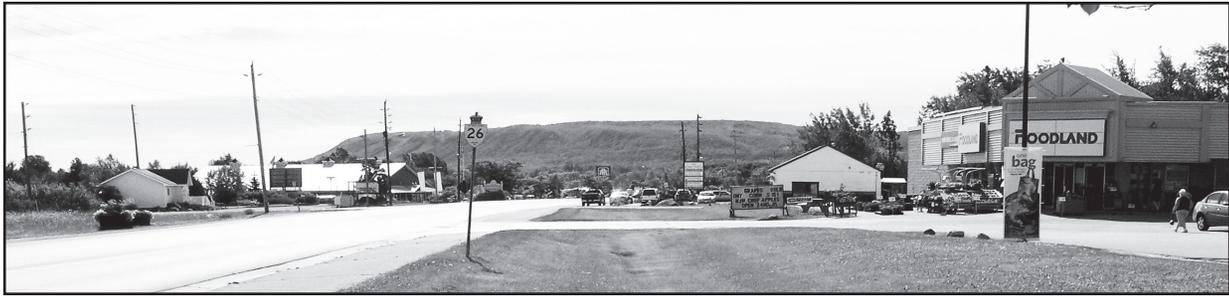


Fig. 07: View of Highway 26 looking East (Potter 2011)





### *General description of the area*

#### **Main Street (Bruce Street)**

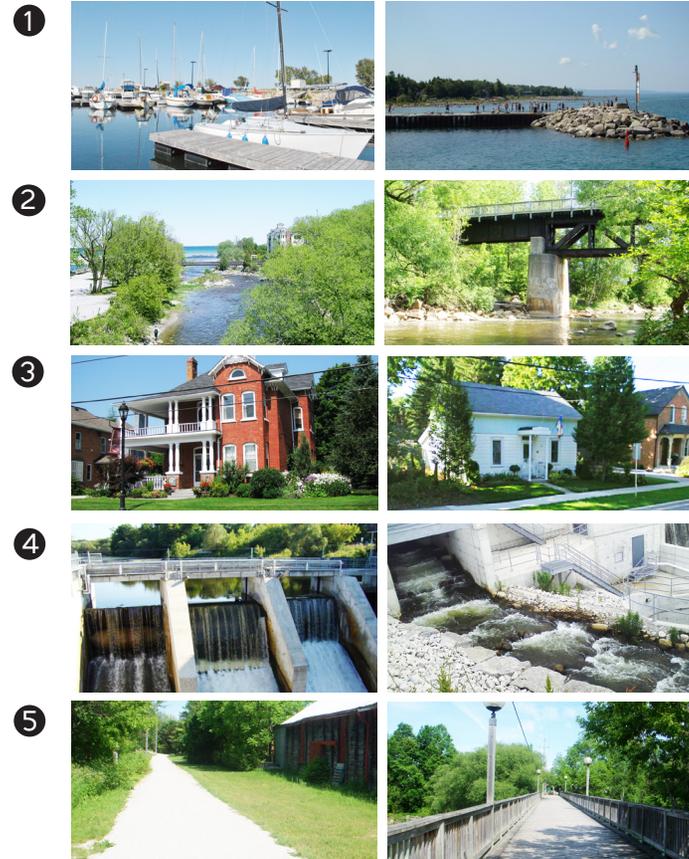
The area known as Thornbury's Main Street comprises the section along Bruce Street South between the Georgian Trail and Louisa Street (see Fig.08). The Bruce Street corridor is a two-lane road with compact two-storeys buildings located on either side. The building masses on Main Street are relatively small in size and most storefronts have traditional 19th century articulated brick facades with updated signage and display areas. A variety of retail shops and service outlets can be found in this commercial district, including:

- 7 Boutique clothing stores
- 6 Restaurants/ cafes
- 6 Professional/ medical offices
- 5 Gift shops
- 3 Furniture/home décor
- 3 Art galleries
- 3 Salons/spas
- 1 Convenience store
- 1 Book store
- 1 Bank

#### **Highway 26**

The Highway 26 corridor is a two-lane provincial highway which cuts through Thornbury's limits from East to West; as it passes through the downtown area, its name changes from King Street to Bridge Street to Arthur Street (see Fig.08). This road represents a major tourist and service route within the South Georgian Bay area and the slow of traffic tends to increase significantly during both the summer and winter seasons.

The urban section of Highway 26 begins on the east side of Thornbury at Elgin Street with the King's Court commercial complex- a strip mall which features kitchen and flooring showrooms, a video store and an antique market (see Fig.11). This section of the downtown reflects a more recent form of commercial development and is characterized by one to two storey buildings with spacious parking lots located at a distance from the street edge. In comparison to Bruce Street, architecture in the areas along Highway 26 is typically much more utilitarian and functional in nature.



1. Thornbury Harbour & pier (Ontario Photos 2011)
2. Beaver River & bridge
3. Residential Streetscapes (Google Maps 2011)
4. Thornbury Dam & Fish Ladder
5. Georgian Trail
6. Mill Pond

**Fig. 08:** A photographic map of Thornbury  
 Base map: (Town of the Blue Mountains 2008)  
 All other photographs: (© Rebecca Lu 2011)



GEORGIAN TRAIL

HIGHWAY 26

BRUCE STREET

1

2

5

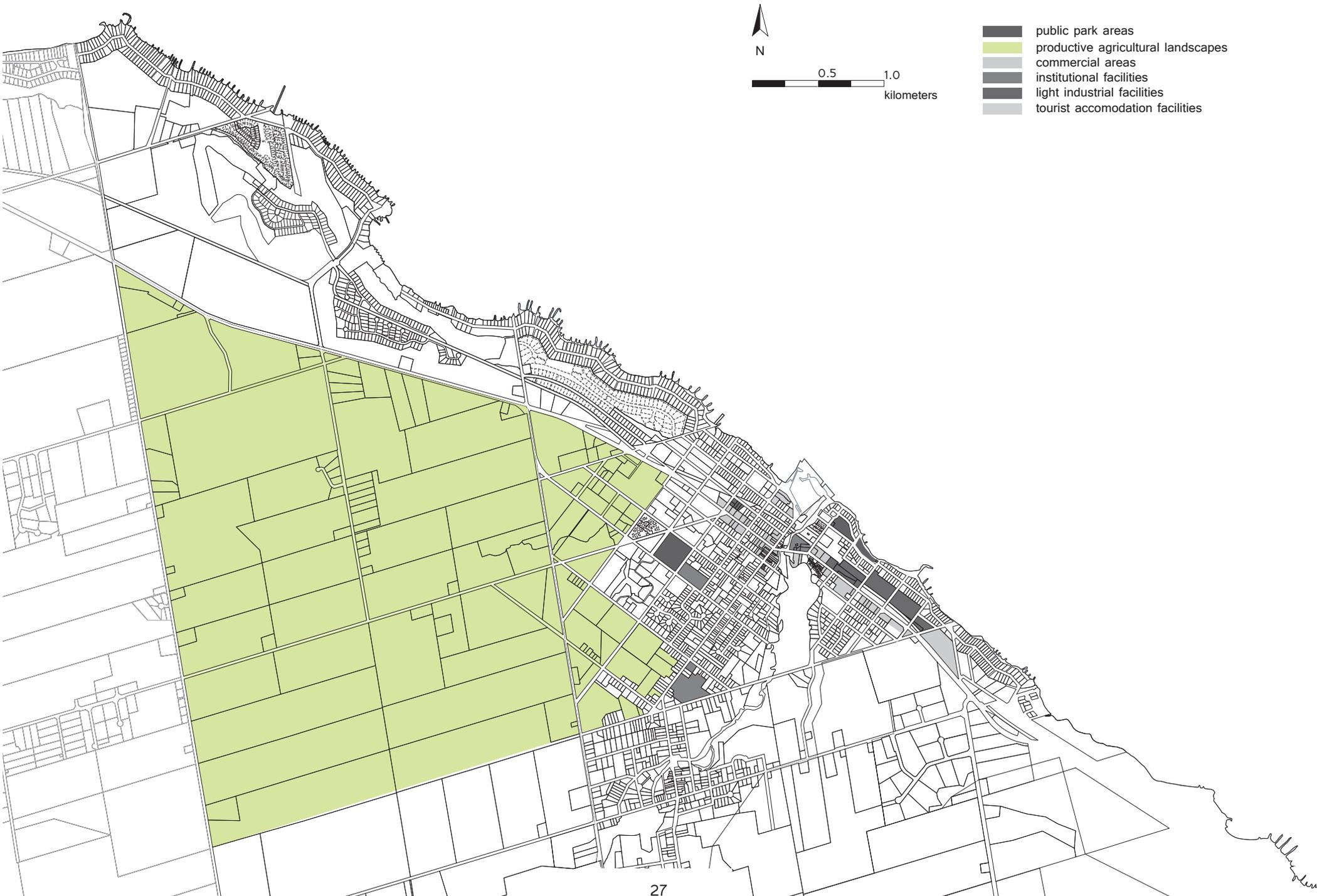
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3

6

**The following diagrams wil serve to illustrate Thornbury’s diverse land use patterns:**

**Fig. 09 (opposite page):** Map of settlement patterns (productive agricultural landscapes)  
Base map: (Town of the Blue Mountains development summary 2008)



- public park areas
- productive agricultural landscapes
- commercial areas
- institutional facilities
- light industrial facilities
- tourist accomodation facilities



Fig. 10 (top): View of Foodland along Highway (Google Maps 2011)

Fig. 11 (bottom): View of King's court mall along Highway 26 (Google Maps 2011)

Fig. 12 (opposite page): Map of settlement patterns (commercial areas)  
Base map: (Town of the Blue Mountains development summary 2008)



- public park areas
- productive agricultural landscapes
- commercial areas
- institutional facilities
- light industrial facilities
- tourist accomodation facilities

- ① Home Hardware
- ② Foodland
- ③ King`s court (strip mall & antique market)
- ④ Bridges Restaurant
- ⑤ Piper`s tavern
- ⑥ New Orlean`s pizza, Thornbury rehab centre, laundromat, post office, Clear Choice pools, Shelagh Fox gallery
- ⑦ Main Street
- ⑧ Largo`s restaurant & ice cream shop (closed)
- ⑨ Tim Horton`s
- ⑩ LCBO, Mac`s
- ⑪ Medical centre (new)

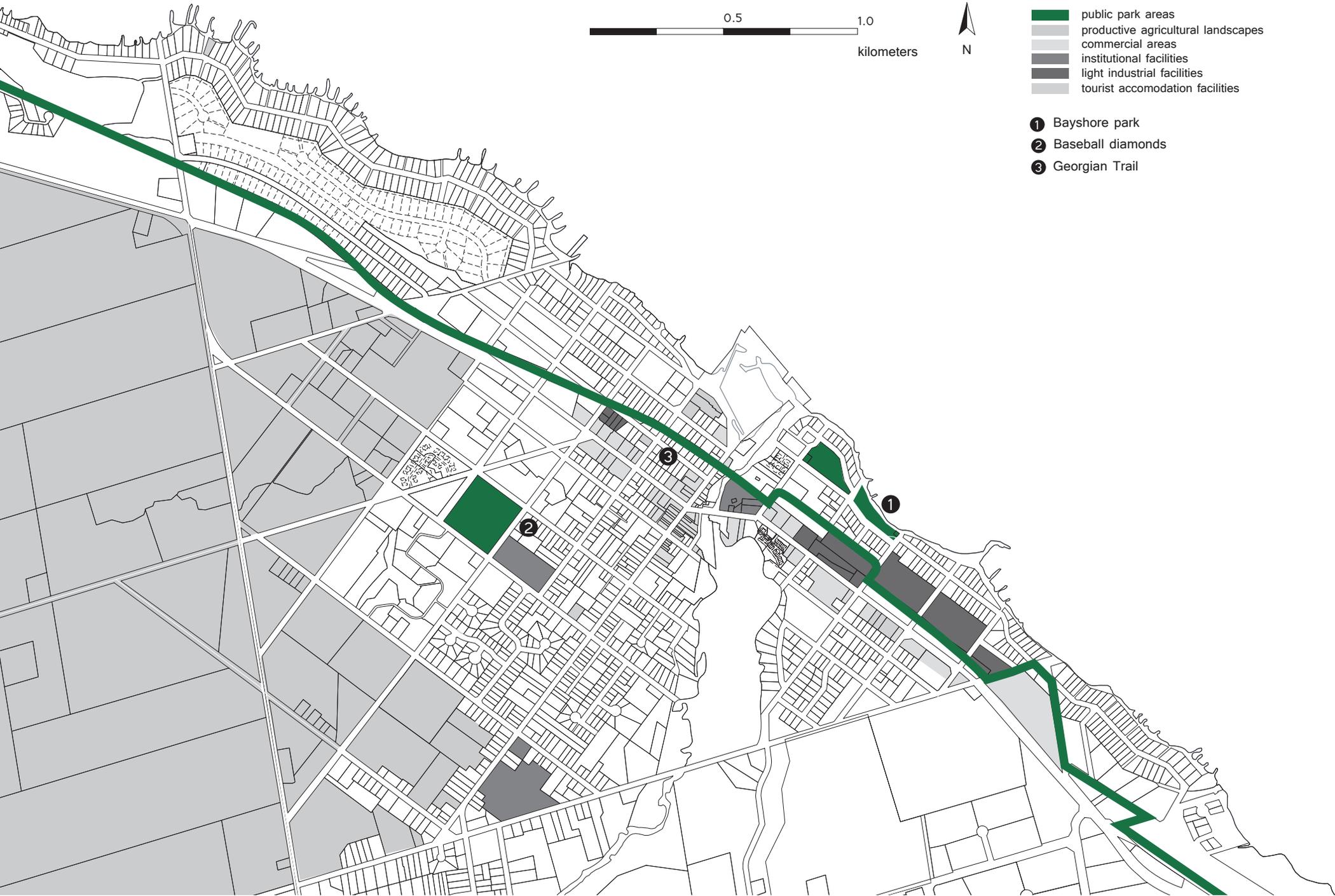
**Fig. 13 (opposite page):** Map of settlement patterns (institutional facilities)  
Base map: (Town of the Blue Mountains development summary 2008)



- public park areas
- productive agricultural landscapes
- commercial areas
- institutional facilities
- light industrial facilities
- tourist accomodation facilities

- 1 Town of the Blue Mountains city hall
- 2 Beaver Valley Community Centre
- 3 L.E. Shore Memorial library
- 4 Beaver Valley community school

**Fig. 14 (opposite page):** Map of settlement patterns (public park areas)  
Base map: (Town of the Blue Mountains development summary 2008)



- public park areas
- productive agricultural landscapes
- commercial areas
- institutional facilities
- light industrial facilities
- tourist accomodation facilities

- 1 Bayshore park
- 2 Baseball diamonds
- 3 Georgian Trail



**Fig. 15 (top):** View of Beaver Motel along Highway 26 (Google Maps 2011)

**Fig. 16 (bottom):** View of Penny's motel along Highway 26 (Google Maps 2011)

**Fig. 17 (opposite page):** Map of settlement patterns (tourist accomodation facilities)  
Base map: (Town of the Blue Mountains development summary 2008)



- public park areas
- productive agricultural landscapes
- commercial areas
- institutional facilities
- light industrial facilities
- tourist accomodation facilities

- 1 Beaver Motel
- 2 Penny's motel
- 3 Royal Harbour Resort
- 4 Georgian Manor bed & breakfast
- 5 Glennkaren bed & breakfast
- 6 Golden Apple bed & breakfast

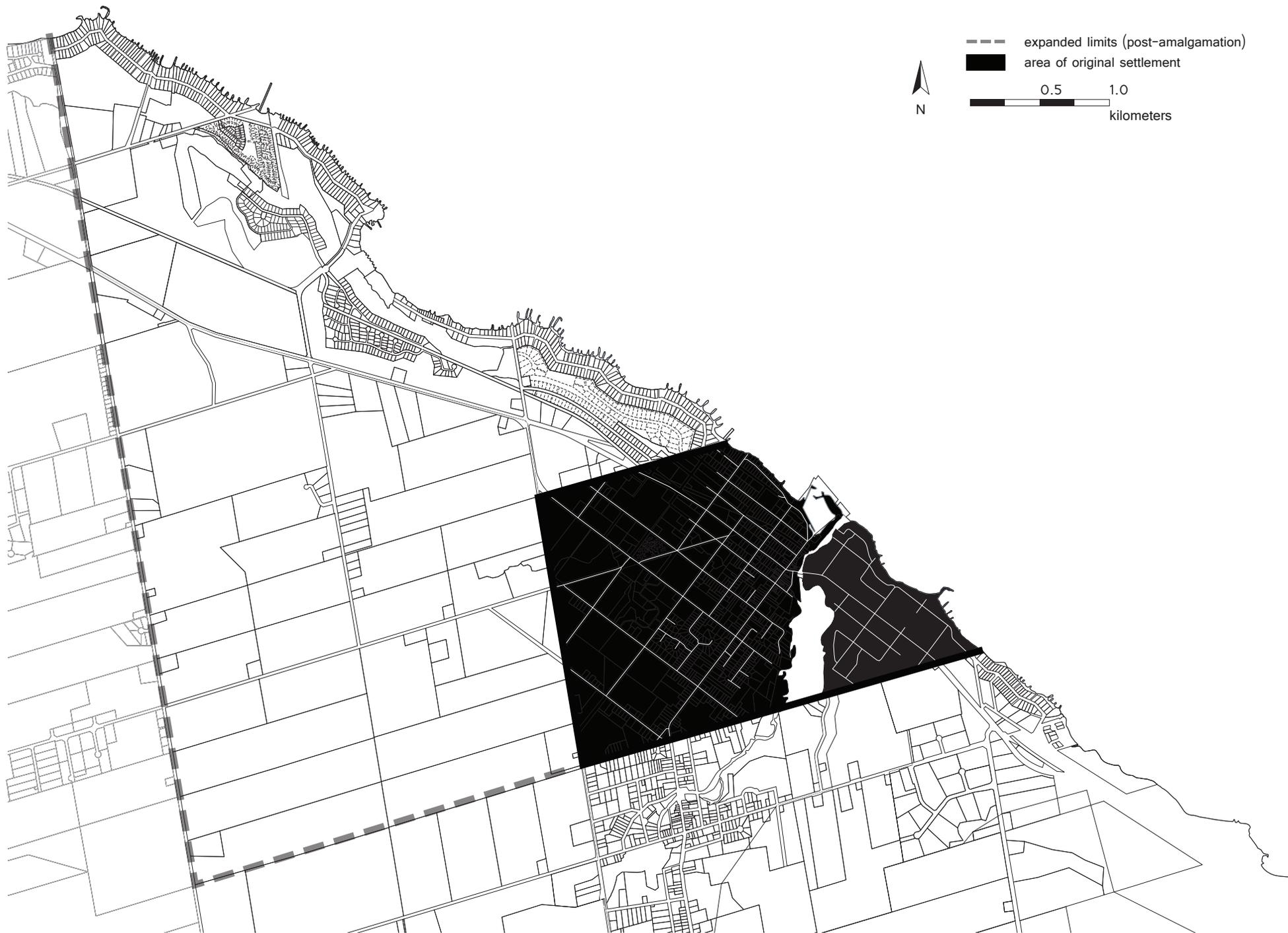




Fig. 18 Thornbury becomes Town of the Blue Mountains (Google Maps)

### Thornbury becomes Town of The Blue Mountains

On January 1st 2001, the town of Thornbury and the Township of Collingwood were officially amalgamated, forming the Town of The Blue Mountains. This municipal restructuring was due, in part, to initiatives put forth by the Ontario government throughout the 1990s to alleviate some of the pressure experienced by small towns who were struggling economically. Hence, provincial policy favoured the merging of small communities to create fewer, but larger municipalities – it was believed that “local government could be more cost efficient and effective through one municipal council and administration” (Flynn 1999). In effect, it was proving to be increasingly difficult for Thornbury to independently provide services and amalgamation seemed logical, given the commonalities between the community, the Village of Clarksburg and the surrounding areas. Thus, since 2001, the town of Thornbury has ceased to exist as a corporate municipality and is today considered a “community” or “village” within the Town of the Blue Mountains, along with the villages of Banks, Camperdown, Castle Glen, Christie Beach, Clarksburg, Craigleith, Duncan, Gibraltar, Heathcote, Kolapore, Little Germany, Loree, Ravenna, Red Wing, Slabtown and Victoria Corners.

The ramifications of Thornbury’s amalgamation into a larger municipal entity will be discussed in further detail through the thesis. For our immediate concerns, it is important to note that this initiative, combined with the increase of development on the fringe, has resulted in a geographical expansion of what constitutes “Thornbury” as well as an overall blurring of boundaries amongst neighbouring communities (see Fig. 19). Therefore, one must be mindful that, throughout the thesis, the maps provided will be those which encompass the newly defined borders rather than the original limits of the settlement. In addition, since the merger, there has been a general lack of data that is specific to Thornbury. Thus, certain inferences have been made to compensate for the unavailability of recent statistics (see later sections for more detail).

Fig. 19 (opposite page) Map of expanded boundaries  
Base map: (Town of the Blue Mountains development summary 2008)





Fig. 20 Peter York's cabin by the harbour (Wickens 1987)

## 0.2 A brief history of Thornbury: From a rural settlement to a tourist destination

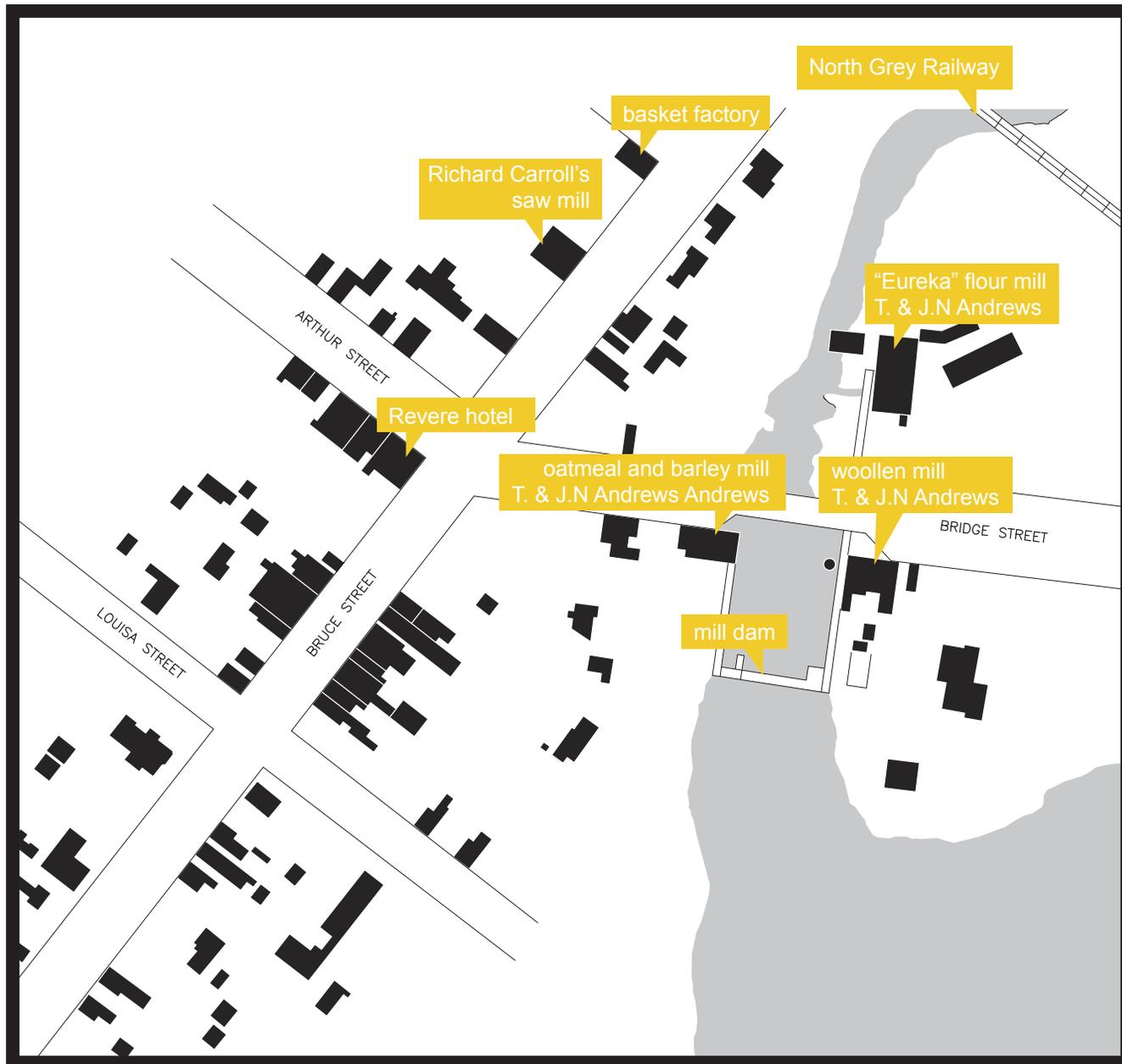
### *Pre-history*

Prior to European settlement, Thornbury was inhabited by a group of "Beaver Indians", whose presence contributed to shaping the cultural and physical history of the town. In fact, Highway 26 likely originated as a trail used by the Petun, Odawa and Huron Indians as a trading route to the Bruce Peninsula and Lake Huron (Mountains 1987, 7). And, circa 1833, there existed two villages in Thornbury on the western edge of the town (McLeod 1967).

Many Indians camped in Thornbury during the summer and perhaps one of the most noteworthy figures of the clan was a Chippewa Indian who came to Thornbury around 1880. His name was Peter York and "he camped at places along the Georgian Bay shore, between Meaford and Collingwood, and in the Beaver Valley, living by selling whatever he could, usually handicrafts of his own making" (Wickens 1987, 9). His winter home was a humble cabin located on the shore near the Thornbury Harbour and, when his generation passed away, so did the Indian presence in the community.

Peter York was a dear member of the community and a fellow resident named Dr. Moore wrote the following verses in his honour:

To friendships true, in honour strong,  
He moved with dignity among  
The friendly folk of farm and town,  
The various casts of White and Brown.  
His rustic cabin, night and day,  
Was Home to all who passed his way.  
To him, if kindness once were given,  
It sealed a bond in sight of heaven.  
(McLeod 1967)



*Thornbury Village: from Wilderness to a rural service centre*

In 1833, government surveyor Charles Rankin, while plotting the limits of the Township of Collingwood, set aside 900 acres at the mouth of the Beaver River to serve as a future settlement. This land would later be known as the village of Thornbury. It was initially settled in 1848 by a wealthy entrepreneur from Burritts Rapids named Solomon Olmstead who was seeking to build a saw-mill. He found a parcel of land near the mouth of the Beaver River to be ideal. Subsequent to registering a claim on the property in Owen Sound, he returned in 1852 and built a saw mill and power dam and “it was here, on the banks of the Beaver River, that the town’s first business, a milling operation, was set up” (Wickens 1987, 7).

In 1852, a second government official, William Gibbard, was sent to survey the town plot and it was him who eventually gave the village of Thornbury its name. Some argue that the wild ‘thorn berries’ which grew abundantly along the shoreline inspired his choice of name; others claim he baptized the settlement after one of the three towns of Thornbury in England. By this time, the growth of the agricultural economy was already evident, with land clearance for farms proceeding at a rapid pace. And, “coinciding with [this phenomenon] was the birth of the logging industry in the area which, along with agriculture, was a cornerstone of the area’s early economy” (Hallman 1991).

By 1853, Thornbury village was comprised of two houses, in addition to the mill. Later, a bridge was built spanning the Beaver River; prior to this, inhabitants on the west side of the river had to be ferried across the pond in a canoe (McLeod 1967). The first road through the village crossed the river at the dam and, with the arrival of diverse craftsmen and merchants, a Main Street was developed which ran parallel to the Beaver River. In 1857, the settlement truly became a rural service centre and grew to a population of nearly one hundred. Its functions included: a general store, a blacksmith, a cooper, a fanning mill, a grist mill, a saw mill and a post office. In other words, the village had evolved into a “central place providing goods and services to the local farmers and the inhabitants of the village and its hinterland” (Alger 1993, 37). As a testament to this growth, by 1861, the settlement’s first hotel was opened to serve as a way-station for weary travelers (Rutherford 1952).

**Fig. 21 (opposite page):** Historical map of Thornbury - 1890  
Scale 1:2000



In 1860, a new gravel road (known today as Highway 26) linking Thornbury to Collingwood and Meaford was inaugurated. Before the construction of this route, supplies were delivered by boat and, in the winter, the main mode of transportation was by sled or snow shoe. And, prior to the arrival of the automobile, residents relied upon livery stables and jitney services to gain access to nearby towns via Highway 26. Hence, this travel road became a significant factor in economic growth which resulted in cheaper transportation rates in the region (Alger 1993, 38).



As the village of Thornbury grew and began to consolidate its status as a rural service centre, new businesses entered into function. In 1881, “one could find hotels, general stores, mills, blacksmiths, wagon makers, shoe makers, a cooper, tinsmith, tanner and a tavern in Thornbury” (Alger 1993, 46). Though, the event that truly anchored Thornbury as a destination happened in 1872 with the building of the North Grey Railway – the first long-line railway in Canada – through the settlement. The main purpose for the railway was to transport timber and stone from local areas to adjoining towns and other building projects, though the transport of passengers was also introduced (Mountains 1987). In 1886, a new wharf at Thornbury harbour was constructed, which further accommodated passenger steamships and various other boats and vessels.

Thornbury was incorporated on April 23rd 1887, officially obtaining the stature of a town and marking a separation from the Township of Collingwood. A mounting discontent between Thornbury and Township council over issues related to taxation led to the dissolution of ties with the township. Residents of the Thornbury felt unfairly burdened by an “unequalized assessment”, given the size of the town relative to that of the township.

Furthermore, the apple industry, whose growth began in the 1880s, started to truly prosper with the formation of an apple packing company in 1894 by Henry Pedwell and Alfred A. Ingersoll and, subsequently, the formation of the Georgian Bay fruit growers association in 1905. As such, Thornbury soon became known as “Apple country” for its bountiful apple orchards and manufacture/processing of apple products.

**Fig. 22 (top):** Thornbury rail station (Wickens 1987)

**Fig. 23 (bottom):** Bridge spanning the Beaver River (Wickens 1987)

**Fig. 24 (opposite page):** Historical map of Thornbury -1925  
Scale 1:2000



Standard Chemical

Johnson coal shed

Snetsinger apples

J. Parks lumber yard

garage (repair shop)

skating rink

Isaac & Isaac feed & flour mill

Parkinson oatmeal mill

fire station

A. Davis seed cleaning

communal drive shed

St-George hotel

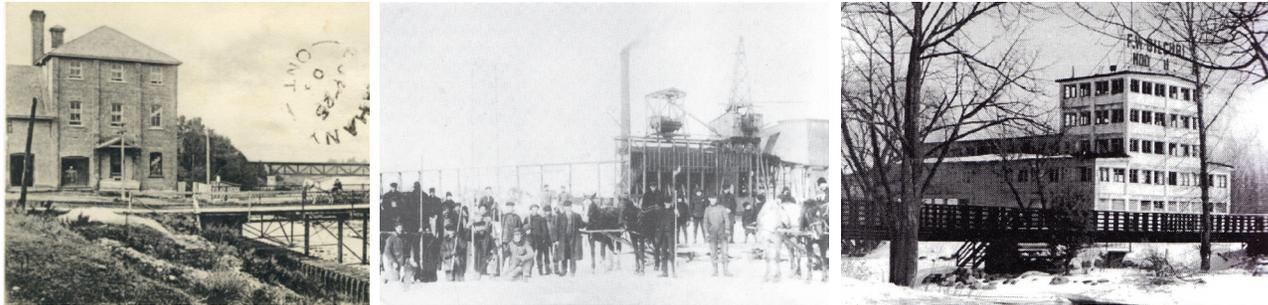


Fig. 25 (left): Parkinson oatmeal mill (Wickens 1987)  
Fig. 26 (middle): Standard Chemical plant (Wickens 1987)  
Fig. 27 (right): Gilchrist Furniture factory (Wickens 1987)



Fig. 28: Royal Harbour Resort (© Rebecca Lu 2011)



#### *Processing and Manufacturing era*

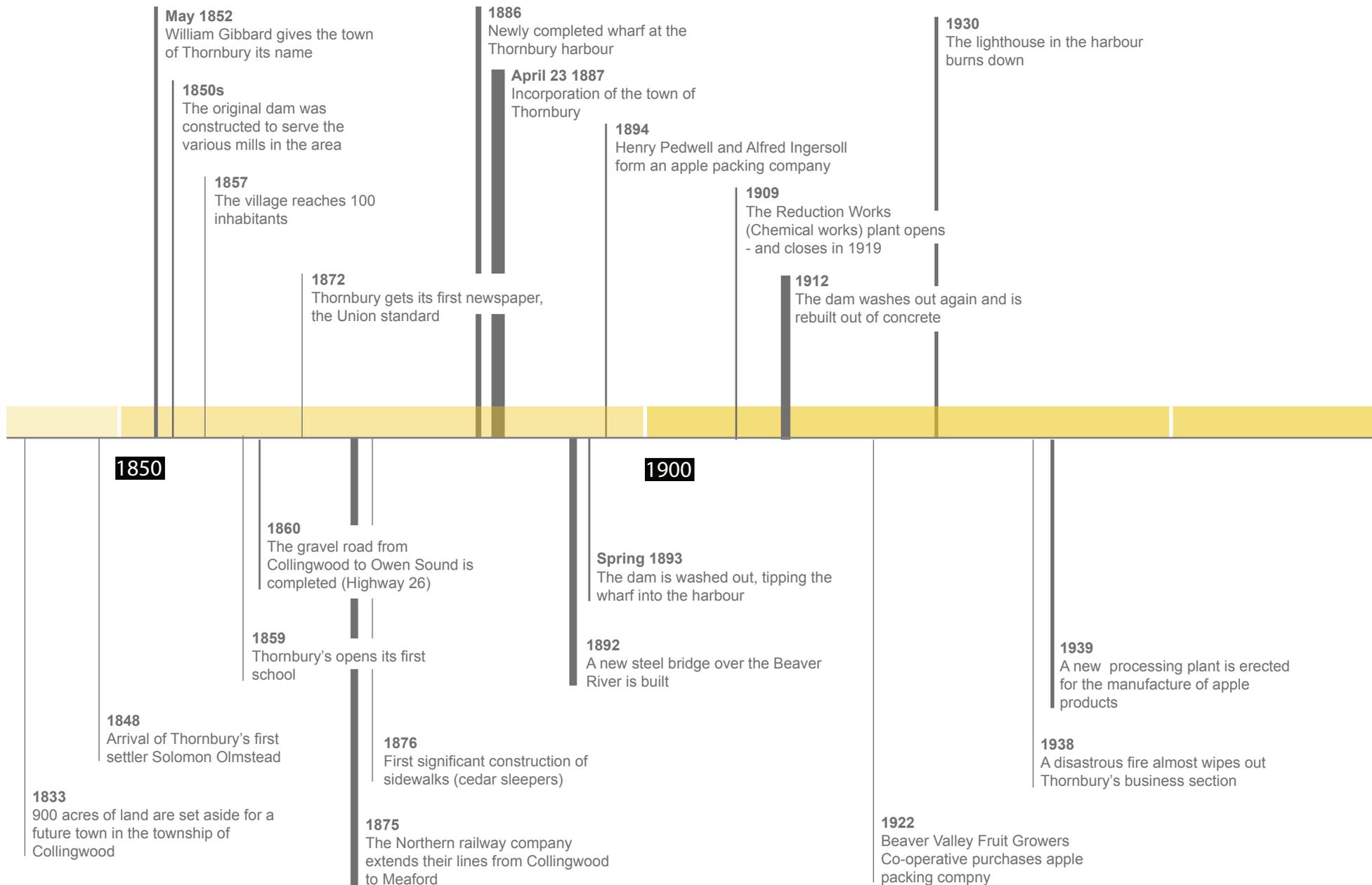
In the 1920s, Thornbury became a town which specialized in processing and manufacturing and a number of large scale operations began to appear, including the Standard Chemical plant (later, the Gilchrist furniture factory), the Parkinson oatmeal mill, the Isaac & Isaac flour and feed mill, the A. Davis seed cleaning mill (later, the Imperial Hay building), the J.Parks lumber yard, etc.



#### *The Town of Thornbury: from a rural service centre to a tourist destination*

Around 1971, Thornbury's agricultural economy shifted to one largely centered upon tourist and service industries, becoming a specialized community that catered to visitors, retirees and exurbanites (Alger 1993). This modification results from incremental changes associated with the appearance of the automobile. For one, "improved roads [and increased mobility] gave former customers the opportunity to bypass local service centers in order to patronize larger places", which subsequently marked a slow decline of Thornbury as a rural centre servicing agrarian populations (Dahms and Hallman 1991).

Accordingly, new functions appeared for Thornbury around 1976 including an antique store, a needlework shop, a pottery maker and a sporting goods store, as well as a number of tourist amenities and enterprises. Furthermore, in 1981, trendy establishments such as bath item boutiques, bookstores, fashion apparel stores, art galleries and fine dining institutions began to emerge, implying that the town was beginning to cater to an affluent clientele of visitors. By 1991, Thornbury boasted a total of three bed and breakfast inns as well as a large time-share resort - The Royal Harbour Resort - which drew in hundreds of tourists seeking tranquil surrounding, a rural ambience and leisurely pursuits. The Royal Harbour Resort, which includes an indoor pool, a gym and a rooftop patio, contributed greatly to propelling the town's status as a tourist community capable of accommodating large scale seasonal visitation. In fact, by this time, the entire "South Georgian Bay [region] had become a year-round vacation destination, acting as a 'tourism periphery' for the [seven] million residents living within 250 km in prosperous Southern Ontario" (Dahms and McComb 1999, 1).



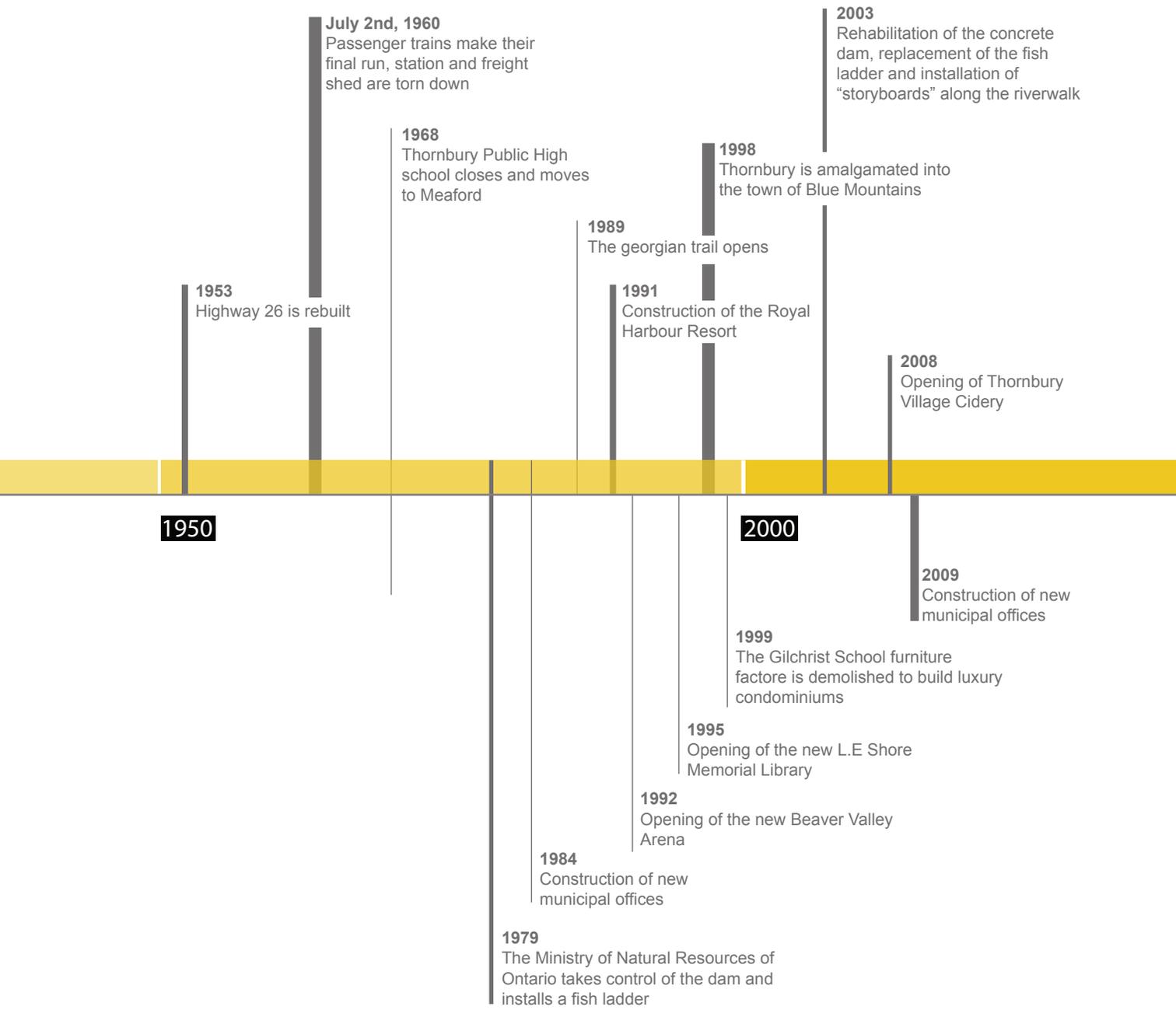


Fig. 29: Summary of important historical events





# PART 1

Community & reflections on local identity

## 1.0 Conceptual framework: Community & Community Identity

### Introduction

Since the post-war era, rural communities and small towns in Ontario have progressively been subject to numerous factors resulting in considerable change – notably, from growth (due to aggressive physical development), mass tourism and municipal consolidations. Yet, the paradox remains that urban growth represents both prospect and problem. While incoming populations and developments imply potentially improved cultural amenities and perhaps a superior profile, adverse effects may occur, including the threat to rural lifestyles, **community** and **identity**.

Thus, the text will begin by examining the nature of community sentiment and identity. This subsection will enable a fuller grasp of the **elements at stake**, namely those concerns associated with “the impact of rapid, uncontrolled growth, in the destruction of established lifestyles, communal values and social relations” (Fulton 1975, 1). For instance, according to Dennis Poplin, “urbanisation, rapid population growth and the increasing complexity of modern society has [led to] a heightened sense of alienation and anxiety” (Poplin 1979, 8). It has become apparent that the lack of rootedness, relatedness and personal identification which stem from such conditions have fostered feelings of detachment amongst citizens. And, as a result, the desire to ‘**return to community**’ has become increasingly prevalent as a measure to counteract these effects, including the impending homogenisation of culture and society.

Thus, the following section will outline the notion of “community”, followed by that of “community Identity” and define their critical roles within in rural towns. In this manner, those factors which undermine conditions of community identity may be interpreted in order to extract the core of the problematic and establish a lens through which to examine the implications of residential change.

## Community

“Large cities, high density and heterogeneity of population – have powerful effects on social organization and psychology. They tend to generate deterioration and loss of community sentiment, as manifest through such social-psychological conditions as isolation, anonymity, impotence, impersonality and malaise.” (Lenters 1986, 11)

First of all, the underlying assumption that ‘community sentiment’ occurs in a more intense fashion in small-scale environments, as opposed to urban areas, is not only widely accepted but also constitutes the basis of much of the literature relating to rurality. Thus, this topic will become central to the discussion. Given that it is understood as dissociated from notions of urbanity (i.e. growth), we can infer that it is a factor at risk of being suppressed under conditions of rapid change.

The term ‘community’ is “derived from the Latin *communitas*, which refers to the very spirit of community” (Beeton 2006, 4). Its significance eclipses the definitions of mere spatial territory and physical setting and instead alludes to the qualities of the culture and social relationships attached to a place. In essence, town is not an equivalent for community. Rather, the ideal of ‘community’ is characterized by the formation of a distinct culture and identity that, in turn, provide meaning and place knowledge to its members. This profile stems from residing in the same environment, enjoying shared histories and experiences, maintaining regular interactions, upholding collective norms and values, etc. – all of which contribute to “a sense of permanence, [membership, as well as] an interconnectedness created by strong connections” amongst dwellers of a place (Salamon 2003, 7).

Accordingly, a ‘sense of community’ results from acquiring an affinity for ‘community sentiment’ and can be understood as a personal realisation of belonging to a group. This, in turn, fuels the desire to actively invest in collective well-being through informal social channels (Beeton 2006, 11). Active civic engagement from a citizens contributes to **social capital**, which is characterized as “a reservoir of social resources that facilitates cooperation for shared goals and activities” (Salamon 2003, 17). Simply put, the notion of ‘social capital’ refers to a community’s social assets which are generated by a climate of trust and reciprocity amongst residents, combined with a commitment for involvement in the town’s welfare.

Essentially, all of these considerations forge a unique narrative for the community that, in turn, inspires its norms and rituals, beliefs, worldviews and lifestyles. They further endow a place with a visibly identifiable character and culture, which is intrinsic to the very definition of ‘community’. Community culture is evident through simple observation of basic interactions, civic life, participation in communal activities, ‘special’ events, the use of public spaces, etc. For instance, one needs only to take notice in the ways in which citizens accost each other, demonstrate acts of support, sharing, reciprocity and interaction in order to sample the flavours of a vibrant community. These aspects generate uniqueness which binds residents and fosters a sense of membership that often manifests itself by a “we” versus “them” attitude towards other communities (Pinkerton and Hassinger 1986, 19).

## **Rural community**

It is necessary to further define the notion of community in rural form, given that the subject deals with small, localized tourist communities where certain aspects of collectivity are more intense and therefore required for additional parameters to be discussed when addressing issues of community.

For instance, in rural areas, there typically exists more opportunities for the creation of social bonds due to the limited range and scale of activities and available facilities (Fischer 1973, 38). In contrast, large urban areas characteristically accommodate many more functions and alternatives, all occurring over larger areas which, in turn, generates a dispersed network of social relations (Fischer 1973, 38). For one, the population base in rural towns remains relatively small, which allows for familiarity to develop more easily; furthermore, much of the activity occurs along Main Street, where small-scale commerce becomes conducive to regular face-to-face contact and frequent, spontaneous and informal interactions (Lenters 1986, 41). Furthermore, in a rural context, social bonds are often established upon webs of kinship as the various households are well acquainted, reside in stable neighbourhoods and enjoy traditional bonds of shared ethnicity, ancestry and religious affiliation.

As such, the livelihoods of residents of rural communities are inherently linked, in both functional and emotional ways. Sonya Salamon, author of *Newcomers to Old Towns*, postulates that, “when life takes place in these small worlds, people share cultural attitudes, beliefs, and practices that define behaviour.” (Salamon 2003, 15). As a result, strong connections and a shared culture and lifestyle are critical to the formation and maintenance of community.

In addition, “small town people recognize that they must be committed to shouldering the work required of citizens to produce and sustain an authentic community” (Salamon 2003, 3). This instinct for commitment and investment in local affairs stems from having developed a deep attachment to place. All of these aspects reveal the cohesion of residents of small towns as well as the strength, prevalence and visibility of rural community sentiment.

## Community identity

The following paragraphs will further expand upon the idea of 'community' and discuss the concept of 'community identity', which is central to the discourse for it alludes to place-specific values that are of particular relevance architecturally.

The expression "community identity" points to the facets of a community that both contribute to its unique character and cultivate a "sense of place". More specifically, this concept addresses the manner in which one identifies with the distinctive physical qualities and cultural features within a community in a way that **holds meanings and creates value** while generating a commitment to place (Salamon 2003).

First of all, notions of "sense of identity" and "frame of orientation" are integral to the definition of "community identity" and will necessarily need to be expanded upon. Erich Fromm, renowned social psychologist, characterizes a "sense of identity" as becoming aware of ourselves as separate and unique individuals and as part of a social group (McLennan 2002). He further adds that maintaining a "frame of orientation" can be understood as having a stable and consistent set of references to organize perceptions and make sense of our environment. Essentially, being immersed in a setting that enables one to gain an awareness of who they are – to understanding their world and their place in it – enables the process of experiencing a sense of "community identity".

Accordingly, the idea of identifying with a community is also commonly attributed with experiencing a "sense of place" – an expression which is analogous with delighting in the "essential spirit, quality of life, liveability, flavour, feeling, ambience, essence, aura, human scale, visual charm, scenic quality, seamliness, harmony, resonance and presence" of a locale (Hiss 1990,22). More specifically, "place" can be understood as a geographic space which becomes significant when a community endows it with value. It is land that acquires meaning from its ability to reinforce local sentiment through either its context or history (Harper 1987, 312). Physical elements equally contribute to evoking the positive sentiment of community identity by acting as frames of orientation; examples include buildings, bridges, activities, symbols, established spaces, landmarks, historical sites, gateways, dominant methods and materials of construction, etc. (McLennan 2002). In sum, a "sense of place" is experienced when the sensory qualities of a locale or its record of personal histories, fashion an authentic attachment or closeness to place.

## **Determinants factors**

In the literature, three dominant characteristics are found to be determinant notions of 'community': *territory, social interaction and common bonds* (Pinkerton and Hassinger 1986). And clarifying these individual notions will ensure that they may be **facilitated/mitigated by design**.

### *Territory*

First of all, as iterated by Sonya Salamon, author of *Suburbanization of the Heartland*, "life is constructed within a shared geographically bounded space identified with the community - including the buildings, the open spaces, and the taken-for-granted practices linked to place" (Salamon 2003, 22). As such, our individual lives are inherently shaped by the terrain within which it occurs - and, therefore, accounting for the territorial dimensions of community culture is critical. For instance, natural landscapes are significant as they are frequently related to the history of the place. The settlement of towns often originates from certain natural features or the topography of the area; likewise, urban development is equally influenced by geography (which is apparent in the construction methods used, industry types and power sources). In addition, distinctive natural elements serve as landmarks or identifiers for communities; for these reasons, "irregularities or special character in a landscape are something to rejoice over and respond to" (Lynch 1981, 94).

Experiencing environments which are perceived as unique or that recall personal histories gives rise to the sentiment of "community identity". And this, in turn, reinforces our sense of personal identity. For one, the idea that a lasting record of lived experiences and traditions can exist as a permanent fixture stirs affection within us and creates the illusion of temporal stability and rootedness. According to Kevin A. Lynch, a renowned American planner, "we attach positive feelings of connection and of being grounded to physically distinctive and recognizable locales" (Lynch 1981, 94).

### *Interconnectedness*

Meaningful social interaction and frequent personal contact are critical factors in inducing feelings of attachment towards community and nurturing social networks. In essence, through time and repetitive interactions, community can be maintained and reproduced (Wuthnow 1998). Constant exchanges amongst citizens serve to build intimacy and affection, to shape collective culture and to further one's knowledge of local characteristics - all which are necessary to establish sense of belonging and connection to place.

On that note, understanding the dynamics of social interactions amongst the differing subgroups within communities – i.e. analyzing the nature of contact, behavioural tendencies, the quality of relationships – will uncover whether the resulting effects on local identity are positive or not. Hassinger and Pinkerton, authors of *The Human Community* have classified communities based upon variants pertaining to levels of social interaction (Pinkerton and Hassinger 1986). For the purposes of the thesis, only two typologies will be considered. The first are **local networks and face-blocks groups**, in which residents experience a sense of familiarity with one another due to regular face-to-face contact and common usage of the same areas and facilities. The second, named **communities of limited liability** are groups in which the residents “live and identify with [the place] but are not deeply committed to it” (Pinkerton and Hassinger 1986, 23). Bedroom communities, for instance, could be considered to be an example of the second typology.

It would follow that, as small scale environments expand (in size or function), the tendency is for communities of limited liability to be inserted in the landscape, thereby dissolving the strength of face-blocks and reducing the sense of local attachment....

#### *Common bonds*

Finally, common ties, bonds, shared values, beliefs and goals further contribute to fostering a sense of community membership (Pinkerton and Hassinger 1986, 19). Particularly in a rural context, when life occurs in such ‘small worlds’, people tend to share cultural attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and practices which fosters strong connections. This aspect is critical to the formation and maintenance of community. Though, as Ontario becomes increasingly socially diverse and traditional bonds of shared ethnicity, ancestry, religious affiliation and shared history are less common, it may become difficult to establish these common bonds... (McLennan 2002, 7)



## Reflections

Under conditions of rapid change, with small-scale lifestyles on the decline, aspects of rural community identity will inevitably disintegrate and, with full knowledge of its determinant factors and understanding of its nature, appropriate strategies or models may be conceived. Though, certain questions still remain: how can such dynamics be engendered through architecture? Are they contingent upon small scale environments? How will they withstand conditions of rapid change?

One can postulate that, when designing for community identity, methods that reinforce unique features, natural environment, history, traditions, community culture should be taken into consideration in order to maintain authenticity and permanence (Campion and Fine 1998). Essentially, a design scheme that appropriately reflects these aspects (which are relatively unchanging) will provide stability, rootedness and commonality amongst citizens who lack traditional ties of ethnicity. In sum, architectural works that result in built environments which enhance community interaction, cohesion and a “sense of place” are likely to foster an authentic attachment to place and, by extension, a sense of commitment the community. In fact, articulations of identity generate commitment by compelling individuals to take ownership of their community’s vision of its own identity (Lynch 1981).

In sum, initiatives that maintain or enhance community identity may have an effect on the viability or sustainability of the place as a whole; for instance, by implementing processes that allow citizens to extract positive aspects of their community to celebrate, towns are endowed with added resiliency against change.



## **1.1 Thornbury: On Community Culture and Participation**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this section is to document the social and physical landscape of Thornbury with respect to notions of community and identity in order to identify factors at risk under conditions of expansion and rapid change. The thesis will attempt to argue that Thornbury maintains a strong sense of community, though its identity is unsubstantiated in the physical landscape. This aspect weakens its ability to resist change, advance local appeal and counter decentralization tendencies. As a result, Thornbury's social structure remains fragile in the face of transformation processes and it is therefore necessary to discuss those elements which render it vulnerable in an attempt to understand the specific conditions that need to be reckoned with by design.

The text will begin by providing the reader with a grasp of the sense of community that exists in Thornbury – namely, those immaterial facets that relate to qualities of social relationships and the formation of local culture. Then, the fragile nature of its landscape will be exposed and notions of identity and heritage, as related to the natural and built environment, will be expanded upon.

Finally, it is important to first assess those characteristics within the social landscape which contribute to building community identity in order to formulate design solutions that can generate, maintain, or enhance these qualities in the physical elements of the town.

### **Community culture and participation**

According to residents, Thornbury was once composed of a tightly knit community structure – one in which, essentially, “everyone knew everyone, one way or the other”. A distinct culture and identity emerged over the years and is apparent in the common interests shared by residents, as well as the collective participation in local events and recreational activities. Recreation and communal life are important to long-time residents and most will describe their most cherished memories as: playing hockey/broom ball at the arena, participating in annual walk-a-thons from Thornbury to Meaford, hanging out at the bowling alley, biking, fishing, roller skating, swimming at the beach, jumping off the pier, watching the trout run in the spring, attending the chilli cook-off, cheering on the Beaver River rat race, tearing down the fields in old cars, stealing apples from the orchards, playing at Bayview park, breaking into abandoned storage houses, hanging out on Main Street, etc.



**CHILI COOKOFF**

**BUS STOP**  
at the Post Office in Thornbury

**SATURDAY JULY 12 | 11 AM - 5 PM**  
NEW LOCATION | THE VILLAGE AT BLUE MOUNTAIN

**HOURLY DEPARTURE  
TIMES TO COOKOFF**

**11, 12, 1, 2, 3**

**4:30 - Last Bus to The Village**  
**5:00 - Last Bus from The Village  
back to Thornbury**

Fig. 30: Ad for the annual Chili Cookoff  
(Thornbury Library Archives)

Several community events are of particular important to Thornbury citizens, including:

**The Blue Mountains Chili Ribfest (and Chili Cookoff):** This annual event is organized by the Thornbury-Clarksburg Rotary Club and consists of a chilli competition, live music, book sales and a car show. The idea was brought back from Mexico by Thornbury resident Don Wills and it was decided that the event would replace the famous Beaver River Rat Race (which was dissolved in 1981, see p.65). Competitors would often come to the Cookoff in costume, dressed as Martians, Scots, hillbillies and convicts (Flynn 1999). For many years, the event was held at the Thornbury arena until the facilities could no longer handle the crowds. For this reason, the location has since been moved to the Blue Mountain Village.

**The Peak to Shore Music & Art festival:** This event was inaugurated in 2009 and is characterized by a number of art events and music acts spread across 15 venues located in Village of Blue Mountain, Clarksburg, Collingwood and Thornbury. The festival is of importance for the region, although very few of the events and presentations are actually held in Thornbury.

**The Apple Harvest festival:** The Apple Harvest festival takes place during Thanksgiving Weekend and consists of free activities such as live music, street performers, seasonal decorations, sidewalk displays and gallery tours throughout the Blue Mountain area.

- The Georgian Sound Festival**
- The Beaver Valley Kinette Pancake breakfast**
- The Beaver Valley Parade**
- The Beaver Valley Fall Fair**
- A Taste of the Town (in Collingwood)**
- Strawberry Socials**
- Fall Studio Art tour**
- The Trout Run at the fish ladder**
- Apple picking**
- Family fireworks, etc.**

Furthermore, Thornbury has many active community groups, including:

**The Thornbury-Clarksburg Rotary Club:** This organization was formed in 1938 and is well respected in both Thornbury and the Beaver Valley community. They are involved with a number of restoration projects, literacy projects and charitable programs in Africa. Weekly meetings are held at Wong's restaurant, on Main Street.

**The Thornbury Independent Order of Oddfellows:** This group was founded in 1992 and is part of a worldwide organization; their meeting place, or 'lodge', was located on Main Street, above the Thornbury Bakery. For many years, the members donated funds to support summer camps for kids with Cancer, Leukemia research, welfare organizations, etc. Recently, membership began to decline and the decision was made in 2009 to dissolve the Thornbury lodge and amalgamate with the Spirit Rock lodge in Warton.

**The Beaver Masonic Lodge:** This club meets every month in the hall located above DeCorso's clothing store on Main Street and are involved in raising funds for charitable organizations and cancer research.

**Thornbury Community Theater:** This group was established in 1990 and consists of a local community theatre group established who put on semi-annual theater performances in the spring and in the fall. Their meeting/rehearsal place is located in Clarksburg.

**Thornbury Yacht Club:** This club was founded in 1983 and is a small, informal, association of boat enthusiasts who keep their boats in the Thornbury Harbour. Their main activities of the Thornbury Yacht Club include organizing social events for its members such as races, club cruises and on-shore gatherings.



Fig. 31: Masonic Lodge and Wong's restaurant on Main Street  
(© Rebecca Lu 2011)



## 1.2 'Ghosted spaces:

### A discussion of Thornbury's fragile landscape and articulations of identity

"Our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography...the culture of any nation is unintentionally reflected in its ordinary vernacular landscape" - Peirce F. Lewis, American geographer

Physical landscapes are symbolic and highly indicative of local culture - even the most ordinary and innocuous sites can be viewed by residents as **a statement of community identity**. As a shared history is being lived out within a community, the inhabited spaces become receptacles for the intensely layered narratives attached to a place. In the course of this chapter, Thornbury's meaningful spaces will be studied - namely, those physical elements to which a community endows with value, that reinforce local sentiment and that fashion an authentic attachment to place.

To begin, a village's heritage and character is inherently built into its natural amenities as well as manmade structures and environments. Interestingly, the latter reflects the fragile nature of Thornbury's identity, as the village's tangible links to the past have been torn, with time, as important buildings have been discarded, forgotten and underused. Some were lost to fires, succumbed to changes in the community or fell into disuse. Likewise, certain traditions also have become obsolete. All of the following factors combined weakens the community identity and structure and renders it fragile in the face of aggressive physical development. Since Thornbury visibly retains little to no indication of its past and treads of history have disappeared, extensive research has been required to fully grasp its heritage and uncover its vestiges due to lack of indicators in the physical landscape.

As such, the purpose of this next section will be to uncover both the cherished landscapes of Thornbury, as well as these ghosted elements.



Fig. 32: The Thornbury Dam (© Rebecca Lu 2011)

### Thornbury Dam

The Thornbury Dam is a prominent landmark in the physical landscape. It is located at the intersection of Bruce Street and Bridge Street and essentially marks the entrance into the downtown area. This piece of large scale infrastructure serves to manipulate the flow of water of the Beaver River, precisely before it spills into the Georgian Bay. The dam has a long history which is intimately connected with the urban development of the town itself.



◀ Thornbury's first dam was a primitive one, built in the 1850s when the town was settled. It was constructed to supply power supply to the adjacent mill.



◀ In the spring of 1893, the dam gets washed out during the spring freshet and has to be rebuilt.

The Thornbury dam gets out washed out again by a flood on the 24th of May 1912. This causes a shutdown of two of the town's main businesses, the H. Parkinson Mill and the Andrews Mill, who were joint owners of the dam.



◀ In 1912, the town of Thornbury purchases Andrew's mill and, in conjunction with Henry Parkinson, owner of Parkinson Cereal Co., proceeds to build a new cement dam to supply the village with electricity.

*Anecdote: Mr. Low, the plant operator at the dam, recognized the aesthetic value of the dam and proceeded to illuminate the tumbling water by attaching coloured light bulbs to a revolving wagon wheel which he hung from the bridge (Commission 1987). Needless to say, the residents were delighted with the visual interest this simple gesture created.*



In 1945, Thornbury decides to purchase electricity from Ontario Hydro, as demand began to exceed the capabilities of the dam and town generator.

In 1979, the Ministry of Natural Resources of Ontario takes control of the dam.

In 2003, the Thornbury dam is rehabilitated.

### *Ghosted*

Today, the Thornbury dam remains an important visual cue in the landscape, though it no longer fulfills its intended purpose as a functional element in a productive system. In fact, certain groups have petitioned the Ministry of Natural Resources to remove this out-dated and obsolete piece of industrial infrastructure for its negative impact on the environment. Needless to say, such concerns were met by strong opposition from Thornbury residents who refuse to see a piece of local history be destroyed.

Fig. 33: Historical images of the Thornbury Dam (Thornbury Library Archives)



### The Thornbury fish ladder & Beaver River

In the early years of settlement, fishing was a basic subsistence skill and “anyone who could not make a good meal of a five pound speckled trout and a half dozen old-fashioned cup potatoes had no business in Thornbury.” (Marshall 1901)



Fishing gradually transformed into a sport and an activity of leisure in the latter part of the 20th century and its popularity within the community became increasingly more evident over the years. In fact, fishing has become a main tourist attraction in the town and, every year during the springtime, anglers from across the province would tread down to the banks of the Beaver River on “opening weekend” to participate in the rush to catch the fish spawning upstream. The remainder of the residents and visitors alike would congregate at the fish ladder at the dam to watch the fish migrate upwards. The ladder, a step pool fishway, was installed in 1979 to allow the Rainbow Trout to overcome the dam and gain access to the warmer waters of the Beaver River in the spring and the Chinook Salmon, in the fall. Access to suitable spawning areas is critical to the survival of these species and the location of physical barriers, such as dams, prevents upstream movement of adult fish to such spaces. With the Thornbury fish ladder installed, the Rainbow trout and Chinook Salmon now have access to 63 kilometers of waters in the Beaver River, which increases the available spawning areas as the population of the species.

Spawning streams must have sufficient year round flow, cold temperatures and a gravel bottom that is free of sediments. In fact, the Beaver River watershed is one of the few streams flowing into the Great Lakes that possess these characteristics.

#### *Ghosted*

This narrow body of water is not only significant as a fishway, but was also home at one time to the ‘Beaver River Rat Race’, a beloved tradition in the community that began in 1957. Essentially, when the ice breaks up in early April, the meltwater creates an overflow and generates a powerful stream of water. This annual event celebrates this condition by organizing a race down the Beaver River on home-made vessels. Over the years, people floated downstream from Heathcote, through Clarksburg, to Thornbury in various contraptions, “from oil drums, to inner tubes, to pieces of Styrofoam lashed together, [...] brass beds, a dragon that puffed smoke”, etc. (Field 2010). The ‘rat race’ continued to grow in popularity and eventually boasted hundreds of competitors; at its peak, between 30-40,000 people descended upon these small rural communities to observe the event. The last race was held in 1981 and the event was dissolved due to the dangerous nature of the event.

On a final note, despite the existence of such rich traditions, the orientation of the town with respect to the water does little to underline the river’s importance to the community. Aside from seasonal interest in the migration of fish, the significance of the Beaver River corridor to the Thornbury area is hardly visible from Bruce Street.

Fig. 34: The Beaver River Rat Race (Field 2010)

## Railways & the Georgian trail

As previously mentioned, the North Grey Railway traverses the East-West axis of the town and was formed in 1872 as an extension of the Northern Railway of Canada from Collingwood onward. During the time of construction, the Beaver River trestle was built in order to allow the railway to span the river; it is interesting to note that the two main support piers were made of different materials – the east pier is of tone block and the west pier, of poured concrete (Mountains 1987). The first train arrived in Thornbury in November of 1872 and four trains stopped in town a day, carrying passengers and the Royal Mail to the adjoining towns of Collingwood, Meaford and Toronto (McLeod 1967). Trains were also used to support Thornbury's various manufacturing and processing businesses; as such, several freight shed, coal sheds, cattle ramp and various storage houses were located along the tracks. The Northern Railway was taken over by the grand trunk railway in late 1800s and was amalgamated with CNR in the mid-1920s.

### *Ghosted*

On July 2nd 1960, the trains made their final run and Thornbury's station house and freight sheds were subsequently torn down, sold or moved. Remnants of the rusted tracks remained until the opening of the Georgian trail in October 1989, signalling the loss of an important reminder of the town's heritage. Today, the Georgian trail acts as a linear nature park on the former CN railway property and is frequently used by cyclists, hikers, joggers and cross-country skiers all year round (Flynn 1999).



Fig. 35: Thornbury's rail station (Wickens 1987)



### Apple industry

As previously mentioned, Thornbury is commonly known as “Apple country” for the area is exceptionally suitable for apple production – this is due to the fact that the waters of the Georgian Bay cools the local climate in such that spring blossoming is delayed until the risk of fall frosts have passed (IBI Group 1977).

The first significant apple packing company was formed in 1894 by Henry Pedwell and Alfred A. Ingersoll. In 1922, the company was purchased by the Beaver Valley Fruit Growers Co-operative. The Georgian Bay Fruit Growers Association – the largest local producer of apples and related products – was formed in 1905 and incorporated in 1911. In the 1920s, there existed an apple house where the train tracks intersected Bruce Street that was run by Mr. Snetsinger, who would purchase different varieties of apples grown across Ontario (McLeod 1967). Likewise, there existed an evaporator at the top of the hill, where cull apples were peeled and dried for sale to markets all over the province that was run by Mr. Reid and Mr. Best.



Needless to say, the apple growing business was a visible constituent of the community, as hundreds of pickers going to work in the orchards in early September and truckloads of fruit would be seen being whisked to markets or cold storage facilities. Originally, apples were originally packed in wooden barrels and shipped via boat to short shore ports. Later, in the postwar years, they were delivered via wood crates by railroad and one could always smell of fresh apples infiltrating the areas nearest to the train tracks (Moorhouse 2009).



### *Ghosted*

Though there still are hundreds of acres of orchards in present day Thornbury, the downtown area retains no evidence of its apple production capabilities as most of the facilities have since been torn down – including storage sheds, evaporators and apple houses. For instance, the Georgian Bay Fruit Growers Association owned a large concrete cold storage building erected in 1932 which was located along Highway 26. It was destroyed in the late 1980s to make way for the construction of King’s Court – a strip mall with an antique/flea market.

**Fig. 36 (top):** The Georgian Bay Fruit growers (Wickens 1987)

**Fig. 37 (middle):** Goldsmith Orchards (Thornbury Library Archives)

**Fig. 38 (bottom):** Peeler Cidery (Peeler Cider 2009)

In contrast, there has been a singular example in which such a facility has been successfully re-used: In 1939, the Georgian Bay Fruit Growers Association erected a 50,000 square foot brick and cement block apple processing plant to manufacture apple products such as cider vinegar, juice, sauce and cider from lower grade apples. Between the 1940s and 1950s, this massive facility would be bustling with activity between September and October and banners advertising “Apples Wanted” would be displayed at the front of the building. And, beginning mid-September, truckloads of crated apples would leave the plant daily from Thornbury to various points in Northern Ontario. Unfortunately, the building remained abandoned and neglected for decades until it was purchased in 2008 by Peeler Cider, a company who rehabilitated and transformed it into the Thornbury Village Cidery (see Fig. 38). The Peeler business was conceived in 2007 by entrepreneurs in Toronto who saw an opportunity to produce hard cider in an expanding tourist community.

Finally, as new residential developments begin to infringe upon productive agricultural landscapes (see PART2) and apple production will inevitably begin to decrease, the need to establish visible links to the town’s heritage becomes increasingly pressing.

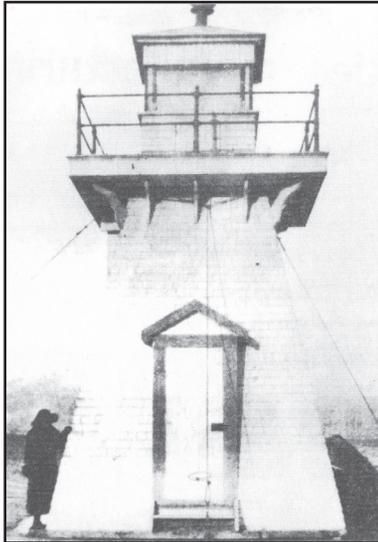
#### **Manufacturing/processing era**

In the same vein, physical evidence of Thornbury’s manufacturing/processing past, which thrived in the downtown area for decades, is all but lost. For instance, many of the plants, buildings and storage sheds were destroyed by fire, removed or demolished once they fell out of use. Examples of large scale operations which have “disappeared into thin air” include the Standard Chemical plant, the Gilchrist furniture factory, the Parkinson oatmeal mill, the Isaac & Isaac flour and feed mill, the lumber yard, etc. Perhaps the only remaining vestige of this era is The Mill Café, which operates out of the old Imperial Hay building on the site where Thornbury was first settled (Wickens 1987).



Fig. 39: Imperial Hay Building (Wickens 1987)





**Fig. 40:** The former lighthouse  
(Wickens 1987)

**Fig. 41:** Jumping off the Pier  
(Pipher 2006)

### Thornbury Harbour & beach

Considered one of the most popular small craft harbours on Georgian Bay, the Thornbury Harbour is perhaps the village's most enticing landmark for visitors; it is considered a "magnet for visiting vessels as well as a storage place for local boat owners" (Dahms 1998, 311). Not only is the Harbour situated in a picturesque location, but it further sports all the amenities necessary to support this activity, with a dedicated washroom and shower building and a fuel dock. Each spring, during boating season, the available berths are filled with pleasure crafts and sailboats littering the waters.

The Harbour was equally important in the village's history; in the early years, sailing vessels traveled between Parry Sound and Thornbury to ship various goods and trade cargoes between ports; for instance, merchandise and fruit were exported from Thornbury in exchange for lumber and shingles. For many years, passenger steamboats were used for travel until the arrival of the railway through Thornbury. Overland travel proved to be a more attractive form of transit; for this reason, this mode of transport faded into the past.

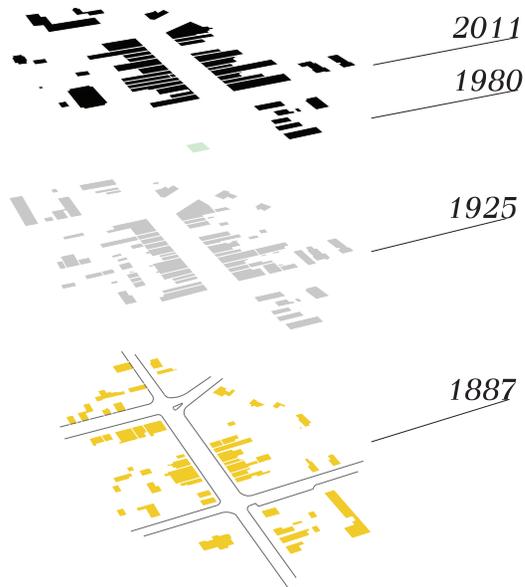
Meanwhile, the beach, located adjacent to the Harbour, is also a magnet for the community. It can be described as a 600 m long stretch of cobblestones and seashells, bordered by a long concrete pier and rocks which delineate the private properties on along the shores of Nottawasaga Bay. The area is lined on the south side with grass and trees. This space is rather popular amongst families, groups of children and seasonal visitors who spend entire days having picnics, reading and building sandcastles at the beach.

Perhaps the most important landmark in the village is the thin concrete pier located across from the Royal Harbour Resort. This structure enables its users to wander at a distance from the shore and enjoy a wide view of the harbour. It is dotted with a ladder, enabling the older children to jump off the end of the pier, climb back up and repeat. Needless to say, many fond memories were forged on this very pier.

### *Ghosted*

For many years, the Thornbury lighthouse, situated at the end of the long pier, marked the entrance to the Harbour and served as a gateway to the town. Additionally, the beacon broadcasted a safe haven for boaters. Alas, the lighthouse burned in the late 1930s and was never rebuilt.





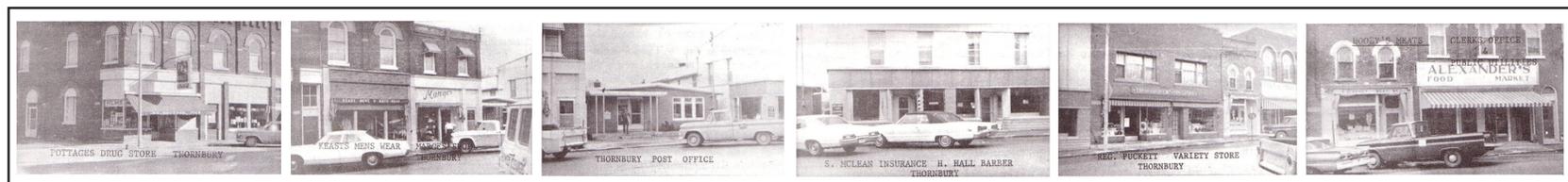
### Main Street

In history, Thornbury's modest Main Street, which lies on Bruce Street between Bridge Street and Louisa Street, has played an important role as the heart of the community since the birth of the settlement. Its diverse and small-scale functions have traditionally enabled frequent face-to-face contact and familiarity amongst residents. More importantly, the visual composition of Main Street has undergone little structural transformation and residents identify with this small strip of commercial activity *because* of its heritage features and constancy. Most of the stores along still carry the brick Victorian style façade that is prevalent amongst many small communities in Southern Ontario. According to the literature, "old buildings play an important part in everyday life simply because they act as repositories of cultural values [;] their importance lies in the strength of historical associations" (Lenters 1986, 54). Furthermore, Main Street is perhaps one of the only remaining sections of Thornbury where the built environment of the past has carried on into the future.

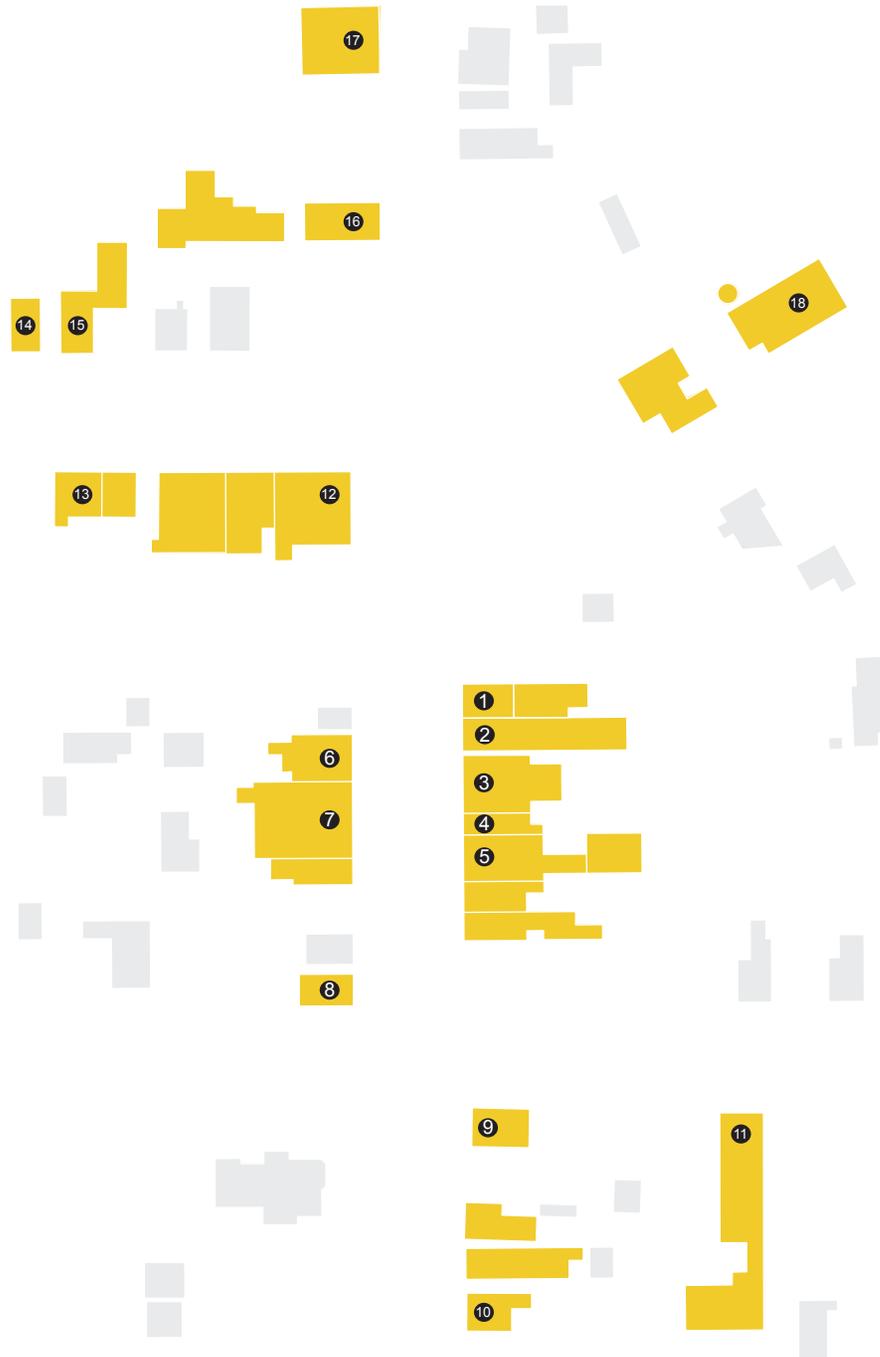
Throughout history, Thornbury's Main Street has grown organically – expanding, trading functions, modernizing, etc. – to coincide with the dynamics of the town. The following diagrams will function to outline the historical development of Main Street, as well as the layering of functions, configurations and occupancy over time. The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate the role of Main Street in acting as a repository for collective memory and local culture, as well as its ability to strength community identity.

Fig. 42 (below): Main Street in 1967 (McLeod 1967)

Fig. 43 (left): The evolution of Main Street







1887

- ① Mr. John Young's hardware and tinsmith
- ② Mr. John White's general store
- ③ Mr. McKenny's drug store & post office, Dr. Hurlburt's office (upstairs)
- ④ private bank (Mr. Smith)
- ⑤ Mr. Myer's general store
  
- ⑥ Richard Stevenson's harness shop
- ⑦ T. & J.N Andrew's general store & hardware store
- ⑧ telephone office
  
- ⑨ Pluss Studios
- ⑩ The Union-Standard (Thornbury's newspaper)
- ⑪ H. Bull & Son pump factory
  
- ⑫ The Revere hotel
- ⑬ The Salvation Army barracks
  
- ⑭ Alex Davidson's wagon shop
- ⑮ Mr. Ingersoll's blacksmith shop
- ⑯ Peter Stoutenberg's furniture store
- ⑰ Richard Carroll's saw mill
  
- ⑱ T. & J.N Andrew's oatmeal and barley mills

Fig. 44: Main street functions in 1887-1890





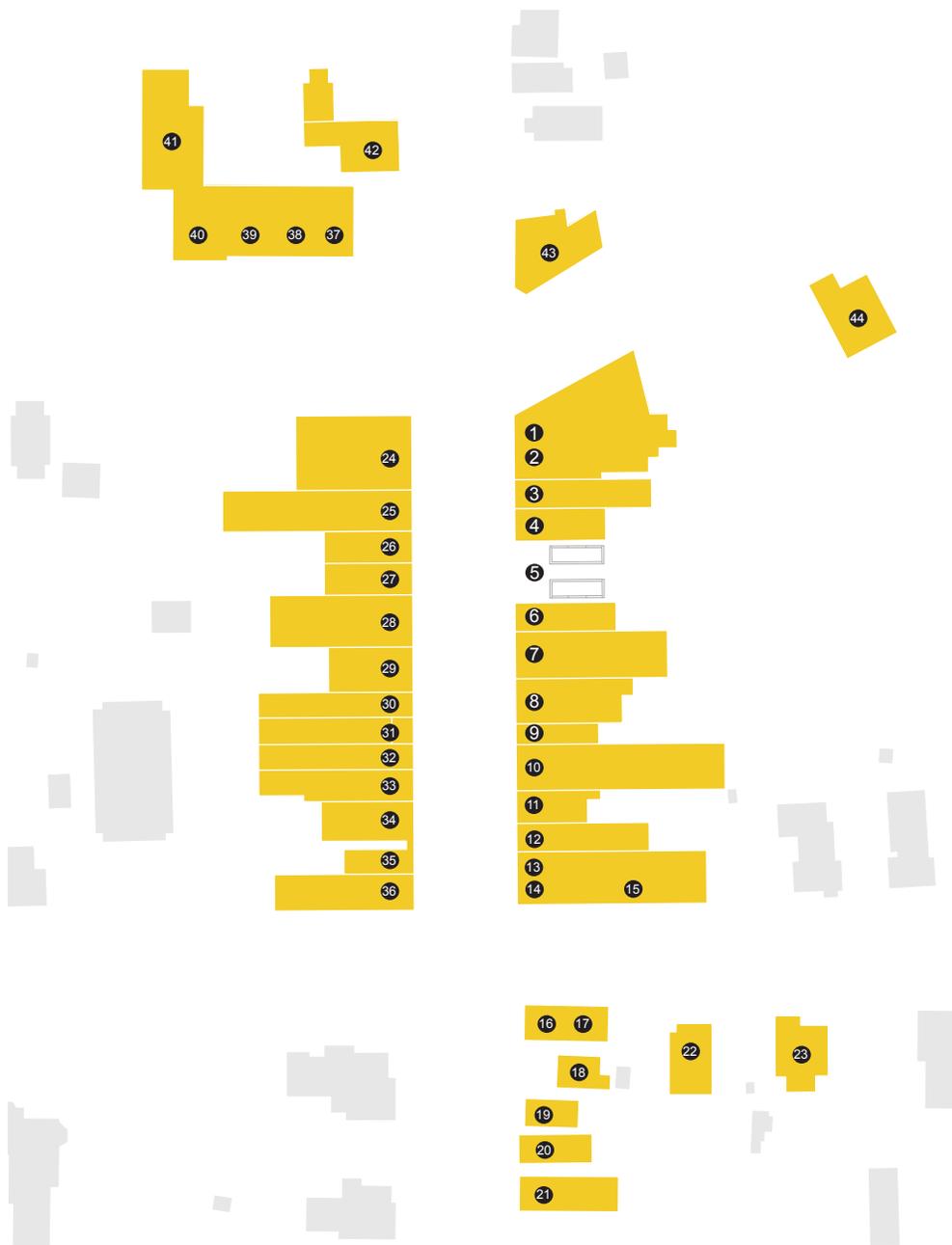
## 1912

- 1 Boyd Drugs
- 2 Keast C., tailor
- 3 Mr. McKenny's drug store & post office, Dr. Hurlburt's office (upstairs)
- 4 McLean Insurance
- 5 Park's Cartage
- 6 Picture Show
- 7 W. Hough drugs
- 8 Carr Brothers general store
- 9 Diller's ice cream
- 10 T.G Idle, Mortician
- 11
- 12 Acres farm parts
- 13 Pluss studios
- 14 Bradbury, shoemaker
- 15 Chinese laundry
- 16 Review Herald, newspaper
- 17 Lowes hotel
- 18 Eastland general store
- 19 Oddfellows harness shop
- 20 Liz Brooks, milliner
- 21 T. Lamber Thompson harness shop
- 22 Farwell jeweler
- 23 Dr. Kent
- 24 E. Free, tinsmith, barber (upstairs)
- 25 J.W Hartman, hardware store (storage)
- 26 Heatherington, plumber
- 27 Bell telephone
- 28 C. Loughneed and A. Cunningham, baker & grocer
- 29 Dr. Cummings, dentist & Dr. McCallum, M.D
- 30 Levens Insurance
- 31 Memorial Smith
- 32
- 33 Brooks Livery
- 34 Bank of Toronto
- 35 Parkinson oatmeal mill
- 36 Post office
- 40 Pedwell lumber

## 1925

- 4 Garage
- 5 Moving Pictures
- 6 Farwell jeweler
- 10 Furniture store
- 11
- 17 Revere hotel
- 21 J.W Hartman, hardware store
- 22 Telegram office
- 23 dentist
- 28 Eastland general store (bakery)
- 31 Chinese Laundry
- 32 Printing office
- 33 Garage (repair shop)
- 36 Fire station
- 37 Flour feed storage
- 38 Curling rink
- 39 A. Davis seed cleaning
- 40 J. Parks lumber yard

Fig. 45: Main street functions in 1912-1925



## 1967

- 1 Pottages drug store
- 3 Keast Menswear
- 4 Marges shoe store
- 5 Post office
- 6 S. McLean Insurance
- 7 H. Hall barber
- 8 Reg. Puckett variety store
- 9 Hooey's meats
- 10 Alexander's food market (Red and White)

- 14 D. J. Davidson (furniture & draperies)
- 15 Funeral parlour

- 24 Thornbury Village Inn & Wong's restaurant
- 25 Brownie's smoke shop (pool Hall)
- 27 The Pagoda restaurant
- 29 Isles Jewelry store

- 36 The Village Fountain (restaurant)

- 42 Thornbury coinwash & bowling alley
- 43 Toronto-Dominion bank
- 44 Imperial Hay Limited

## 1980s

- 4 Geri's hairstyling
- 7 Peter G. Lush, realtor
- 8 Steadman's

- 16 Berna's sportswear
- 18 The Store & kitchen boutique

- 25 Violet bakery
- 26 Cornfield real estate
- 27 Pro Hardware

- 34 J.W Sporting goods

2005

- 1 Wong's restaurant
- 2 Benjamin Moore
- 3 Bluewater Gallery
- 4 Flowers on Main
- 5
- 6 Jessica's book nook
- 7 The Diamond Studio
- 8 Sisi on Main
- 9 The Whole Grain Health Emporium
- 10 Marion's hair studio
- 11 Ashanti coffee estate & roastery
- 12 Kopperud Hamilton, LLP  
barristers & solicitors
- 13 Cherche (home decor)
- 14 Drewhaven town & country  
(decor & antiques)
- 15 Phoenix
- 16 Terasse - furniture & decor
- 17 Black dog gallery
- 18 **VACANT**
- 19 Heavenly sweets bakery
- 20 Decor & Co.
- 21 The Courier-Herald, newspaper
- 22 Masters Design art gallery
- 23 Pamper & Soothe (perfumes)
- 24 TD Canada Trust
- 25 Terraware (Clothing), Galen Ireland  
school of dance (upstairs)
- 26 Thornbury bakery cafe
- 27 Studio 16 (gifts)
- 28 Whitton, chartered accountant
- 29 Royal Lepage Locations North (realty)
- 30 Bayswater market (gifts)
- 31 DeCorso's clothing
- 32 Choices convenience store
- 33 Osborne's TV, Masonic Lodge (upstairs)
- 34 Dental Office
- 35 Furbelows (clothing)
- 36 Interior motives (furniture)
- 37 New Orleans Pizza
- 38 Thornbury Physiotherapy &  
rehab centre
- 39 Clearchoice Pools & Spas
- 40 Shelagh Fox Gallery
- 41 Canada Post Office
- 42 Maytag laundromat
- 43 Century 21 (realty)
- 44 The Mill Cafe

2011

- 3 The Cheese Gallery
- 15 Wonderactive art shop
- 18 The French Laundry (clothing)
- 19 **VACANT**
- 20 Cutting Edge meats
- 21 **VACANT**
- 31 GAIA clothing
- 32 Hasty Market
- 33 DeCorso's clothing,  
Masonic Lodge (upstairs)
- 36 Evolution for men (clothing)

Fig. 46: Main street functions in 1967–2011



**Fig. 47:** Local institutions in Thornbury disappeared/on the verge of disappearance (© Rebecca Lu 2011)  
 From left to right: Heavenly sweets bakery, Wong's Chinese restaurant, Pining 4 U Antiques and crafts, Largo's restaurant and ice cream shack, Piper's tavern.

### *Ghosted*

As revealed by the diagrams, it is the functional composition of Main Street that gives it meaning and strengthens its uniqueness. In fact, the layering and diversity of activities attest to a distinct community culture. The beauty of Thornbury's Main Street lies in its small, locally-owned businesses whose shopkeepers are the true attractions. Some of the most significant businesses over time have included The Village Fountain, whose owners Bill and Helen McColeman made the best grape crush float and fries, and Wong's a Chinese restaurant owned by Mr. Peter Wong (who was a devoted fan of the Hamilton Tiger Cats fan) who served the town's favourite chips and gravy.

Most residents will confirm that the primary elements that have been 'lost' over time are those interpersonal relationships made possible with small-scale/small-town functions. Today, nearly every store has been renovated to maintain a quaint appearance for newcomers; as well, functions along Main Street have dramatically shifted. Very few of the current businesses truly contribute to sustaining social activity in the downtown area, as they consist primarily of high end furniture stores, expensive clothing stores, real estate offices and art galleries littering the streets. Furthermore, an increase in businesses that promote a corporate identity, rather than a locally derived one, can be perceived.

In essence, the permanent fixtures in the town have been slowly disappearing and, with Wong's Chinese restaurant (which currently accommodates the monthly meetings of a variety of community groups including Thornbury's Chamber of Commerce) being put up for sale and Piper's Tavern officially having been closed, the last of Thornbury's staples will have vanished.

*Fragile Landscapes (continued): Restructuring/centralization*

Centralization in rural communities equally contributes to the making of Thornbury's fragile social landscape and therefore predisposes the town for drastic alteration. In recent years, numerous initiatives for the amalgamation and restructuring of municipal organisation have surfaced amongst small communities in Ontario. The following section will discuss the ways in which such occurrence has proved to negatively influence Thornbury's connection to place.

**1 – Municipal restructuring**

As previously mentioned, Thornbury became incorporated in 1887 and remained as such until it amalgamated with the Township of Collingwood in 2001, essentially forgoing its title as a standalone town. Since then, **the town of Thornbury has ceased to exist**. It can no longer be considered a corporate municipality, but rather a 'community' or 'village' within the Town of the Blue Mountains.

Certain scholars maintain that such centralizing tendencies "will weaken and destroy local areas and communities" (Wirth 1957, 16). For instance, where municipal restructuring leads to name change, there is a resulting loss of historic connection as places names are creations of the past, which have resulted from decades of human occupancy. Place names further "create an image, portraying features of [a community's] identity and influencing how the place is understood" (Hough 1990, 19). Furthermore, towns and villages have increasingly become dependent on metropolitan centers for decision-making, information, planning and event coordination in such that the autonomy characterizing [rural communities] has been lost, and towns and villages have been absorbed into the national institutional fabric" (Hodge and Quadeer 1983, 116). Likewise, another outcome of the issue is the dimension of social power and economic standing. In general, small communities lack the social strata (such as the bureaucratic elite or corporate executives) that is capable of influencing provincial or regional decision-making processes. Thus, amalgamation implies surrendering full control of its destiny (Hodge and Quadeer 1983, 116).

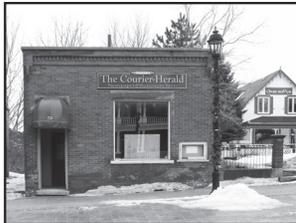
In the same vein, given that the boundaries of Thornbury no longer correlate with the administrative boundaries imposed by the local government, the town must find other means to manifest itself as an identifiable settlement. The literature reveals that "clear boundaries make it possible for people to know where one community ends and another begins. They allow the residential area to be grasped and appreciated as a unit. [...] Boundaries are significant not only for identification but for social action" (Lenters 1986, 21). Moreover, with large-scale cross-border developments and increasing activity along the edge of Thornbury's urban field, boundary conditions continue to be blurred as villages which once were thoroughly dispersed are blending into one another.



## 2 – Amalgamation of educational institutions

For the same reasons mentioned earlier, the provincial government had placed equal pressure on rural school districts to consolidate and so, in 1968, Thornbury district High School was moved to the adjacent town of Meaford. Subsequently, in 1981, Thornbury public school was closed and its students were transferred to the Beaver Valley Community School, which grouped all elementary school students in the surrounding areas into a single establishment.

Local schools are just one of the institutions that reinforce a small town's heart and character. And the loss of such establishments due to regionalization “[erodes] the relative insularity that helped maintain the unique identity of a small town and create loyalty based on exclusiveness.” (Salamon 2003, 6).



## 3- Loss of the local newspaper

The first newspaper appeared in Thornbury during the year 1872 and was called the *Union standard*. Later, in 1900, it was joined with another publishing paper and became *The Standard-Reflector*. In 1885, the *Thornbury Herald* and *Grey Recorder* was formed and a second amalgamation in 1913 produced the *Thornbury Herald Reflector*. In 1917, the *Review-Herald* was born when the Thornbury Herald Reflector joined with the Clarksburg Review. Finally, in 1972 *The Courier-herald* became the community newspaper with its printing office located on Main Street.

Despite such a long history, the Thornbury printing office eventually closed its doors when the *Courier-Herald* became *The Blue Mountains Courier-Herald* and the main office was re-located to Meaford.

Fig. 48 (top): Commemorative handbook for Thornbury district High School (Thornbury Library Archives)

Fig. 49(middle): Thornbury District High school (McLeod 1967)

Fig. 50 (bottom): The closed printing office on Main Street (© Rebecca Lu 2011)





# PART 2

Altered landscapes



## **2.0 Conceptual framework: Upscale tourism, suburbanization & newcomers**

The following chapter will focus on studying the **agents of change** associated with generating altered social landscapes – namely, those processes which triggered sudden growth and aggressive physical development. Research has recognized that the social and economic modifications due to a massive influx of seasonal visitors on a host community can be important; in the following paragraphs, these consequences will be examined. For the purpose of this study, focus will be placed primarily on the ways in which **community identity** is directly affected by factors linked to an altered social landscape and a modified tourist economy.

In sum, the phenomenon of upscale tourism, suburbanization as well as the arrival of ‘newcomers’ in rural communities will be discussed to further expose the idea of **socially and geographically divided landscapes** and the extent of potential ramifications. The commentary will center on the physical separation of rural and vacation/residential zones and the fundamental divisions between these two areas. And the outcome of this research will begin to inform the question of how to accommodate expansion while conserving rural lifestyles, maintaining consistency with regards to traditional character and reinforcing a ‘sense of place’ through the medium of architecture.



## Rural Tourism

The discourse takes on added complexity when addressing small rural communities serving as tourist destinations; in particular, community size is a significant variable for assessing the impacts of tourist development. It has been found that the consequences of increased visitation tend to be more polarized in smaller communities where tourism is highly visible; conversely, they are less extreme in urban areas due to low guest to host ratios, more diversified economies, and advanced infrastructure (Mason and Cheyne 2000).

As such, the paradox of tourism (and growth related to this) represents both prospect and problem. While incoming populations and developments imply a potentially improved economy and perhaps a superior profile, adverse effects may occur. Thus, as the economic benefits may be crucial to the viability and sustainability of a small community, the effects of tourism must undoubtedly be mitigated.

First and foremost, a brief introduction on traditional rural tourism will be provided as a framework for reference. The advent of rural tourism came into force in the post-war era, with the widespread ownership of the private automobile, combined with rising incomes and additional leisure time. All of these factors endowed the typical North American middle-class family with the means to purchase second homes in the area to the north and northeast of Toronto (Punter 1974, 18). The literature has revealed that rural centres in scenic environments within close proximity to urban areas have successfully attracted tourists, seasonal residents, day trippers and retirees from larger metropolitan areas (Alger 1993). Visitation was concentrated during the summer and winter months and, thus, the term “seasonal economy” has become increasingly important for many small Ontarian communities in the edge of the urban field.

Simply put, rural tourism is often defined as ‘a country experience’ that is driven by the romanticized notions of “relaxing, passiv[ity], nostalgia, [the] traditional, low technology [and the] non-competitive” (Page and Getz 1997, 147). The particular traits of a locality which appeal to rural tourists include attributes such as “country atmosphere”, “scenery” and “peace and quiet”, natural features, recreation, village centres and ambience. Furthermore, this culture of travel occurrences in predominantly in the form of ‘seasonal residency’, as visitors successively becomes ‘weekenders’ or second-home owners. Though, according to Dr. Sue Beeton, professor in Tourism, “second-home owners are primarily absentee owners, who impact rural communities in various ways, in a positive manner as well as potentially adverse” (Beeton 2006, 150)...

Moreover, research has found that exurbanites are characteristically drawn to scenic locations by “anti-urban sentiments” and a nostalgic desire to return to the countryside (Davies and Yeates 1991). In fact, the literature postulates that “rural sentiment” is deeply rooted in the idea that small town values are morally superior to those of urban society” (Bunce 1981, 119). As such, traditionally, rural tourists deeply treasured the natural amenities that the host village had to offer and valued its unique sense of community, which was evident in their lifestyles and activities of choice. Dr. Stanley Plog, travel researcher, suggests that “tourists with different personality traits seek different travel experiences, selecting different forms of travel and types of destination” (Beeton 2006, 38). Thus, as the culture of tourism changes, so will the expectations of its patrons...

## Upscale Tourism & Suburbanization

In select locations, where rural tourism is gaining momentum and evolving into a form mass tourism, the qualities of traditional seasonal visitation have given way to a new culture of travel, along with a breed of newcomers with different expectations and lifestyles. And, with an increased demand for second-home settlements, growth has taken the form of condominium projects, resort developments and subdivisions. The text will further expand on how this occurrence can essentially be characterized as '**upscale suburbanization**' and how the formation of neighbourhood enclaves and segregated social networks is largely derived from this process. This research will provide insight on how the dynamics of such change affects traditional patterns of movement and consumption, bifurcates social structure, alters traditionally established spaces and reforms cultural identity. Ultimately, the aim is to gain a thorough understanding of the **transformed community**.

First of all, several factors have contributed to the recent rise in attraction towards small tourist communities. Since the 1970s, a steady influx of new residents began to settle on a seasonal basis in rural communities in Ontario, though, such process remains largely incremental. In contrast, rapid, unrelenting change usually occurs in a context where a sudden population growth in an urban centre transforms adjacent rural communities into vacation destinations of choice. As stated by Greg Halseth, author of *Cottage Country in Transition*, "rural residential areas situated near the outer bounds of an urban field [represent] an area undergoing increasing change prompted by a growing demand for cottaging properties by non-local purchasers" (Halseth 1998, 4). Such growth is further amplified by local marketing strategies and developers rebranding rural towns to appeal to newcomers by selling a luxurious lifestyle and an upscale tourist experience. The outcome of such occurrence has newcomers transplanting accustomed suburban lifestyles to the rural landscape, exhibited by conditions of urban sprawl where, essentially, "newcomers [are] refashioning [rural] communities into suburban enclaves for nearby small cities" (Salamon 2003, 6).

Such settlements have effectively replaced traditional cottage landscapes, or "cottage culture" whose very purpose was to rekindle with nature, re-establish a focus on family and pursue a simpler life by escaping the distractions of everyday urban lifestyle (Cross 1993). In fact, the "paradox emerges when cottagers, in rushing to the limited range and number of amenity locations in the countryside, simply recreate many of the same pressures and landscapes they sought to escape" (Halseth 1998, 16). Simply put, "such seasonal movements of urban residents to densely developed cottage and resort areas [occurs] on a scale that resembles [...] an annual process of a wilderness being transformed into a peculiar clone of suburbia by cottage development" (Halseth 1998, 16).

Moreover, the suburbanization process effectively generates localized growth, uneven development and upscale conditions in designated 'pockets'. For one, new developments are usually built outside the original town grid, on the fringe, with no provision for being socially or economically connected to the town centre, which causes a decline in core activities and vitality. This composition contributes to establishing a large disconnection between two entities and propels movements of decentralization. In effect, "there is an inherent insensitivity to a sense of community or social fabric" (Corbett 1981, 20).

The physical unfolding of rural subdivisions has further resulted in a drastically transformed social fabric. The new communities are conceived with little regard to the compact form of traditional small towns, conventional patterns of settlement, density, layout, dimensions, architectural styles, natural features and existing rural lifestyles. Furthermore, the emphasis that suburbs place on the provision of private space can create isolation, disconnectedness and defensive attitudes, thereby detracting from community identity (McLennan 2002, 42). For instance, new resort and cottage developments use mechanisms such as culs-de-sac, artificial lakes, non-linear streets and landscaping, exclusive residential use, homogeneity of house size, cost and consequently the age and income level of residents to achieve such means. Ultimately, these settlements are conceived to provide every family with a freestanding home and ample yard space, while allowing every resident to drive speedily through the neighbourhood to his or her front door (Corbett 1981). Maximum privacy is also of the essence, which is achieved by orienting the home to the back and by placing double or triple garages in the front. Essentially, these mechanisms cater to the desires for newcomers for “privately viewing nature as a landscape devoid of people other than one’s family” (Halle 1993). Again, there is an inherent dissimilarity in the configurations of new developments versus the narrow streets, longstanding neighbourhoods and tight-knit community structure of traditional rural communities and “the perpetuation of monotonous landscapes and the lack of concern about imaging and good urban design [will inevitably leave] a vacuum in the urban entity (Bunting and Filion 2006, 7).

In sum, the literature has shown that the post-WII subdivision has failed to enhance **community identity**—and, by extension, this conclusion can be applied to the present discussion on upscale suburbanization in small tourist communities. Sarah Harper, author of *A humanistic approach* to the study of rural populations, asserts that since the strength of relationship with place “depends on the frequency and intensity of contact with place, friends and family” (Harper 1987). Therefore, such relationships cannot exist in a suburban environment due to the physical design of the streets and homes, as well as the lack of amenities and spaces where such interactions are possible; ultimately, this leads to a failure to build “places” people can relate to. And, though “private developers are required to dedicate a small parcel of land for park purposes, which has a positive value, but is definitely different from the intimate town centre where people work, shop, find entertainment or reside” (Corbett 1981).

Lastly, with this phenomenon implies the potential for public land to be alienated “for use by the limited segment of the population able to afford it”; for instance, the denial of public access to lakes that are ringed by private cottages is a striking possibility (Halseth 1998, 20).

### **Newcomers and communities of limited liability**

As mentioned, a change in the culture of tourism has introduced a robust influx of additional newcomers which differ significantly from traditional rural visitors. The following section will expand upon the ways in which new residential groups present fundamental challenges to social cohesion in rural communities and how, with the advent of newcomers, come “pressures that in turn generate new social geographies” (Halseth 1998, 41). As mentioned in PART1, relationships in small towns can be understood as local networks and face-blocks groups, in which residents experience a sense of familiarity with one another due to regular face-to-face contact and usage of common usage areas and facilities. In the transformed community, rather, a new set of relations are introduced, which is that of communities of limited liability – groups in which the residents “live [within the community] but are not deeply committed to it” (Pinkerton and Hassinger 1986, 23).

As a measure of comparison, traditional rural visitors respected the community in which they took up seasonal residency and valued the town’s uniqueness, which was evident in their activities and choice of settlement (Salamon 2003, 8). Cottagers were able to identify themselves with local residents as they share basic common interests and facilities, namely the use of the waters and surrounding lands for recreation. As such, it became possible to develop a “sense of belonging to a cohesive community [and remedy] the loss of community spirit in the city [that] is universally deplored” (Halseth 1998, 19)

Conversely, in the present context, travellers are drawn in by developers marketing new rural subdivisions by advertising a quality of life, investment and an upscale tourist experience rather than rural community life (Salamon 2003, 16). This supports the idea that recent population growth is influenced primarily by lifestyle choices and amenity. As a result, the tendency is for these newcomers to view small towns as interchangeable for, without any form of sentimental attachment, their vacation homes can be treated as mere commodities.

Furthermore, these suburban, homogeneous rural neighbourhoods are physically designed to be “oriented outward toward the metropolitan area anchoring the region, rather than inward”- essentially, to benefit from the amenities of those adjacent urban centres which propagated its growth and with little interest in connecting with the community itself (Salamon 2003, 10). Such tendencies are known as **decentralization**, which can be described as the dissipation of social networks that traditionally linked residents or a phenomenon where fewer and fewer lives are contained within a single, autonomous, town. Under the onslaught of suburbanization, rural communities, “once proud, self-contained, insular worlds, are being transformed into places where people only live; they [play], shop and obtain services elsewhere.” (Salamon 2003, 5). Furthermore, because new subdivisions are spatially segregated and located at such a distance from the village core, newcomers can effectively avoid informal interactions and face-to-face contact with locals. As iterated by Greg Halseth, “distances involved in the cottage commute, and the crowding or clustering of recreational properties around amenity settings, act to isolate the resort area from the rural context in which it is set” (Halseth 1998, 16). One can speculate that this lack of proximity amongst citizens of a place may progressively lead to a decline in the traditional reliance on neighbourhood ties and an overall sense of detachment.

Furthermore, intrinsic in the formation of these newly developed residential areas is a new social order, imposed by the building in of a residential segregation by class and consumption in towns where previously the classes were mixed together and such differences were not emphasized (Gieryn 2000). For one, “the costs of purchase, mortgage, insurance, maintenance, travel to and from the [seasonal residence], and property taxes” place newcomers into an economic class that is easily characterized as ‘affluent’ (Halseth 1998, 13). Moreover, incoming populations are lured in by ideals of leisure and luxury and inherently seek a confirmation of social status through participation in cottage ownership – evidently, this can only exist if such lands are segmented from the surrounding rural context. All of these issues mark these new resorts and vacation residences as self-contained milieus where the rural landscape is only something to be passed through in travelling to the cottage (Halseth 1998, 20).

Overall, the concept of the ‘community of limited liability’ emphasizes the idea of impermanent, landless tenants as newcomers are essentially sojourners. Accordingly, the intrinsic fluidity of the community – with people constantly buying and selling houses – equally reflects the idea of temporality. Moreover, as newcomers have little to no understanding of the local history and culture, they tend to romanticize town harmony and do not truly grasp the social costs of strong interconnectedness. They are oblivious to the need to make the necessary social investments in the community or actively engage in its lifestyle. In contrast, in small towns, “each person had a total commitment to local social and economic welfare – “living in a [particular rural community] for a lifetime put the individual into a situation of total liability” (Lenters 1986, 14). As such, if newcomers fail to make the necessary social investments and gain acceptance from the locals, the whole “organic social system can wither and degenerate over time” (Salamon 2003, 24).

In any case, “the continuation of this trend into the fringe endangers many of the elements which make up the fabric of the small town and village community – most notably its [...] core areas” (Lenters 1986, 20). And the decreasing dependence upon the local town centre represents not only a physical change, but a dissipation of community sentiment itself. Changing social structures resulting from conversion can also generate conflicts over attitudes towards local norms, institutions and political activity in these rural communities due to the differences in collective interests between the rural and vacation areas.

In sum, the literature has revealed that rural social structure remains fragile in the face of transformation processes and that the separation in social and geographic space between rural and upscale residential landscapes could potentially result in the destruction of established lifestyles, communal values and social relations.



### **Loss of heritage resources/staples/unique environments**

Rapid, uncontrolled growth can also affect the physical attributes of a place, leading to the loss of collective memory and the decline of community identity. For instance, such consequences can occur if there is an inherent failure to protect elements of local culture or unique buildings from the threat of change. For instance, given that “capitalism and economics [are] the primary sources of inspiration for urban form, “older, original, buildings cannot be easily adapted to meet the standardized layout and image of most retail chains; [as a result,] this increases the pressure to abandon existing buildings and move away from the downtown core to areas more appropriate for the making of strip malls” (Hough 1990).

Essentially, the potential loss, obliteration or deterioration of heritage resources greatly affects community identity. For instance, “building heritage is comprised of human-made, fixed elements, possessing historical values and meaning derived from the settings in which they occur and societal values that ascribe worth to them” (Nuryanti 1996, 257). They are authentic structures which keep a record of historical experience and act as frames of reference for residents. This is particularly crucial as time passes for “the loss of information increases as the rate of development rises” (Lynch 1981, 53). In essence, well planned cities should provide visual clues to where the town where it came; the same principle applies to natural features which are also at risk of disappearance with the advent of larger and larger resort compound and rural subdivisions. Interestingly, “rural subdivisions [often] carry names like Rolling Prairie or Woodland Acres, to honour the landscape features that the developer has just obliterated” (Lippard 1997, 76).



### NEWCOMERS

Type of residency: part-time/seasonal  
Approx. 46% of the total population  
Arrival: Between 2004 - 2011  
Income level: Upper middle class



### RURAL CITIZENS

Type of residency: permanent  
Approx. 51% of the total population  
Arrival: Since the inception of the settlement  
Income level: Working class



Fig. 51: Diagram demonstrating the statistics for newcomers & rural residents

## **2.1 Thornbury's population & traditional culture of tourism**

In order to understand the changes underway, it is critical to first study the traditional culture of tourism that existed in Thornbury, prior to the rapid growth of resort developments, as well as its population structure.

Historically, the economy of the South Georgian Bay region was based on the fishing, lumber and apple-growing industry although, in the late 1970s and more predominantly throughout the 1990s, the focus for development has progressively shifted towards the tourist trade. This area holds the largest concentration of downhill ski facilities in the province and offers a variety of four-season amenities, which has enabled it to become "a year-round vacation destination acting as a 'tourism periphery' for the [seven] million residents living within 250 km in prosperous Southern Ontario" (Dahms 1998, 303). According to Fred Dahms, geographer, this era is characterized by affluent individuals who are increasingly willing to make sacrifices in time or cost in order to settle (on a part-time basis) in locations perceived as more 'attractive' than those in which they reside permanently. (Dahms 1998). All of these factors have resulted in significant change and rapidly growing rural townships (particularly in the case of the town of Collingwood). Throughout the late 1980s, this gradual transformation has become evidenced by the extensive cottage developments, retirement communities, time-share condominiums and campgrounds along the shores of the Nottawasaga Bay.

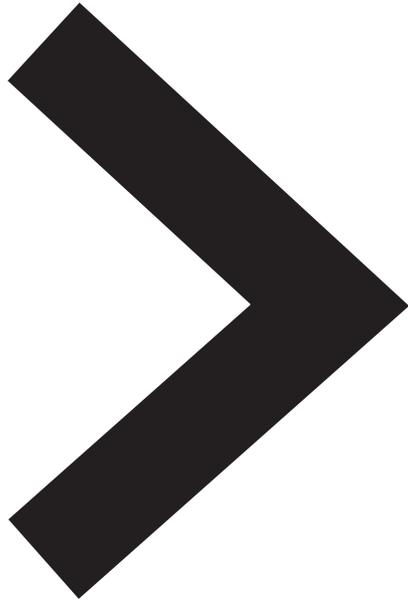
During the same period, Thornbury has also begun to establish itself as a natural focal point for tourist development. Over the years, the village has slowly transformed into a quiet community of retirees, locals, exurbanites and seasonal residents that were attracted by its scenic environment and rural ambience. In 1891, Thornbury had a population of 902 and, by 1991, the number had risen by 15% due to the increase in part-time residency (Dahms 1998). Most visitors came from areas of South-West and South-Central Toronto as well as cities within 3 hour driving time of Thornbury such as Sarnia to the west, London to the southwest, Oshawa to the southeast and Barrie to the east (Dahms 1998). In 1991, there were three bed-and-breakfast inns - the Mill Pond, the Idle Inn and the Golden Apple - with a total of 13 rooms as well as The Harbour Club, a 48-unit resort complex.

Today, Thornbury's current population has risen to approximately 2,400 residents, with roughly half of them being seasonal residents.

**Population Statistics for the Town of the Blue Mountains (2006):**

(Note: Since the amalgamation of Thornbury with the Town of Blue Mountains in 2001, data pertaining solely to the community in question is longer available, see following section for more information)

Land area (sq. km):	286.78
Population in 2001:	6,116
Population in 2006:	6,825
Population change (2001-2006):	11.6%
Median age of the population:	50.6
% of the population aged 15 and over:	86.9%
Median income:	\$74,190
Occupations:	
- Management	13.8%
- Business, finance	13.8%
- Sales and services	22.3%
- Trades	15.8%
Canadian-born population:	86.2%
Visible Minority population:	0.7%
Total private dwellings:	5,619
Private dwellings occupied by full-time residents:	2,939
Percentage of private dwellings that are single-detached houses:	84.2%
Number of dwellings constructed before 1986:	1,940
Average value of owned dwelling:	\$406,849
Mobility status:	
- Lived at the same address 5 years ago	66.0%



**Fig. 52:** Demographics for the Town of Blue Mountains & Thornbury  
(Source: Statistics Canada 2006)

**Population Statistics for Thornbury (2001):**

**Estimates for 2011:**

Land area (sq. km):	4.16
Population in 1991;	1,763
Population in 2001:	1,771
Population in 2006 (approximate):	2,217
Population change (1991-2001):	0.5%
Population change (2001-2006):	8.0%
Median age:	49.7
% of the population ages 15 and over:	86.2%
Canadian-born population:	89.4%
Visible minority population:	0.11%
Median income:	\$44,253
Occupations:	
- Management	12.8%
- Business & finance	8.5%
- Sales and service	32.1%
- Trades	19.3%
Total private dwellings:	765
Number of dwellings constructed before 1991:	690
Average value of dwelling:	\$181,103
Mobility status:	
- Lived at the same address 5 years ago	Unknown

Land area (sq. km):	???
Population in 2011 (approximate):	2,438
Population change (2006-2011):	10.0%
Median income:	\$75,000
Average value of dwelling:	\$400,000
Mobility status	approx. 55%





## 2.2 On the precipice of change. Thornbury: A shift in the culture of tourism

The recent shift in Thornbury's traditional culture of tourism is unmistakable. It is evidenced, in part, by the town's pronounced efforts to market itself as a four-season leisure destination, the new functions appearing on Main Street and the BMWs and Range Rovers that litter the area on weekends. Advertising banners and pamphlets were created to embellish the town's attractions and amplify its quaintness; likewise, a whimsical new logo and slogan "four seasons of charming" were introduced. The use of French was also inserted to give Thornbury the sophisticated flair it needs to sustain the interest of well-to-do newcomers and promote its 'chic' boutiques along Main Street (see Fig. 53). Needless to say, the proposed images or description of Thornbury render it virtually indistinguishable from other small towns in Ontario. The projected images of Thornbury tend to be consumer-oriented, rarely relying on a local sense of place and a standard formula for 'quaintness' was adopted to stimulate the interest of an affluent clientele. In sum, it is this very trend toward homogenisation that the thesis proposes to reform.

Furthermore, this shift in the culture of tourism has produced significant impacts on Thornbury's local community and identity. The following chapter will analyze the conditions of change in relation to the notions put forth by the literature. Though, it will be argued that, because the town is **on the precipice** of major modification, many of the ideals and consequences discussed cannot simply be projected onto the town's current situation. Rather, the research will merely provide insight on potential outcomes and further confirm that the present is a critical time for Thornbury.

Fig. 52: Marketing brochure for Thornbury (Thornbury.ca 2011)



Fig. 53: Recent advertisements for Thornbury (© Rebecca Lu 2011)

Fig. 54: Luxury vehicles parked along Main Street on a Saturday (© Rebecca Lu 2011)

To begin, although Thornbury's full-time residents feel impacted by aggressive development, they do not seem to express overt feelings of dissent towards newcomers. Conversely, they acknowledge that the recent surge in visitation, along with the arrival of wealthy visitors, has been beneficial for the local economy. They realize that the survival of the town hinges upon the success of tourism; yet, many will admit they are not fully aware of the potential ramifications of rapid change and its real effects on the community. And citizens are further unsure of where the town is headed in the future. The community has yet to grasp the phenomenon in its entirety – perhaps this is due to the fact that the more radical changes occur in the fringe areas and have not yet been made clearly manifest in the village core. In fact, issues discussed in the literature regarding problems related to tourist development have not been fully fledged – namely the alienation of land for use by the limited segment of the population, pressures for new and improved levels of services such as paved or widened roadways, garbage collection, water supply and the like (Halseth 1998). In contrast, the structural changes that have been put into place occur on a more subtle level, gradually affecting social networks, relationships, identity and community.

It is important to note that the tone adopted by the thesis should not be viewed as a critique on the intrusion of newcomers. Instead, the research has attempted to understand the dynamics between newcomers and initial populations as well as new developments versus traditional settlements. The following chapter will provide insight on the effects of an altering social fabric, namely, how the dynamics of change have begun to reconfigure traditional lifestyles, patterns of movement and consumption, existing social structures, established spaces and cultural identity. Ultimately, the aim is to gain a thorough understanding of the community on the precipice of being transformed in order to formulate appropriate strategies for offsetting the fragile nature of rural identity.



Fig. 56: The newly built Town Hall (© Rebecca Lu 2011)

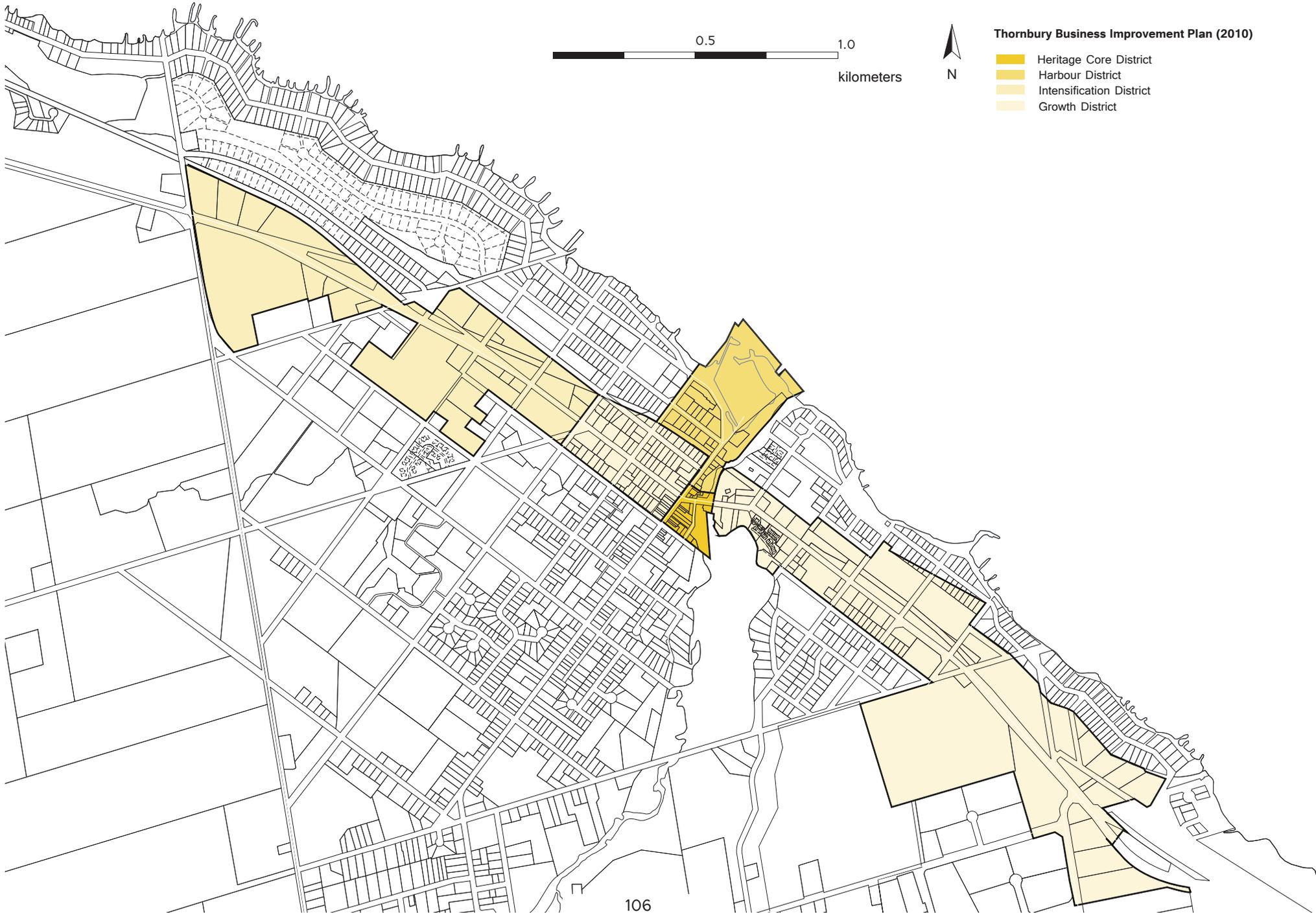


Fig. 57: The site plan of Town Hall SCALE 1:5000

### **Town initiatives/Gentrification of Main Street /New Tourist Infrastructure**

As mentioned earlier, regional centralization and amalgamation have produced a shift in jurisdictional boundaries, thereby signalling a certain loss of control over local affairs for Thornbury. In fact, according to author Greg Halseth, “an administrative formulation of community may be very far removed from the way people structure their social and interactive lives” (Halseth 1998, 44). For this reason, it is critical to discuss recent initiatives put forth by the Town of Blue Mountains that, on the one hand, are bound to dictate the course of Thornbury’s future and, on the other, can be construed as detrimental to community culture and identity.

First of all, perhaps the most visible indication of changes to come is the newly built Blue Mountains Town Hall, located on Mill Street in downtown Thornbury. With an increase in municipal staffing to address the growth and expansion of the town, the need has arisen for more space. The existing Town Hall and office complex housed a total of 54 employees, which greatly exceeded the building’s capacity. In addition, due to space constraints, municipal council could no longer meet at Town Hall and it soon became necessary to expand for projected growth. For all these reasons, a new Town Hall was constructed, which will eventually include a skating rink and ample parking space. The structure was meant to be designed as a source of civic pride and a celebration of the town’s history while also developing an active outdoor space for the community. Unfortunately, the resulting construction is a massive structure that is not only dramatically out of scale, but which also acts as a ‘wall’ to the downtown area. Interestingly, in speaking with residents, there seems to be a unanimous feeling of resentment towards this new Town Hall. Most say it resembles something that “belongs in Barrie” and some have even nicknamed it the ‘Taj Mahal’ of Thornbury.



Another evidence of change is the Business Improvement plan for Thornbury mounted by the Town of Blue Mountains which proposes to intensify commercial development along Highway 26 and significantly enlarge the existing commercial district. These plans include the development of two commercial areas surrounding Bruce Street named the 'Intensification District' and the 'Growth District':

**Intensification District:** This quadrant is located immediately to the east of Main Street and currently features a number of contemporary strip malls. The plan set forth by the Town of Blue Mountains is to intensify development and accommodate redevelopment in this area over time. The municipality imagines intensification on this site to take place in the form of 'Main Street development', which includes a "tight street edge presence "a pedestrian environment with ornate small scale buildings with parking either to the rear or to side of the buildings (Town of the Blue Mountains October 2009).

**Growth District:** The area is located to the west of Main Street and is largely vacant, which provides significant opportunity for new Greenfield development. The Community Improvement Plan proposes to implant mixed-use development along this portion of the Highway 26 corridor which consists of multiple storey buildings with main floor commercial uses accommodating a range of different uses, including office, service and retail commercial uses; live-work units and higher density residential uses (Town of the Blue Mountains October 2009).

Ultimately, the aim is to significantly enlarge Thornbury's commercial potential in order to draw the masses into the downtown core. The beginnings of such plans can be perceived with the construction of a new health care facility along the highway, which has been fashioned in a typical suburban strip mall style. It is evident that one of the impacts of growth (in outlying areas) has been the advent of suburbanization processes within the downtown core due to an increased reliance upon the automobile. As mentioned in the literature, the tendency to want to concentrate development along the highway negates notions of collective congregation and affects the vitality of historic meeting places such as Main Street.

**Fig. 58 (opposite page):** Extent of the Thornbury Business Improvement plan  
Base map: (Town of the Blue Mountains Development Summary 2008)



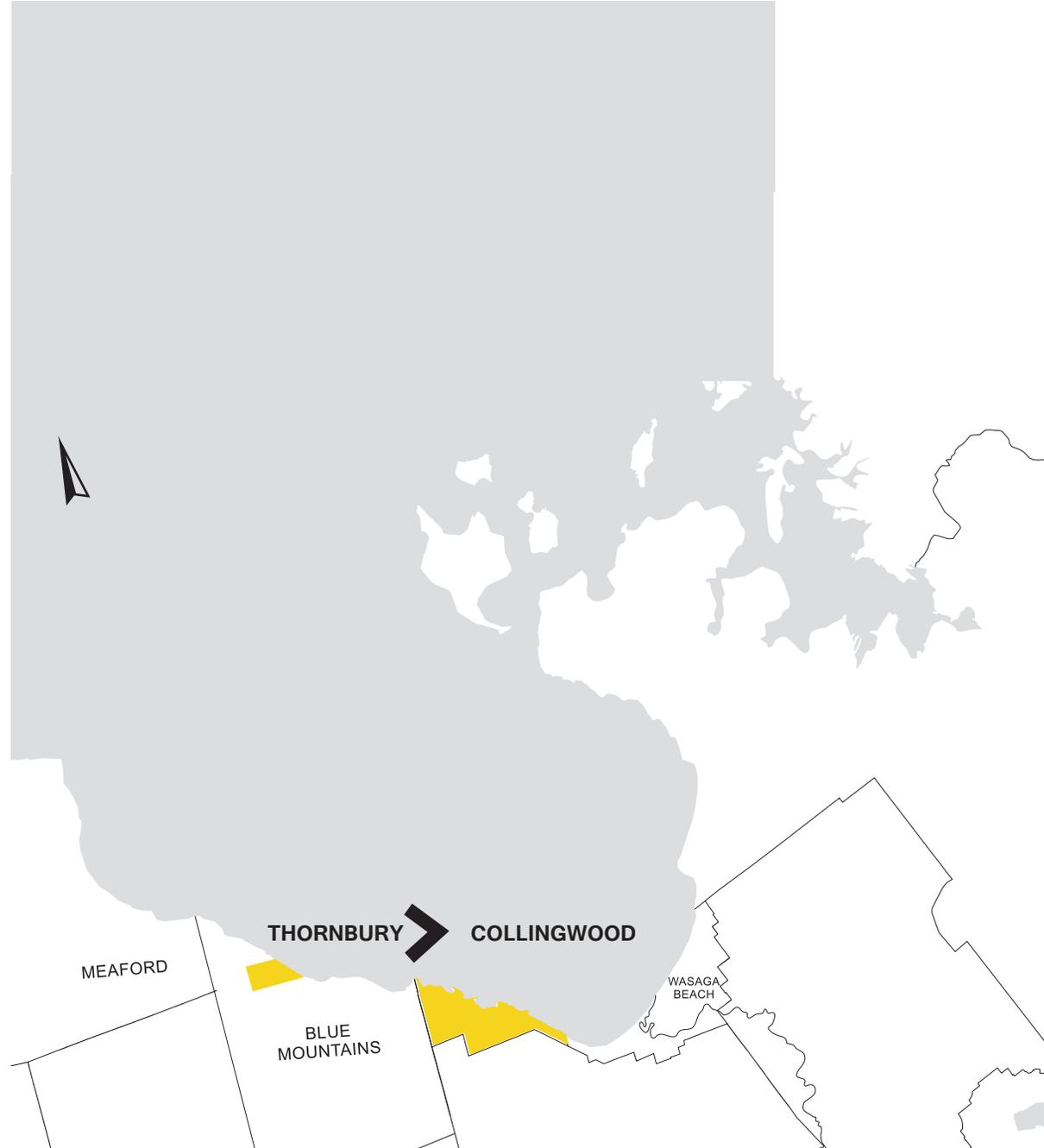
**Fig. 59:** Main Street's upscale functions (© Rebecca Lu 2011)  
From left to right: Bruce wine bar, Cherche & Brevhaven furniture stores, The Cheese Gallery, TERASE decor & furniture and the Black dog gallery

As mentioned, not only has a shift in the culture of tourism resulted in changes to Thornbury's urban morphology, it has further altered the functions of Main Street. The local economy had diversified considerably, with added new economic functions to serve the increasingly sophisticated population; moreover, "many formerly central place functions being replaced by businesses catering to cottage dwellers and tourists" (Dahms and McComb 1999, 141). In examining the types of businesses along Main Street, the pervasive theme of 'high country living' becomes apparent, particularly in the trendy names of some of the town's art galleries and high end fashion, food and spa enterprises such as "Cherché", "Bruce wine bar", "black dog gallery", "TERASE decor & furniture" and "Brevhaven Town & Country". In essence, the response from local businesses and the town of Blue Mountains has been to devote their efforts to offering leisure services as well as lavish products for the decor and maintenance of luxurious second homes. Ultimately, the aim is to create an "upscale tourist experience" in a quaint countryside setting.

Evidently, the prevalence of businesses designed for occasional visits/superfluous needs fails to be truly functional for long-timers and, in the long run, can greatly affect community bonds. For instance, the strength of community relationships "depends on the frequency and intensity of contact with place, friends and family" (Harper 1987). Over time, with the lack of meeting spaces along Main Street, it will no longer have the properties to sustain the diverse activities that once produced a rich form of civic life and, in turn, created community traditions. Ultimately, this will cause a decline in core activities and vitality. Essentially, Main Street can no longer act as a receptacle for social activity without the longstanding, layered functions that once occupied its storefronts. Such businesses were a product of Thornbury's shared history and culture and their presence contributed to the viability of the downtown district. In fact, most residents will never forget Main Street as a vibrant place to spend time, congregate and socialize. And many will always remember hanging out at Wong's Chinese restaurant, ordering lemon pies at the bakery, eating French fries at The Village Fountain, chatting away at Margie's dress shop, etc. Such businesses remain very ordinary locales, some even consider them non-descript places, but when a community as a whole builds such spaces into their routines and experiences are shared, they become special places in the community. In essence, it is the quality of social relationships which are most indicative of Thornbury's local character.

Furthermore, as "villagers are no longer restricted to, or solely dependent upon their local area for social stimulation", Thornbury's downtown will inevitably struggle to retain its appeal amongst the locals (Lenters 1986, 39). In fact, those who live in Thornbury have begun to visit the less trendy, lower priced outlets of neighbouring communities such as Collingwood. This is due to the fact that, in contrast to Thornbury, Collingwood now has a variety of affordable recreation and entertainment options which have been developed because of tourism such as a Loblaws, an LCBO, etc. Thus, with the removal of businesses that act as longstanding testaments to the community, one can anticipate that the sentiment of knowledge and ownership of place will subside, along with feelings of commitment and attachment. Main Street has become nothing more than a tourist attraction.

The case of Thornbury reflects a widely copied model for revitalization; though historic Victorian facades portray the illusion of a 'charming' small town, "Main Street is essentially, a big downtown shopping mall; instead of being housed within the concrete walls of an expansive complex, stores are located in separate buildings within the district" (Bunting and Filion 2006, 7).



**Fig. 60:** Map of Thornbury and Collingwood  
Base drawing source: (Elections Canada 2011)

### 2.3 Collingwood's expansion & upscale tourism

In attempting to trace the origins of Thornbury's surge as a tourist destination, one can argue that traditional forms of tourism were altered with the substantial expansion and development of the Collingwood tourist area. In this section, Collingwood's boom as a resort town will be discussed, along with its subsequent effects on Thornbury's village core. For the last 40 years, Collingwood has been a popular and major recreation area for the southern part of the province and, early on, investors realized the potential of developing its surrounding areas. Given that Thornbury lies on the western edge of Collingwood, its success as a tourist area was largely derived from that of its neighbour.

The town of Collingwood has a total population of 17,290 and is located approximately 150 kilometres north of Toronto (Statistics Canada 2006). It is a short distance from the popular Wasaga Beach Provincial Park and The Blue Mountain ski resort, which contributed to initially consolidating its status as a recreational hub. In the 1970s, Collingwood remained a "fairly nondescript industrial town [whose] main business was shipbuilding" (Pullen 2005). In the early days, "the community [of seasonal residents] was close-knit. Everyone, it seemed, knew one another" (Pullen 2005). And when the shipyards closed, Collingwood focused on establishing itself as a four-season tourist area providing services for the resort trade by aggressively promoting its proximity to the Blue Mountain ski resort. Soon, the two entities became interchangeable and, with the number of visitors and seasonal residents on the rise, condo building began to intensify. By the late '80s and early '90s, people were already referring to Collingwood as *Condo-wood*.

Furthermore, in 1999, international resort developer Intrawest Corporation purchased a 50% ownership of the Blue Mountain Ski Resort, which accelerated development in the area and solidified Collingwood's status as a boom town. Prior to the Intrawest resort village development, Blue Mountain was attracting 380,000 visitors per year; today, it attracts upwards of 2.5 million visitors per year (Town of Collingwood 2011).

In the subsequent years, the town metamorphosed into a true resort destination, complete with pockets of low-density subdivisions and several high-end enclaves and golf communities. Today, with over 4200 residential development units planned - 70% of which are multi-unit residences - Collingwood truly demonstrates random, unmonitored, growth (Town of Collingwood 2010).





**Fig. 61:** Advertisement for luxury townhomes in Thornbury  
 (© Rebecca Lu 2011)

### Luxury resort/residential development

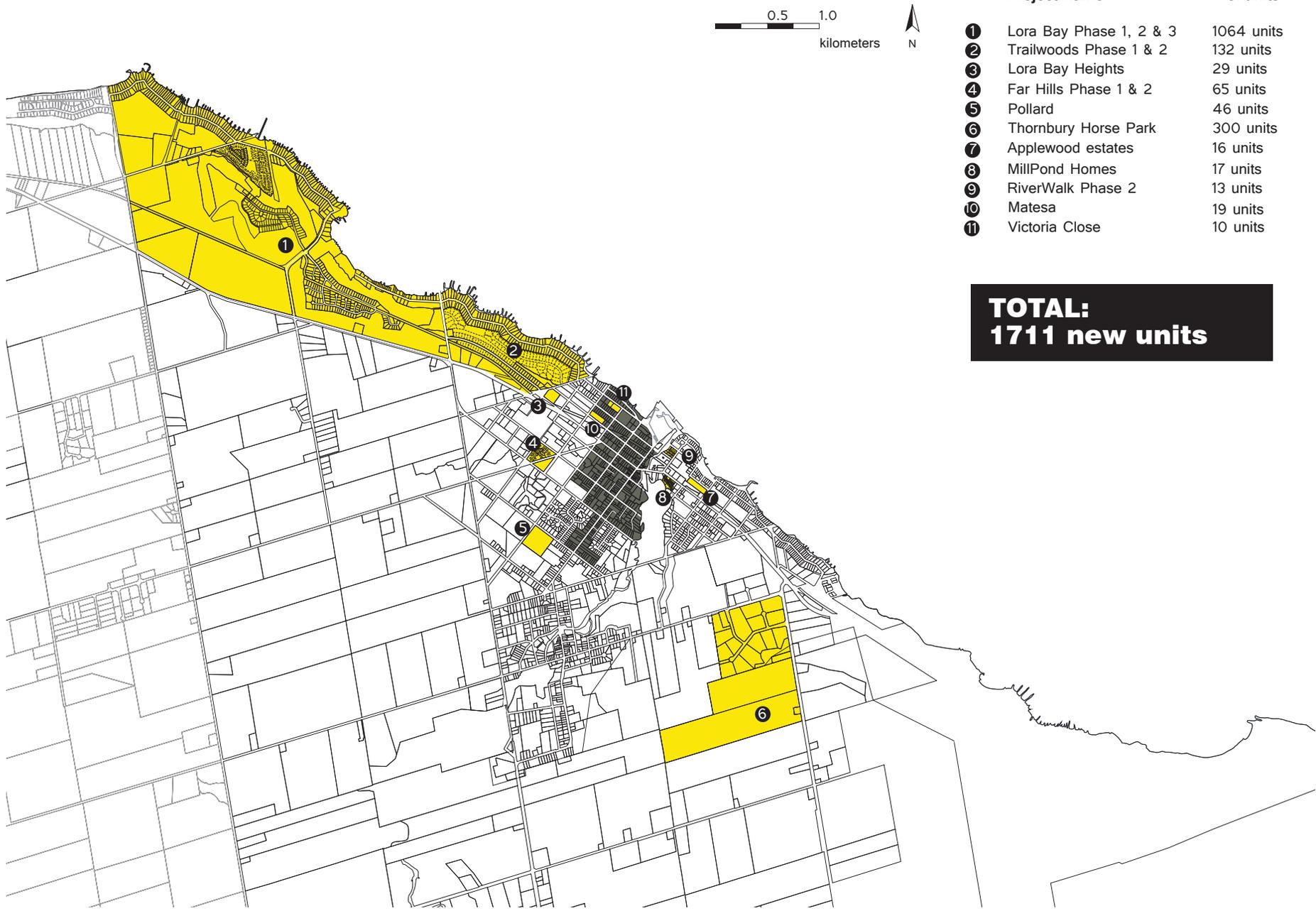
The rate at which residential construction in Collingwood is proliferating has had a remarkable impact on the spatial structure and physical character of Thornbury. Initially, visitors and developers were lured in to the village by the allure of rural ambience as well as the proximity to Collingwood and the Blue Mountain ski resort. This occurrence, compounded with the arrival of a significant resort development within the village limits, effectively propelled the move towards upscale suburbanization.

Prior to the recent and sudden boom in development, Thornbury's inventory of vacation properties grew by increments, with seasonal residents primarily opting to move into existing housing stock or lodge in local bed and breakfast inns. In 1988, perhaps the most significant development for the area's tourist economy was launched: the Royal Harbour resort – a 4-storey building located on the shores of the Georgian Bay comprised initially of 48 condominium units which later became timeshares in 1991. The resort centre offers its tourist clientele all the amenities expected of a large-scale vacation property including an indoor swimming pool and hot tub, gym facilities, tennis courts and a roof terrace.

Subsequently, three small-scale condominium developments were introduced in the town's southwest quadrant: Applejack condominiums, Appleridge condominiums and Rankin's landing. On a side note, several failed attempts were also made to convert the area adjacent to the Georgian Bay Fruit growers cold storage (today: Peeler Cider) into a townhouse development built within a series of "connecting water canals" (Flynn 1999). Finally, in the early 1990s, a Guelph-based developer demolished the Gilchrist School furniture factory, located on the east bank of the Beaver River, and replaced it with a condominium apartment building named RiverWalk Phase I in 2002 (Flynn 1999).

In 2004, the value of construction in the Town of the Blue Mountains reached \$110.2 million and, in 2006, the figures escalated to an astounding \$126.54 million (Gilck 2011). It was during this period that the Thornbury area truly developed into a hotbed of activity, characterized by a speed and scale of development that is far removed from the cottage culture of previous eras.

Yet, the true development catalyst was initiated in 2006, when Intrawest proposed to make Thornbury home to "Lora Bay" – a new 'upscale-country' resort-style community featuring a semi-private golf club, a beach club and a communal lodge and spa. It is composed of prestigious custom homes ranging from 1,200 to 4,000 square feet, many of which are a variation of what is known as "mountain style" – essentially a cross between a chalet and a residential home. In addition, The Raven Golf course, a world-renowned course contained within Lora Bay, has a 7,105-yard championship layout. This facility played host to the TELUS World Skin Games in 2007 and welcomed the PGA's Nationwide tour in 2008-2010, attracting high-profile players worldwide as well as thousands of tourists and celebrities such as Wayne Gretzky, Kid Rock and Adam Sandler.



Project Name	# of units
① Lora Bay Phase 1, 2 & 3	1064 units
② Trailwoods Phase 1 & 2	132 units
③ Lora Bay Heights	29 units
④ Far Hills Phase 1 & 2	65 units
⑤ Pollard	46 units
⑥ Thornbury Horse Park	300 units
⑦ Applewood estates	16 units
⑧ MillPond Homes	17 units
⑨ RiverWalk Phase 2	13 units
⑩ Matesa	19 units
⑪ Victoria Close	10 units

**TOTAL:  
1711 new units**

This expansive project has since enticed a myriad of visitors to settle in the area and therefore sparked investors to conceive of various new housing developments and ritzy subdivisions. According to the number of proposed residential projects and those currently under construction, Thornbury will continue to encourage mass tourism in the coming years, with approximately 1711 additional units to be added to its 'seasonal' housing stock (see Fig. 62). Thus, in recent years, Thornbury's urban morphology has been drastically transformed, with the area occupied by residences being greatly enlarged and dispersed in clusters across the landscape along the outer limits of the town. This marks a clear demarcation between vacation-property zones and the surrounding rural areas. Likewise, suburban style layouts dominate the outlying areas with orderly arrangements of curving roads and endless cul-de-sacs; this stands in stark contrast to the original urban settlement, which has developed on a grid. New resort and residential developments have non-linear streets and landscaping, exclusive residential use, homogeneity of house size, cost and consequently the age and income level of residents – all of which propagate a new social order and conditions of unevenness (McLennan 2002, 42). Hence, it is in this manner that the polarization between population subgroups finds expression in the urban landscape.

Today, some of the newest resort and condominium developments in Thornbury, in various stages of approval, include: The Trail Woods (a large Greenfield community development), MillPond on the Village (luxury townhouses), Riverwalk townhouses Phase II, Far Hills of Thornbury (an upscale subdivision), Pollard, Matesa, etc. Likewise, a 250-acre 'state-of-the-art' equestrian centre – the Cedar Run Horse Park – is currently under construction and is destined to house the Collingwood Horse Show and other international competitions. Its facilities will include residential condominium units for short or long term stay as well as club amenities. Overall, it is evident that the aforementioned resort/residential developments are widely advertised and designed for amenity appeal as care is taken to market the vacation compound's amenities such as activity centres, fitness facilities, outdoor pools, lounge areas, tennis courts and game rooms. This supports the 'luxury lifestyle' and 'rural amenity' explanations of recent population growth (Dahms and McComb 1999, 137).

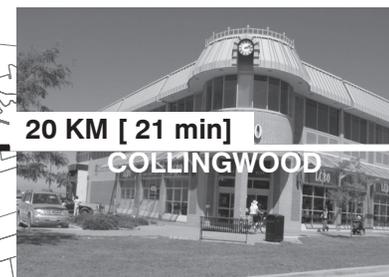
According to real estate agents in the area, incoming populations are primarily composed of affluent families who reside in Toronto who have purchased second homes for use during the weekends and extended periods during the summer and winter months. Newcomers are known to have large amounts of expendable income which enable them to afford a prestigious second home in the countryside. The average housing prices in new developments on the fringe range from: upwards of \$350 000 for condominiums or townhouses and upwards of \$400 000 (up to the millions) for detached homes. In comparison, within the village center, prices range from upwards of \$200 000 for an older detached house.

**Fig. 62 (opposite page):** Distribution of upscale resort/residential properties  
Base map: (Town of the Blue Mountains Development Summary 2008)





**Fig. 63:** Collage showing the evolution of visitor accommodation facilities in Thornbury  
 Clockwise: Penny's motel (Google Maps 2011), Far Hills of Thornbury (© Rebecca Lu 2011), Lora Bay (Reid's Heritage Homes 2011), Millpond on the Village (Design Quorum Inc. 2011), Trail Woods (Trail Woods Community 2011), Riverwalk Phase II (Eleven Bay Street 2007), Millpond on the Village (Design Quorum Inc. 2011), Beaver Motel (Google Maps 2011)



## 2.4 Decentralization tendencies

With Thornbury's economy more closely linked to that of Collingwood than ever before, certain pressures arising from this proximity began to surface, specifically in the form of modifications to the village core and an overall decentralization of social and economic activity. Hence, the following section will focus on the specific interactions between Thornbury and the adjoining urban system in order to unearth the extent to which change has initiated a "flight from the core" of sorts.

Since the town's inception as a tourist area, it has been linked economically to Collingwood; in fact, since the arrival of the automobile in the early 1900s, citizens would commonly travel to the larger centre nearby to obtain goods not readily available in town. And this routinely progressed as "the shopping mall in Collingwood [became] a popular place for local people, [so much so that] one wondered on a Friday night whether there was "anybody left to mind the store in Thornbury" (Alger 1993, 169). In contrast, in the days when Thornbury existed as a rural service centre, occasional day trips were made to Collingwood by rail and the downtown area epitomized its role as the heart of the community. On Saturday nights, the hardware store would remain open until midnight as "everyone would come into town" (Alger 1993, 8). Inevitably, with increasing mobility, the functions of a village become dispersed over broader and broader areas.

Such linkages have been radically amplified in the last decade with Collingwood truly becoming a central magnet for shopping, services and entertainment, particularly in the eyes of Thornbury's incoming population. This pattern is primarily derived from the spatial arrangement of new developments. For one, the resort communities and residential subdivisions in question are built outside the original town grid, on the fringe, with no provision for being socially or economically connected to the town centre. In fact, these neighbourhoods are either specifically designed to be oriented towards the adjacent metropolitan area to benefit from their amenities or to provide sufficient recreational settings onsite, so as to isolate the resort area from the rural context. This composition demonstrates the lack of interest in connecting with the community of Thornbury itself, which contributes to establishing a large disconnection between two entities and propels movements of decentralization.

**Fig. 64:** Diagram graphically illustrating the linkages between Thornbury and Collingwood  
Base drawing: (Town of the Blue Mountains Development Summary map 2008)

**RESORT DEVELOPMENT**

Lora Bay Golf course 7-day pass: starting at \$2,300  
Lora Bay Golf course annual membership: \$12,500  
Condo fees (amenities and common elements): from 140-400\$

**SERVICE STATION: THORNBURY**

Lunch/brunch at a fine dining establishment: 25-40\$  
Picking up essentials at the pharmacy, LCBO or grocery store  
Shopping at high end furniture & clothing boutiques: -

**DESTINATION: COLLINGWOOD/ BLUE MOUNTAIN RESORT**

Blue Mountain ski pass: starting at 279\$  
Ridge Runner Mountain Coaster: starting at 15\$  
Shopping at the village at Blue Mountain: -  
Scandinave Spa at Blue Mountain: starting at 119\$  
Hiking trails at Blue Mountain: FREE  
Scenic Caves adventure: starting at 25\$  
Collingwood's farmer's market: -  
Collingwood's seasonal events (jazzfest, sidewalk sales, etc.): -  
Shopping in downtown Collingwood: -  
Patronizing large chains (Loblaws, KFC, McDonald's, etc.): -  
Dining in downtown Collingwood: -  
Golf Course at Cranberry resort guest fees: starting at 89\$  
Collingwood Museum admission: By donation  
...Wasaga Beach Provincial: 15\$

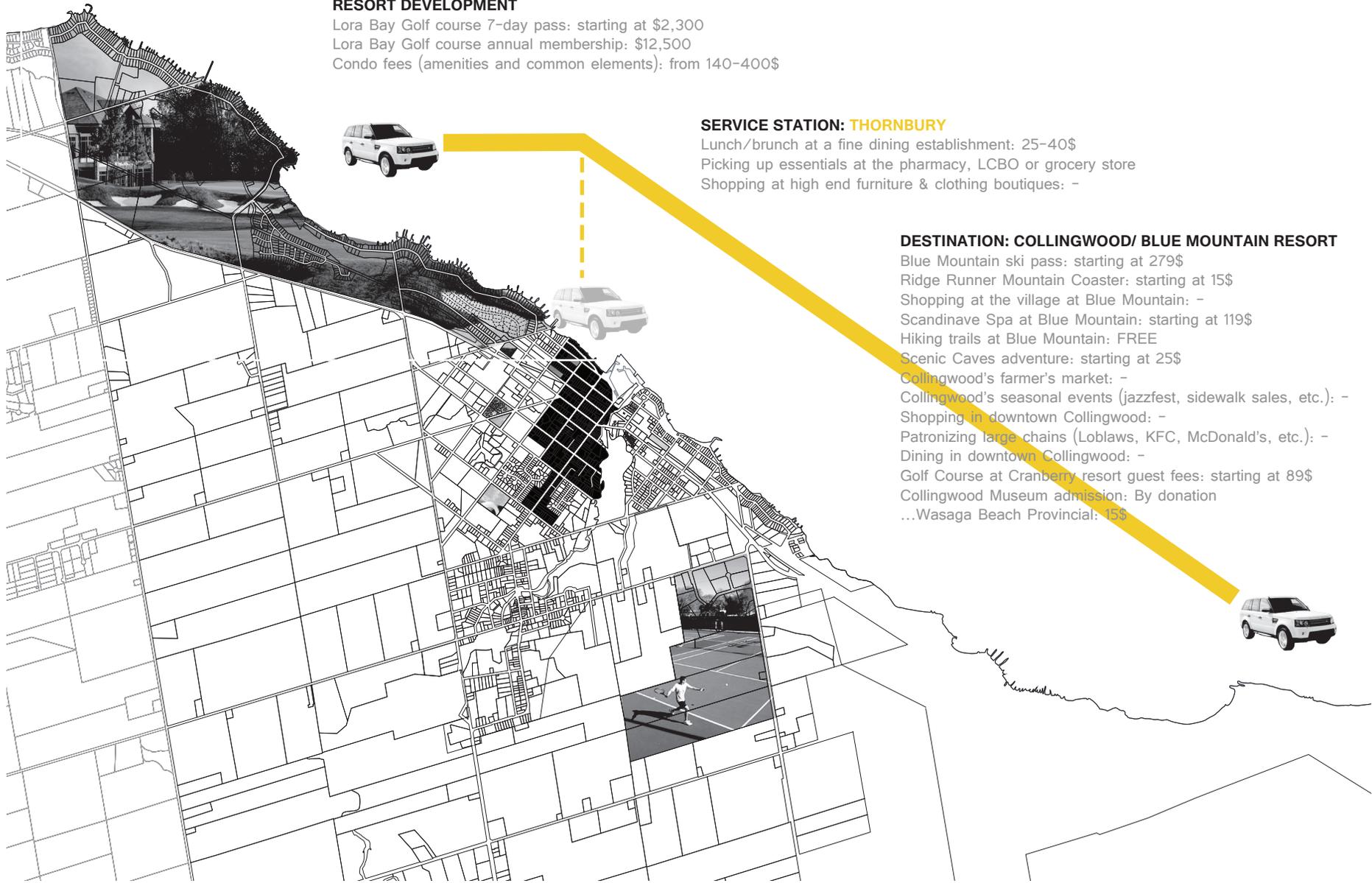
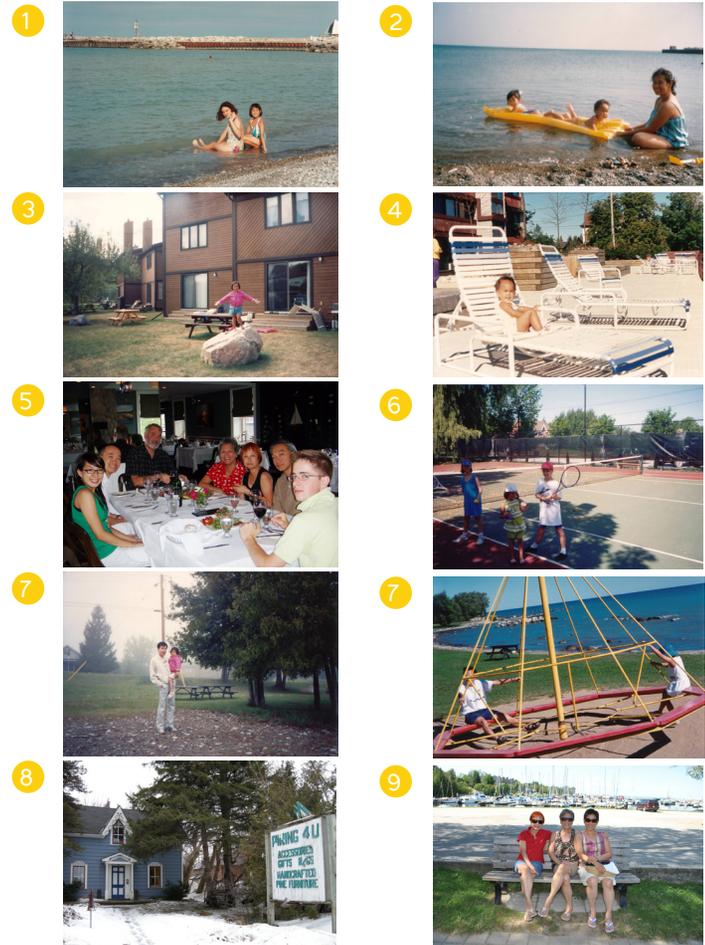


Fig. 65: Diagram illustrating Thornbury's role as a service station  
Base drawing: (Town of the Blue Mountains Development Summary map 2008)

In fact, new resort/residential developments on the fringe form their very own communities and often have own book clubs, gatherings at the communal lodge, men & women golf tournaments, ski outings, etc. Occasional visits to the village centre occurs on weekends and the sudden boost in population in Thornbury's downtown core is clearly visible, particularly during brunch hour where BMWs, Mercedes, various SUVs and Range Rovers fill the parking spaces across from Bridges restaurant, Simplicity Bistro and Sisi on Main. Their stay is usually brief and, after an afternoon of indulging in the small town charm of Thornbury, newcomers will travel to Collingwood for more diverse activities or return to make use of resort amenities. As such, interactions with locals did not occur in a sustained and involved fashion, which prevents newcomers from truly integrating into the community. According to Halseth, vacation enclaves are viewed as sanctuaries while "the nearby small town [functions] as an anonymous supply depot" (Halseth 1998, 17). Furthermore, the distances between remote seasonal residences to the village core and the clustering of recreational properties around amenity settings act to isolate the resort area from the rural context in which it is set and render it difficult to form close neighbourhood ties.

The burden of accessibility causes visitors to view entering the town as a "stop-over" of sorts rather than taking ownership of place or appropriating the town as one's residence. Furthermore, retail shops on Thornbury's Main Street predominantly offer conveniences and services that attract people but don't keep them in town; these tend to be "hit and run" stores, such as hair salons, art galleries, furniture stores, banks, paint stores, dental offices, real estate offices etc. (Lopilato 2003, 1). Furthermore, "where the mixing of these populations occurs, it is in the service-supply sites of local villages or towns, and then usually confined to the transaction at hand, which does little to reduce the social distance between rural and cottage residents" (Halseth 1998, 17).

In sum, with the mounting popularity of Collingwood, the physical unfolding of rural subdivisions and the altered functions of Main Street, the beginnings of a transformed social fabric are well underway. And with tendencies for decentralization, fewer and fewer lives will be contained within a single, autonomous, town; as a result, aspects of rural community identity will inevitably disintegrate, including the strength of traditional neighbourhood ties.



1. Watching kids jump off the concrete pier
2. Sunbathing at the beach
3. Our summer home
4. On the sun deck at the Royal Harbour resort
5. Eating at Largo's restaurant with the family
6. At the tennis courts with my cousins
7. Playing at Bayview Park
8. My favourites antique store Pining 4 U
9. Taking strolls along the Harbour and the wooden bridge
10. Buying bread at the bakery and raiding the bookstore on Main Street
11. Having lunch at the Mill Cafe, watching the crashing waters at the dam
12. My grandmother fishing on the Beaver River

Fig. 66: Diagram highlighting my personal experience in Thornbury

## 2.5 Alterations in population structure: from a cottaging community to a post-cottaging community

As demonstrated by the literature, with a sudden influx of newcomers into the community, a certain degree of social differentiation and a shift in community dynamics ensues. Using information obtained from observation and conversations with residents, one finds two separate and distinct subgroups within Thornbury, each with differing attitudes, expectations and lifestyles. The following section will discuss and compare the socio-economic profiles and activities of these two entities and extract the implications of such a shift in population structure.

As previously mentioned, Thornbury was once composed of a tightly knit community structure. According to long-time residents, “everyone knew everyone, one way or the other”. The formation of a distinct culture and identity is evident in the common interests shared by residents, as well as the collective participation in local events and recreational activities. Recreation and communal life are important to long-time residents and most will describe their most cherished memories as: playing hockey/broom ball at the arena, participating in annual walk-a-thons from Thornbury to Meaford, hanging out at the bowling alley, biking, fishing, roller skating, swimming at the beach, jumping off the pier, watching the trout run in the spring, attending the chilli cook-off, cheering on the Beaver River rat race, tearing down the fields in old cars, stealing apples from the orchards, playing at Bayview park, breaking into abandoned storage houses, drinking at Bridges or Piper’s Tavern and hanging out on Main Street. As such, shared experiences and interests, as well as regular face-to-face interactions are important in the formation of Thornbury’s distinct culture and identity. This type of social stratification that, today, is on the rise did, not previously exist. In fact, within small towns, “distinctions of social class are masked by an aura of familiarity. With few exceptions, almost everyone lives in similar houses, buys from the same stores and drinks at the same bars” (Hodge and Quadeer 1983, 17). This apparent similarity of lifestyles is what binds residents and generates community.

Today, the qualities of this type of social relationships remain, though, with Main street functions on the decline, combined with the added pressures of growth, social networks are becoming more dispersed in space. And it is becoming increasingly difficult to render those elements which are important to the character and spirit of Thornbury **identifiable** to the public in order to stimulate authentic appeal for the local.

### *Cottaging communities*

Furthermore, in order to understanding the changes brought on by recent newcomers, one must first grasp the nature of Thornbury’s initial tourist population and its traditional culture of tourism. The original visitors to Thornbury – i.e. the quiet tourist community of retirees, exurbanites and seasonal residents – have been drawn in for decades by the scenic locale, the possibilities for recreation and the stability of a tightly knit community structure. They also exhibited a characteristic willingness to be integrated into the community, which was **integral to the experience** of seasonal residency. Traditional rural visitors respected the community in which they took up seasonal residency and valued the town’s uniqueness, which was evident in their activities and choice of settlement (Salamon 2003, 8). Cottagers were able to identify themselves with local residents as they share basic common interests and facilities, namely the use of the waters and surrounding lands for recreation. Visitors share days on the beach, at the harbour, at the pier, at the park and fishing at the Beaver River with long-time residents which promoted interaction. As such, it became possible to develop a “sense of belonging to a cohesive community [and remedy] the loss of community spirit in the city [that] is universally deplored” (Halseth 1998, 19).





Given that seasonal visitors settled in cottages or townhouses close to the downtown core, they were able to partake in Thornbury's small town lifestyle and maintain face-to-face interactions with the locals in such that they became not so much a distinct subgroup as they are part of the community. Commenting on Thornbury's social structure in 1991, Fred Dahms maintains that "it is difficult to separate tourist and seasonal residents from the general population but most businesses in Thornbury relied on a mixture of patronage from **locals and non-locals** to stay in business", which is much different than the current situation (Dahms 1998, 316). Furthermore because tourism is essentially interwoven into rural lifestyle and growth proceeded at a manageable pace, the spirit and character of Thornbury remained relatively unaffected.

#### *Post-Cottaging communities*

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the massive influx of incoming populations to new resort and residential developments are drawn in by the promise of a leisurely lifestyle, upscale vacation homes and luxury amenities. Generally speaking, their interest lies in **external** factors rather than aspects linked to the locale itself. Key amenities which have appealed to vacations have been access to water, though "private developers have [increasingly] promoted the commodification of rural and added to the place utility of their projects by constructing marinas, golf courses, tennis courts and ski facilities" (Dahms and McComb 1999, 144). Hence, part-time residents who settle into expansive resort/neighbourhood enclaves rely largely on a constructed ideal of community – one that is inherently removed from the likeness of Thornbury. The social composition of these affluent populations is also dramatically different. Their income levels are much higher and their expectations for life in the countryside are considerable; they expect to enjoy a life of leisure and consumption. And they further have the discretionary income necessary to ensure this high quality rural lifestyle.

Furthermore, because of aspects of distance, accessibility and the attractive amenities accompanying the new developments, it is unlikely that this new strain of visitors will truly integrate in community population. The town further lacks the infrastructure and gathering spaces to support potential exchanges between locals and newcomers. In addition, the richness of local culture and history are not properly discerned in the physical landscape in a way that cultivates visual enthusiasm in the eyes of transient populations. The disconnect that exists between Thornbury and incoming visitors can be described as a condition of **communities of limited liability**– where groups on the periphery reside within the bounds of the town, but cannot identify with it. In fact, much to the disdain of locals, newcomers tend to refer to the community as the "village of Thornbury" or simply "Town of the Blue Mountains", while long-timers are bound by tradition and remain adamant about Thornbury being identified as a town or, at the very least, an autonomous settlement.

**Fig. 67 (opposite page):** Lora bay development amenities

Base drawing: (Town of the Blue Mountains Development summary 2008)

**Fig. 68 (above):** Photographs of luxury developments at Lora Bay (© Rebecca Lu 2011)



## **2.6 Conclusion: Impacts on local identity, social networks, patterns and perspectives**

In sum, upscale suburbanization and incoming populations have **eroded local control** over the economy and town affairs, thereby **raising uncertainty levels**. Hence, with change underway, it is imperative that Thornbury respond to the effects of suburban-like growth to resist homogenisation, decentralization and the dissipation of community culture and the social networks that traditionally linked rural residents.





# PART 3

Strategies and Design Guidelines



Central to the practice of architecture is the ability to formulate design processes that react to obstacles, acknowledge cultural assets and impact public perception of the built environment. Thus, the intent of the thesis is not only to study the network of conditions affecting small tourist communities subjected to active social changes, but to demonstrate the role of architecture as a responsive profession. And further expand on the role of architectural interventions can have in small town design.

The design component of the thesis is aimed at addressing the **real needs** of small tourist towns and devise solutions that are unique to a place and its people. This notion is demonstrated by introducing a place-specific architectural response. This aspect represents an opportunity for a small rural community such as Thornbury to benefit from a focused research into the specific issues of the community. Furthermore, it is often much more effective to engage a community by introducing a specific and implementable proposal for a known site rather than producing a lengthy study and abstract guidelines...

### **3. 0 Strategy for design**

Under conditions of rapid change and faced with the prospect of losing the vestiges of community and identity, it becomes necessary for rural towns to **imagine an architecture of response**. And growing problems related to unevenness inevitably point to the need for creating **alternative styles of managing growth**. Though, what kind of development will properly negotiate these circumstances? How can the entrenched dynamic between upscale tourist facilities and low-density land-use patterns be modified? And, finally, how can design interventions be both authentic to the community, yet progressive enough to propagate tourism?

The present paragraphs will formally present the overall strategy for conceiving of such a design proposal. First of all, as alluded to in the previous sections, by establishing a complete understanding of the community and the agents of change – i.e. identifying those elements at stake, community relations and identity – one can begin to imagine creative responses. For instance, having researched the dynamics between Thornbury's two distinct subgroups and analyzed the town's fragile landscapes, it is now possible to draw certain conclusions from which a logical design solution can be derived. The fundamental aim of the thesis was further strengthened through such research as it was found that, even though we are contending with transient populations whose presence within the town occurs on a seasonal basis, the town's future is planned around the concept of upscale tourism and approximately *half* of the population consists of part-time residents who hold the ability to consume resources and alter established spaces. For these reasons, it is critical to formulate immediate strategies to address factors of rapid change in rural communities.

The thesis posits that, by fashioning [a new culture of tourism inspired by the nature of social relations in the transforming community and overturning the current reign of “resort-based” tourism, certain destructive practices may be countered. Notably, by visibly introducing aspects community identity into the physical landscape, **a new style of visitation can emerge that is formed on the basis of the local**. Making the urban fabric legible, elevating cherished local landscapes and providing a basis for understanding and acknowledging the charm of everyday ruralism are methods that can result in a visibly distinct culture. This, in turn, perpetuates a place’s unique small town character and increases the affinity towards the locale, even from the perspective of external populations. The literature has shown that, in fact, most Canadian towns and villages can readily identify a particular basis for being unique; one aspect of this notion stems from their small size. As iterated by authors Hodge and Quadeer, “The smallness of a locality means that it cannot sustain numerous activities or serve a multiplicity of functions; [furthermore,] the activities drawn to it are limited in scope” (Hodge and Quadeer 1983, 114). This point is argued throughout the thesis – **that it is in the personalized dealings, the existence of traditions and events in which the entire community partake, routines, the similarity of lifestyles, the aura of familiarity, the existence of common facilities and the social organization of a town that contribute to its individuality**. Harnessing rural assets, restoring them on the path to progressive change and rendering them visible can ultimately provide a design that both mitigates current conditions and meets the aspirations of the community.

Moreover, the idea of uplifting **everyday ruralism and ordinary landscapes** by design serves to **intrinsically bind (new and existing)** residents. For instance, geographer Yi-Fu Tuan considers that humans have an innate desire to attach themselves with a particular place, to fill it with emotions and meaning and, in this process, make it an extension of themselves (‘topophilia’) (Bunting and Filion 2006,). The literature has shown that “this physical and emotional connection to a place, which needs time to evolve, is bound to be diminish in today’s fast-paced cities, where much of new development is generic in design” (Bunting and Filion 2006, 440). As a result, by immersing in the local culture and actively participating in the rituals of rural towns, community sentiment can be advanced, which provides meaning and place knowledge, a sense of membership, identification and a will for social investment. As demonstrated by the literature, this aspect is critical for creating resilient and sustainable environments, for aspects of smallness may be conserved in a rapidly expanding context...

Furthermore, it is necessary to address the social stratification described throughout the thesis and the important division emphasized between those who “are” and those who “are not” considered townspeople. By setting up structures and mechanisms that both promote closeness and interaction and mitigate competing interests, new relationships and traditions can be formed collectively and organically amongst incoming populations and rural citizens. Implementing **porous institutions, cross-boundary activities** and introducing overlapping patterns of movement are examples of such initiative. This is important for, if newcomers as a group fail to make the necessary social investments and actively engage in local lifestyle, the whole “organic social system can wither and degenerate over time” (Salamon 2003, 24). Ultimately, the intent is for the use and design of public spaces to build interconnections across the community that could address the intrinsic fluidity of the community potentially link all residents through social networks. Though such methods, it is possible to offset decentralization tendencies, social segregation and **unevenness** and further establish the means for self-sustaining and resilient communities.

### **3.1 Downtowns and Main Streets**

In the following paragraphs, the thesis will focus on demonstrating that downtowns and Main Streets play a seminal role in strengthening rural community sentiment. By examining the functions and development of Main Street, one will find that it has historically been a continuing community-building resource in the life of small towns. This aspect is of particular importance, given that the previous sections have revealed that reinforcing community identity is central to mitigating the effects of change and reconciling the various subgroups. As a result, the text may then argue that design strategies must occur in the central downtown district.

First of all, the literature has found that Main streets and downtowns serve as the cultural heart of rural communities. This aspect stems primarily from its historical character and associations; as previously mentioned, “old buildings play an important part in everyday life simply because they act as repositories of cultural values” (Lenters 1986, 54). In fact, “they represent the origins of our communities, and the ongoing unfolding and expression of local community development and public life” (Rural Economic Development Data & Intelligence 2005). Furthermore, core areas reflect local character and shared histories because of the unique narratives that derive from its formation and evolution over time. Downtowns and Main streets are where one finds special places, buildings, monuments and structures that are indicative of community heritage and identity. As a result, Main Streets and downtowns project an overall image of the values and history of the community and “serve as a source of collective representation and common interests.” (Lenters 1986, 1). In an era of transformative processes, historic districts represent constancy and resilience.

In addition to its cultural contribution, Main Street represents the convergence of social networks and economic activity within a rural community. It acts as a socializing hub and represents not only a source of face-to-face contact for residents but an important element in unifying rural towns. The nature and diversity of such social relations is reflected in the interactions and functions on Main Street as well as the use of public spaces. For instance, traditionally, the concentration of commercial activity, the presence of everyday functions such as the post office, the local library and financial institutions contributed to the steady flow of populations into the downtown areas.

In sum, downtowns represent more than mere shopping districts: they symbolize local character and identity which, in turn, have significant impacts on both visitors and local citizens. As such, despite its contemporary challenges, downtowns and main streets remain a key component in the building of healthy and sustainability communities.

## **Design strategy**

Taking into consideration the importance of Main Streets and downtowns, the design strategy proposes that architectural interventions occur in core areas. Due to the issue of development occurring outside traditional quadrants, uncontrolled growth and upscale suburban architecture, the principle aim is to soften decentralization tendencies and induce a return to the core from the fringe by nurturing and strengthening community identity. Basically, the design strategy must involve converting downtown Thornbury into a locus for negotiating the collision of identities between newcomers and long-time residents in order to reclaim its role as the heart of the community. Overall, the aim is to overturn current conditions in which Main Street functions have deteriorated at the expense of upscale tourism, jeopardizing its social importance and deteriorating its baseline character.

### *Main Street revitalization*

It is important to note that, in light of a host of changes resulting in unprecedented expansion, it is common for “rural communities surrounding urban centers [to look] toward Main Street preservation/revitalization as a counter-measure to the alienating and isolating tendencies attributed to [...] growth” (Lenters 1986, 6). In fact, faced with similar issues, over 1,600 communities in the United States have adopted the Main Street approach in the past 25 years (National Trust for Historic Preservation 2011). In this section, a critical outlook of currently accepted models for Main Street revitalization will be provided in order to further stimulating reflection on alternative methods.

According to Ontario’s Rural Economic Development Data & Intelligence, several different approaches towards downtown revitalization are being adopted by communities in Ontario today. These procedures will be detailed in the following paragraphs:

**Beautification:** This strategy was common during the 1970s and 1980s and operated under the assumption that, solely by improving the aesthetic qualities of downtown, one could render it a more attractive destination and stimulate economic renewal (Rural Economic Development Data & Intelligence 2005). Downtown Belleville, Ontario, is an example where the focus of revitalization was placed on improvements on public property such as enhancing sidewalk pavings, performing laneway renovations, adding flower boxes, wall murals, banners, lighting and seating, etc.

**Urban Renewal:** This movement was designed to revitalize the downtown by tearing down older buildings in order to fulfill a ‘neater’ vision for the town which consists of new modern buildings (Rural Economic Development Data & Intelligence 2005). Downtown Bangor, Maine, is an example of urban renewal; in the 1960s, the historic city hall and clock tower, union station and stage theatre were all demolished in favour of installing new parking structures and strip malls.

**Theming:** This movement was prevalent during the '70s and '80s and the intent was to first envision and then impose a uniform theme throughout the downtown area as a method of marketing and revitalizing the core (Rural Economic Development Data & Intelligence 2005). Interestingly, in many cases, the theme had little to do with the actual context or the built fabric of the town. Kimberley, British Columbia, embodies this approach as the town strategically began to promote itself as a European-themed “Bavarian village” in order to encourage tourist visitation. The municipality features a large cuckoo clock, picturesque peaked-roofed and wood-paneled buildings, cobblestone paths, mural-painted buildings and a variety of German pubs. Other examples include Battleford, Saskatchewan, a village inspired by the theme of Hollywood’s Wild West.

**Main Street Approach:** This idea can be understood as “an integrated approach bringing together effective management, economic development, appropriate design and preservation that [can lead] to incremental change” (Rural Economic Development Data & Intelligence 2005). The concept relies on establishing a network of stakeholders and generating the necessary funding in order to restore historic integrity and architectural character to traditional main streets.

**Strategic Planning Approach:** This model involves preparing strategic plans and developing a specific vision that is relevant to the community in question. In certain cases, provincial governments provided seed funding to small communities for assess priorities and develop strategies that could achieve high levels of local buy-in (Rural Economic Development Data & Intelligence 2005). The StreetSmarts Program, which is sponsored by the Heritage Canada Foundation and the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, is an example of this approach. For instance, this initiative allowed for funds to be distributed to eligible business owners in Napanee, Ontario, for shop owners to restore their storefronts to their original historic character.

A combination of the aforementioned models has been endorsed by various communities in Ontario. Though, over time, it has been found that the most effective approach to downtown revitalization is a holistic one that addresses economic development and community needs according to the guiding principles articulated in the “*Seven Building Blocks for Downtown Revitalization*” (Housing and Economic Development – Government of Massachusetts 2011):

1. Encouraging Community Involvement & Ownership
2. Preserving & enhancing downtown character
3. Ensuring economic vitality
4. Promoting downtown assets
5. Getting into & around downtown
6. Living downtown
7. Keeping downtown safe

### 3.2 A critical outlook on currently accepted models for Main Street revitalization

For the purposes of the thesis, focus will be placed on studying those standards of revitalization which relate directly to design.

First of all, the involvement of design in revitalization typically translates into enhancing the physical attributes of Main Street through the vehicle of visual elements such as storefronts, signage, awnings, street furniture, public art, landscaping, merchandising and promotional materials. The aim is to create safe and inviting environments by improving streetscapes, pedestrian venues, parking and street lighting. In the same vein, according to the text *Main Street: Lessons in Revitalization*, clean streets, sidewalks and alleyways as well as attractive window displays and streetlights are prescriptions for good downtown environments (Lopilato 2003, 11). Maintaining the character of traditional downtowns by restoring the historic integrity and architectural character of main streets through building conservation and rehabilitation is equally important. To some extent, the assumption is that, by simulating the character, charm, and spirit of traditional Main Streets through typical revitalization projects, small towns may gain popularity and thus, more resilient to change. In essence, focus is placed primarily on beautification processes, surface modifications, storefront aesthetics and or artificially inserted programs to evoke the feelings of 'quaintness' thought to be necessary for renewal.

Ultimately, such initiatives can contribute to commodifying the tourist experience as the projected images are geared towards imagined notions of the countryside rather than relying on a local sense of place. As shown by the literature, images which stem from a community's identity create a more authentic experience "and [potentially] a more sustainable form of tourist development" (McLennan 2002, 17). People want to be part of communities that have an identifiable sense of place and downtowns are key to helping define a community's uniqueness (Rural Economic Development Data & Intelligence 2005). Furthermore, the implications of a town's appearance are far less significant than issues relating to how we residents engage in civil society and how they impact the environment through our daily activities (Bunting and Filion 2006, 430).

As such, through the design proposal, the thesis will attempt to challenge common downtown revitalization processes. It will be argued that, though suitable and effective for many small towns in Ontario, Main street revitalization would be an **incomplete gesture in the case of rural tourist communities in flux**. In the intended setting, such efforts do little to appeal to authentic manifestations of community, which are often revealed in the layered relationships and functions of Main Street rather than in a physical form. For all of these reasons, Main Street revitalization is only a **partial** solution to a situation that is much more complex than simply restoring vitality to a place. In effect, the response must **actively address** the rift settling between the population subgroups as well as the loss of community functions. In essence, identifying characteristics for rural communities are often intangible as they are found in relationships, special events and community functions that occur organically and over time. Therefore, it is critical for architecture to stimulate residents to re-appropriate Thornbury's public space in order to create new shared experiences and history over time. Only then, can places truly become a reflection of community identity. As such, the design solution cannot presuppose that the planting of trees, the enlargement of sidewalks and the simulation of small town features as a **standalone process** is sufficient to promote resiliency and address altered social landscapes.

In the same vein, widely accepted formats of downtown revitalization include provisions for economic restructuring, which is thought to strengthen a community's local economy by diversifying its economic base. This is accomplished by retaining and expanding successful businesses and attracting new ones to provide a balanced commercial mix and competitiveness. Though, often, (as in the case of Thornbury), small merchants providing affordable services or products are uprooted in favour of fashioning a neat, unified, uncluttered scheme. And genuine diversity is thus lost.

Hence, additional measures are necessary to provoke the necessary changes in rural downtowns undergoing transformations. Certainly, in the case of Thornbury, traditionally accepted forms of Main Street revitalization alone has not been successful in contending with the issues at hand. For instance, a program which was aimed at reinvigorating the village center called the C.A.U.S.E project (Community Assist for an Urban Study Effort<sup>TM</sup>) was undertaken in 1999 by the Ontario Architects Association. This study was a comprehensive community project that included extensive research, brainstorming and design exercises. Most of the findings and design concepts that resulted from this exercise were subsequently implemented by a designated committee.

The general objectives of the study included refining streetscapes and public spaces, improving parking, intensifying street and business activity and preserving historical features. These were set out to improve the visual quality of the shopping area in anticipation of accelerated change in the upcoming years due to the fifty-five million dollar Intrawest resort village at Blue Mountain. Thus, existing curbs, sidewalks and asphalt medians were reconstructed and pedestrian-scaled, heritage-themed, street lighting and street tree planting were introduced. Furthermore, at the time, it was found that only 78% of the commercial buildings along Main Street were found to be in keeping with the preferred architectural character and therefore it was necessary to recommend design principles to guide the upgrading of buildings and signs by the private sector (Town of Blue Mountains 2000). The report suggested that building materials be brick, vertical or horizontal siding with stone accent areas; in contrast, concrete block and architectural products and stucco are less desirable. And architectural detailing of cornices, windows and doorways and semi-circular arches should be highly encouraged. Thus, one could easily argue that the physical attributes of Main Street are less than lacking and that even this does little to mitigate the effects of accelerated change.

This viewpoint can be understood by studying the case of Unionville, Ontario, where an intense beautification project in the 1980s turned the town's declining Main Street into a posh, attractive and quaint destination. Its buildings underwent extreme visual transformation, of which the old post office and fire hall were the most notable examples. The general consensus is that the revitalization of Main Street was immensely successful as visitation was increased, generating a plethora of commercial establishments specializing in antiques, crafts and gifts. On the other hand, one can pinpoint an emerging trend towards luxury consumerism and some would speculate that, as a result, the village is beginning to lose the amenities that were geared towards the local population. Harold Lenters, *author of Conservation of Main Street and its Communal Value In the Urban-Rural Fringe: A case Study of Unionville*, Ontario stipulates that, "the high-priced specialty shops are not conducive for the day-to-day kind of interaction perhaps enjoyed by the less affluent and less fashionable citizens [and that] Main street is quickly becoming the exclusive domain of the affluent, young professions and trendy tourist crowd" (Lenters 1986, 118). His research further maintains that, while the aesthetic dimension of Main Street is important, it must effectively serve the function of bringing local residents together into community...



Revitalization need not be limited to improvements to the built environment, but it **must** address cultural identities. A prime example of this notion can be found in Nelson, British Columbia where a long-dormant bicycle race through downtown Nelson was revived as part of the revitalization process (Fulton 1986).

As such, the proposal is to adopt an alternative method for Main Street revitalization – one that considers downtown as a dynamic organism and addresses transformative processes and changing cultures of tourism. The idea is to **indirectly motivate** revitalization by affecting Main Street through secondary mechanisms, in such that the kind of commercial activity that unifies members may be formed organically. In this manner, Main Street can be rebuilt by the transformed community by increments, formed by layered activities and changing functions over time. Likewise, closeness and sentiments of membership are acquired by being a part of this very process in such that community can become the basis for tourism.

The concept of secondary influences is inspired by the configuration of Grand Bend's Main Street with respect to the beach, which is located on the shores of Lake Huron. The Main Street is situated perpendicular to the beach, funnelling visitors to and from the two amenities. This spatial arrangement enables the merging of both entities into co-dependent systems. For instance, the Grand Bend urban beach is an incredibly popular destination and represents a source of economic prosperity for the village and local downtown businesses. And the restoration and enhancement of the beach, which includes an extensive boardwalk with viewing platforms, a playground, a 'waterplay area' and a gazebo for performances, aroused both newfound diversity and vitality for this natural feature and its adjacent Main Street.

### 3.3 Design Guidelines

In the following section, the discourse will be steered towards developing a set of design guidelines, methods and resources for forging sympathetic cultures in an altered rural landscape. The thesis will attempt to put forth loose, principle-based notions that are both applicable in a variety of settings and open to interpretation. These will be inspired, in part, by the determinant notions of 'community identity' discussed previously: *territory, social interaction and common bonds* (Pinkerton and Hassinger 1986).

The intent of the thesis is to translate the aforementioned design intents into creative solutions that are unique, grounded and appropriate for small tourist towns undergoing rapid change. The present section will place an emphasis on setting up guidelines for designing a concept plan and strategic design interventions that can fulfill the goals of *physically* defending and reinforcing local identity and bridging the gap between opposing populations. The design intervention in question can assume a variety of formats so long as their intended impact on core areas is clearly defined. The project in question can be a building, new patterns of movement, a temporary structure or even a string of impactful events. Overall, the idea is to establish a basis for the strengthening community identity and addressing social concerns in such that lessons learned can be subsequently carried forth onto Main Street.

#### CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

##### 1. Imageability through Cultural sustenance

Kevin Lynch defines the concept of 'Imageability' as "that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. It is that shape, color, or arrangement which facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images of the environment. It might also be called legibility, or perhaps visibility in a heightened sense, where objects are not only able to be seen, but are presented sharply to their senses" (Lynch 1960, 9).

First of all, it is possible to understand the concept of imageability as a product of cultural sustenance. By developing a vision for the town that is leveraged by local assets—from cultural or architectural heritage to local enterprises and community pride – a clearly defined image may arise. Experiencing environments which are perceived as unique or that recall personal histories gives rise to the sentiment of "community identity". And this, in turn, reinforces our sense of personal identity. For one, the idea that a lasting record of lived experiences and traditions can exist as a permanent fixture stirs affection within us and creates the illusion of temporal stability and rootedness. And, according to Lynch, a renowned American planner, "we attach positive feelings of connection and of being grounded to physically distinctive and recognizable locales" (Lynch 1981).

*Strategy:* Means of achieving imageability can be developed by first studying a community's inherent properties and gathering research information on its existing resources such as abandoned structures or underdeveloped sites. From this analysis, conclusions may be drawn and unique ways of translating community identity into the physical landscape may be conceived. Methods may include elevating and promoting heritage, producing memorable frames of reference, capitalizing upon distinctive environments and uplifting identifying landmarks. All of this – in a manner that is both consistent with local tradition and authentic to the community. As iterated throughout the text, marketed or projected images that are drawn from a community's identity result in a more authentic experience and a more sustainable form of tourist development.



Fig. 69: Elora Mill Inn and restaurant  
(Elora Info 2009)

*Application:* Elora, Ontario, is a tourist destination known for its distinct and well-defined character – from its unique 19th-century historic limestone architecture to the beautiful Elora Gorge Conservation area. The village is also known for its prominent artistic community and its numerous shops, art galleries, quaint cafés and restaurants, which lie along the river's edge. Some of its most remarkable landmarks include an old mill (Ontario's only remaining five-story mill) overlooking a waterfall and the old Gorge Cinema, which is Canada's oldest continuously running repertory theatre.

## 2. Rural programming, community & inclusive activity

It is critical to recognize that local assets often lie in the quality of relationships and that, in many cases, there exists the opportunity for community to act as the basis for tourism. As such, local and tourist facilities need not be distinct; in fact, shared spaces and joint activities can effectively create induced linkages amongst longstanding residents and newcomers. Furthermore, measures must be taken to direct interest to the qualities of rural life, which will not only serve to preserve longstanding traditions, but further stimulate vitality and engagement amongst new citizens. Examples of programs which are a part of the rural tradition include community suppers, strawberry socials, pancake breakfasts, Lobsterfest, chicken BBQs, church fundraisers, roast beef suppers, community walks, etc. Meanwhile, examples of shared facilities may include recreation outlets such as arenas for ball or ice hockey, ball diamonds and everyday places such as local bakeries, general stores, delis, etc. This aspect is of particular importance as the engagement and involvement of new part-time residents in rural affairs and interests will ultimately promote resiliency and the survival of traditions.

It is important to instil a physical and emotional connection to place amongst newcomers in order to generate community. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan uses the term 'topophilia' to describe this love of place, which stems from a human need for "attaching [oneself] with a particular place, filling it with emotions and meaning, and in this process making a particular place **an extension of [oneself]**" (Bunting and Filion 2006, 440). Only then, can genuine 'community sentiment' arise.

Finally, the notion of "Rural programming, community & inclusive activity" as a factor for critical success is inspired by the text *Canadian Cities in Transition*, which proposes that issues pertaining to adapting to social change and diversity be dealt with by adopting a vision of "Inclusive City". The authors suggest that such measures can be achieved by "supporting cultural services, encouraging community building, community empowerment and anti-discrimination measures" (Bunting and Filion 2006, 458).

*Strategy:* Central to this approach is constructing facilities and introducing infrastructure that will render aspects of rural lifestyle and community culture **more visible** and support potential interactions between distinct segments of the population. The intent is to create a new tourist experience where face-to-face contact and social relationships are the driving force behind visitation. Hence, programs should not only appeal to local interests, but be thoroughly accessible to newcomers and in keeping with their expectations and patterns of travel.



Fig. 70: Cookstown's Wingding festival  
(The Village of Cookstown 2011)

*Application:* Cookstown, Ontario, is a prime example of rural programming applied to a tourist setting which both benefits the community and external populations. The town's Wingding festival/party is the largest and longest running community garage sale in Ontario which attracts visitors from surrounding areas. It is essentially a two-day event which features hundreds of yard sales, an antique and craft sales area, live music and a display by the Georgian Bay Steam Show.

### **3. Public space: The merging of social networks and tradition building**

Meaningful social interaction and frequent personal contact are critical factors in inducing feelings of attachment towards community and nurturing social networks. Through time and repetitive interactions, community can be maintained and reproduced. Constant exchanges amongst citizens serve to build intimacy and affection, to shape collective culture and to further one's knowledge of local characteristics – all which are necessary to establish sense of belonging and connection to place.

“Public spaces are arenas where a sense of community develops that bonds residents to a place” (Salamon 2003, 13). By assembling gathering spaces that enhance interaction and increase connectivity, this small tourist community can potentially support the merging of populations and the building memories and new traditions in a transformed setting. Central facilities or large public congregation spaces should be primed to act as a socializing hub, a source of informal gatherings and a space where newcomers and long-timers can invariably have chance encounters. Over time, a unique narrative for the transformed community will emerge that inspires the formation of a new culture with its distinct norms and rituals, beliefs, worldviews and lifestyles.

#### **4. Overlapping patterns of movement**

New developments are typically built outside the original town grid, on the fringe, with no provision for being socially or economically connected to the town centre, which causes a decline in core activities and vitality. This composition contributes to establishing a large disconnection between the two entities. Furthermore, incoming populations must enter downtown areas by car and thus are prone to travel to and from specific destinations in motorized vehicles, which further amplifies the disconnection between population subgroups. Thus, it becomes critical to encourage enhanced pedestrian channels and opportunities for convergence within the downtown core. Increased foot travel in and amongst core areas is likely to intensify the use and awareness of special places as well as amplify closeness and **commonality** between newcomers and locals. Likewise, overlapping patterns of travel expand the likelihood of chance encounters.

*Strategy:* The making of shared pathways, new circulation patterns and using multi-use trail corridors as alternative transportation routes can all contribute to achieving this goal. In most cases, such schemes will require the support of a network of way-finding elements such as **paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks** (Lynch 1960). Such features contribute to the legibility of the layout of a place and ensure that added focus is placed on a town's distinctive features and reference points.

#### **5. Organic growth and community engagement**

Engaging a community in the design process increases the community's appreciation and awareness of its own place. This is a critical component of the method, as it is necessary to build support for the proposal in order for residents to appropriate the process and, in turn, put in the necessary social investment. This can be achieved by constructing forums and consultations to keep the public informed as well as establish consensus, cooperation and advocacy for the proposal. Thus, engaging community participation and building collaborative relationships are the foundation for downtown revitalization; as iterated by the *Main Street Initiative* report by the State of Massachusetts, those "who are able to build consensus around key issues have been most successful in reinvigorating their communities (State of Massachusetts 2000).

This type of social commitment allows for new relationships, special events and community functions to build organically over time in the designed spaces – this will, in turn, inspire larger processes. Therefore, it is critical for architecture to stimulate residents to re-appropriate Thornbury's public space and create new shared experiences and history over time. Only then, can places truly become a reflection of **community**. And it is this type of genuine diversity that will endow the town with newfound vitality and resiliency.



#### **6. Simple, small-scale solutions for small scale environments**

It is imperative to learn from the scale, character and proportions of the existing and to complement long-standing rural landscapes – a principle which stands in opposition to the new patterns of resort and residential development, which takes no heed in traditional forms of settlement. The proposal must be inspired by its territorial context in order to be authentic and true to local character and scale. As seen with the construction of Thornbury's new town hall, a massive structure that is not only dramatically out of scale, but out of tune with the existing architectural character of the town, can dramatically alter the physical landscape.





# PART 4

Design proposal



#### **4.0 The study area**

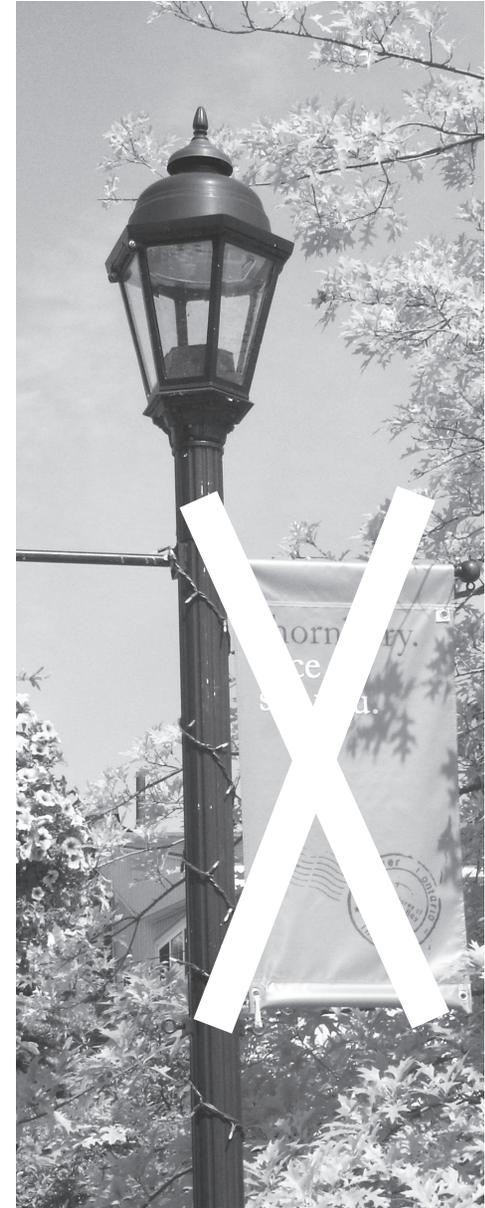
For the purpose of the thesis, the area chosen for intervention is defined by the quadrant marked on the adjacent map. It comprises the area which is situated between Mill Street to the east, and Elma Street to the West and is bound by the Georgian trail to the north and Louisa Street to the south. The choice of study area was motivated by the thesis' attempt to argue the functional importance of downtowns in strengthening community sentiment under conditions of rapid change.

**Fig.71 (opposite page):** Map of the study area (Google Maps 2011)





Fig.72 Rendered overview of the design proposal



**Fig. 73** Illustrating the need to abandon generic marketing efforts  
(© Rebecca Lu 2011)

#### 4.1 Introduction to the design proposal

“If a place is considered desirable by its own citizens, it has the potential to attract others as well  
– Fred Dahms, geographer

As described throughout the thesis, although Thornbury boasts a rich civic life and unique local culture, this aspect is visible only in the relationships and social organization of the community and is largely unsubstantiated in the physical landscape. This aspect weakens its ability to resist change, advance local appeal and counter decentralization tendencies. As a result, Thornbury’s social structure remains fragile in the face of transformation processes. Furthermore, as elaborated upon in PART2, the effects of amalgamation have been particularly detrimental to the village’s identity. Faced with municipal efforts to restructure Thornbury for mass tourist appeal and the ongoing replication of suburban-type settings, the local culture as a whole is threatened and the need to establish visual links to the village’s heritage is becoming increasingly pressing.

The concept plan for downtown Thornbury will be designed as a series of interventions which account for both the physical and social elements of the problematic. For one, the overall intent is to create a clear, identifiable identity for the settlement which can establish the core area as a community destination, linking rural citizens, seasonal residents, tourists and passer-bys alike. Likewise, the scheme is designed to stimulate a change in the culture of tourism, modify popular attitudes towards downtown and heighten residents’ understanding of their community.

As such, design processes will be centered on enhancing, promoting and preserving the uniqueness of Thornbury’s culture and traditional character, which is made evident in **ordinary landscapes** (i.e. the Beaver River trestle, the dam, the concrete pier, the longstanding institutions on Main Street, etc.), as well as aspects of **everyday ruralism** (fishing, relaxing at the beach, jumping off the pier, having an ice cream float on Main Street, attending local pancake breakfasts and community suppers, etc.). Physical landscapes are symbolic and highly indicative of local culture – even the most ordinary and innocuous sites can be viewed by residents as a statement of **community identity**. And making the urban fabric legible, elevating cherished local landscapes and providing a basis for understanding and acknowledging the charm of everyday ruralism are methods that can result in a visibly distinct culture. This, in turn, perpetuates a place’s unique small town character and increases the affinity towards the locale, even from the perspective of external populations.

The literature has shown that, in a fact, many small towns can readily identify a particular basis for being unique. As demonstrated in the thesis, it is first necessary to study a community’s inherent properties, gather research information on its existing resources and, ultimately, transform those findings into a vision for the town that is wholly leveraged by local assets. Therefore, the projected images of Thornbury must be reformed to reflect a local sense of place rather a standard formula for ‘quaintness’ adopted to stimulate the interest of an affluent clientele (see Fig. 73). To this end, the idea of PIERS, BRIDGES and SHEDS is proposed as an overarching theme, to inspire not only the architectural works within, but to serve as a branding formula to rouse outside interest in the traditional qualities of rural life in Thornbury.



**Fig. 74:** The Georgian Trail and Highway 26 serving as links between fringe communities and core areas.  
Base Map source: (Town of the Blue Mountains 2008)

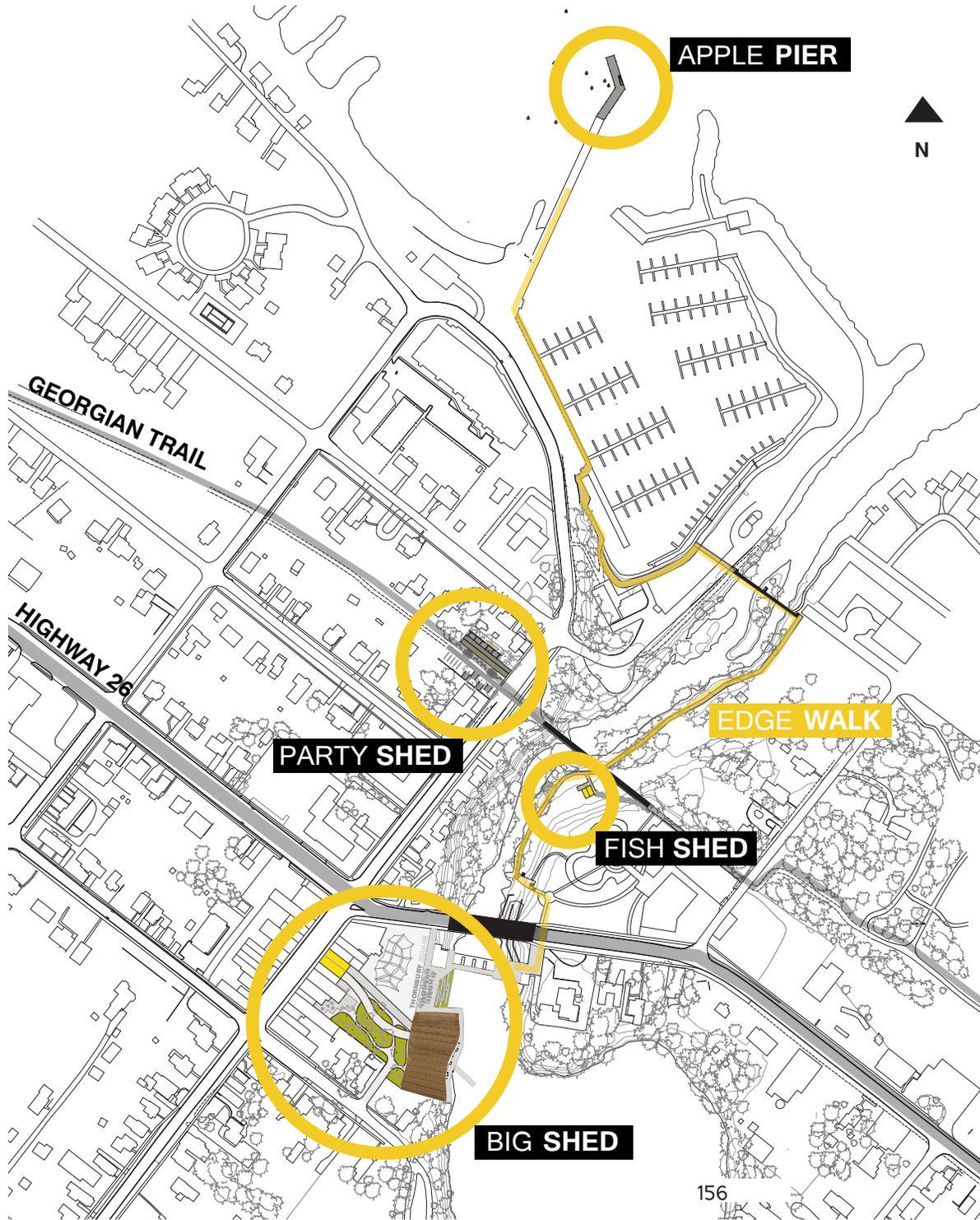
Interventions will be set up as to promote an **organic unfolding** of activity and authentic social relationships (in the same manner that Main Street had evolved into a rich and layered place). As such, new traditions and rituals may be forged over time, in a manner that incorporates newcomers and reflects shared community. The intent is also to craft dynamic spaces that promote authentic community and, by extension, act as a catalyst for Main Street revitalization. Perhaps, in this manner, Thornbury's Main Street can be restored to a context where local shops and institutions cater to the needs of rural residents, reflect the aspirations of the community and whose owners become "characters" within the area.

#### **4.2 PIERS, BRIDGES & SHEDS**

First of all, it was necessary to identify the existing potentials of the site in re-establishing civic identity and determine the areas that are of cultural significance to the town, but have disappeared from the consciousness of residents over time. From then, the strategy is to reactivate such sites by amplifying existing qualities and encouraging a heightened relationship of place by adding a new layer of understanding. The aim is to further engage users as mean of linking people to place, building relationships and **connecting extremities**.

##### *Site*

First of all, from a visual point of view, there exists a marked division between the Beaver River and Mill Pond from the remainder of the town's urban fabric. The adjoining Main Street and residential properties front the opposite direction, obscuring the water from view; as a result, this natural feature, along with its associated cultural assets and narratives, does not impose itself as a distinctive constituent of the landscape. Secondly, in terms of the flow of circulation, there is no connecting system directly linking Main Street to the river, nor is the path leading to the Thornbury beach and Harbourfront immediately apparent from Highway 26 and the downtown area. Thus, the objective is to establish two parallel corridors of interest (the first being the Bruce street artery and, the second, a path along the river's edge) and link them through urban interventions in order to merge both urban and natural frontiers. Care will also be taken to establish the intersections between Highway 26 and the Georgian trail as central components of connectivity within the town, as these represent potential threads for linking fringe developments such as Trail Woods and Lora Bay Phase I, II and III (as well as the adjacent communities of Meaford and Collingwood) to core areas (see Fig.74).



**APPLE PIER**



Existing  
Proposed

**GEORGIAN TRAIL**

**HIGHWAY 26**

**PARTY SHED**

**EDGE WALK**

**FISH SHED**

**BIG SHED**

The concept of PIERS, BRIDGES & SHEDS, as a place-specific design solution for Thornbury, emerged from both an investigation of the site and those notions put forth by the thesis. In part, the aim is to express the notion of disappearance and renewal by reviving the lost typology of community/drive/storage sheds in a manner that is both reminiscent of the village's character and local history. The latter is inspired by the fragile nature of the community's physical landscapes – as the village's tangible links to the past have been torn, in time, with buildings being discarded, forgotten and underused. Furthermore, the proposal is to re-introduce Thornbury's distinctive bridges as important elements of the landscape by inserting a parallel layer of movement that intensifies their use. And finally, the project's last objective is to connect one of the area's most cherished landmarks, the concrete pier, to Main Street in order to link downtown to the waterfront and concretize the importance of both environments. As a whole, the proposal can be characterized as a **re-inhabitation of lands through the vehicle of PIERS, BRIDGES & SHEDS**; a scheme which offers new perspectives of the landscape, yet is fully anchored in traditional understandings of the community. The proposal further includes engaging visitors and residents with interactive nodes and shelters such as a BIG SHED, A PARTY SHED, A FISH SHED and an APPLE PIER that that reinforce the narrative of the site and act as active, vibrant gathering places and areas of activity.

Programs are loosely defined and spaces are multi-functional in such that the formation of new social relationships, traditions and rituals may be formed organically. Furthermore, facilities are conceived to make visible and accessible the qualities of rural civic life, in a manner that promotes inclusivity and overturns conditions in which “the mixing of populations occurs [is] confined to the transaction at hand – which does little to reduce the social distance between rural and cottage residents” (Halseth 1998, 17). Essentially, the point that was argued throughout the thesis is that **it is the personalized dealings, the existence of traditions and events in which the entire community partake, routines, the similarity of lifestyles, the aura of familiarity, the existence of common facilities and the social organization of a town that contribute to its individuality and marketable character.**

The overall scheme is designed to endow Thornbury with a motif for creating “imageability” – to brand the village in a way that reinforces a community's own understanding of its identity and, in the same fashion, is valued by those who experience it or who live there on a part-time basis. Architectural interventions capitalize upon existing assets and make it evident that Thornbury is a place of PIERS, BRIDGES & SHEDS. Furthermore, the historical associations implied by many of the spaces facilitate the absorption of local knowledge into the mainstream. Finally, creating new places that **“everybody in Thornbury goes to”** can effectively create a hybrid infrastructure of sorts that negotiate the collision of identities between newcomers and long-time residents and, ultimately, establish a new local culture that is inclusive.

In sum, all of the design decisions involved in this project arms to harness rural assets, restore them on the path to progressive change and rendering them visible in order to, ultimately, generate a design that both mitigates current conditions and meets the aspirations of the community. It is also important to note that this proposal is meant as a generative scheme for Thornbury – a ‘branding formula’ to establish a robust **infrastructure of identity** – which can effectively be expanded upon and carried on at a larger scale.

Fig. 75 Key plan of overall design SCALE 1:3750

A shed is an outbuilding, a simple structure that serves multiple usages – from shelter to storage, to housing cars, train, horses, buggies and community gatherings. This typology will be utilized as a symbol to make reference to Thornbury's historic landscape, which was populated with sheds of all sorts during its years as a manufacturing hub, including drive sheds, cow sheds, community sheds, apple storage sheds, lumber storage sheds and freight sheds. Furthermore, **such structures were typically of modest construction, designed to wear and expire over time, a condition which typifies the fragility of Thornbury's landscape.**

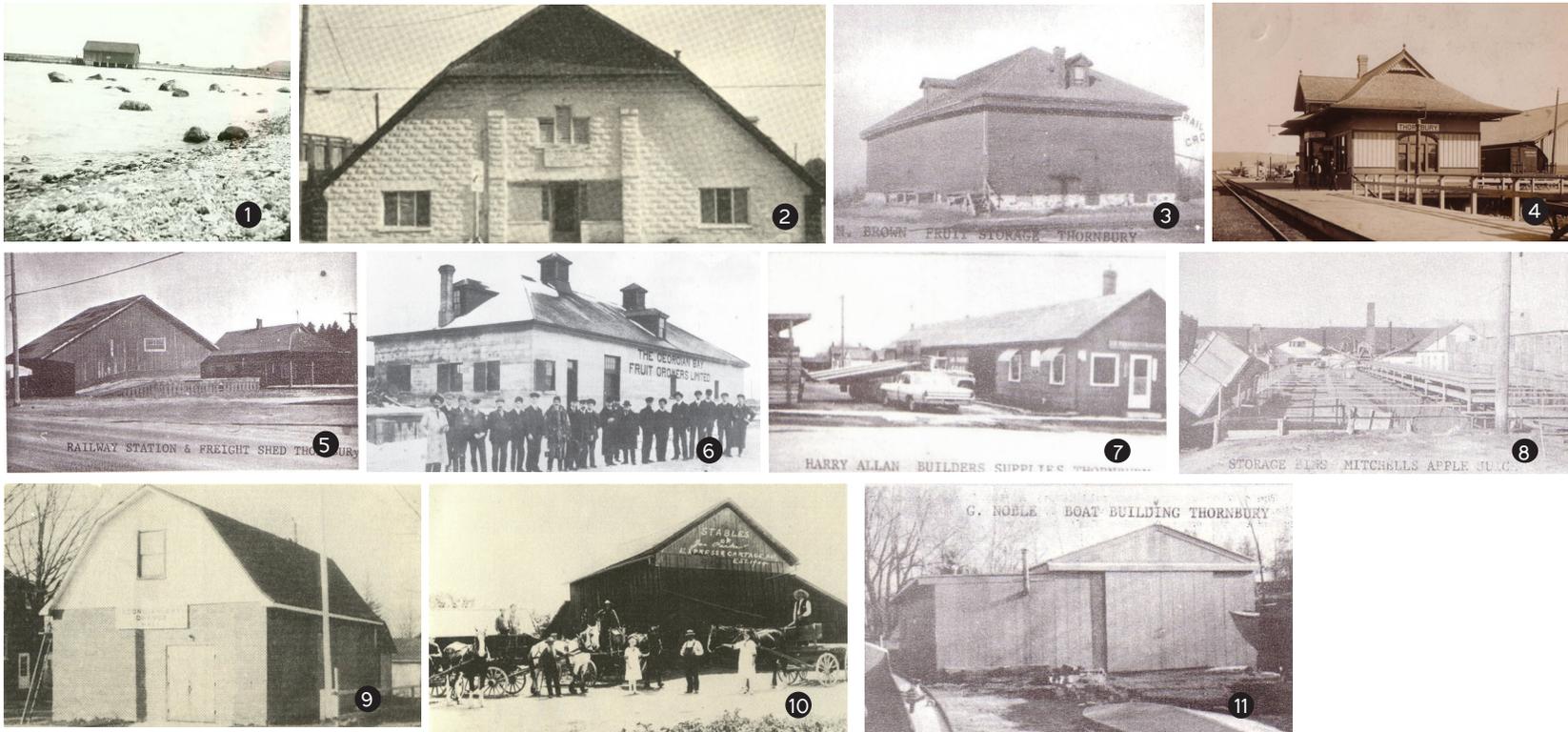


Fig. 76: A compilation of Thornbury's sheds (Wickens 1987) (McLeod 1967) (Thornbury Library Archives)

### **Thornbury's sheds**

- ① Thornbury Harbour boat club shed
- ② Town Shed (or Community Shed)  
Farmers coming to town would leave their horses or, later, tractors here while they conducted business. School children would leave horses and buggies or cutters here while attending classes.
- ③ Mr. Brown's fruit storage shed
- ④ Freight sheds (background) 1909
- ⑤ Freight sheds
- ⑥ Georgian Bay Fruit growers storage shed
- ⑦ Harry Allen Building supply shed
- ⑧ Mitchell's apple storage shed
- ⑨ Isaac Cider Mill, later the Orange Hall, which was used for community gatherings and bake sales
- ⑩ J.A. Parks Stables
- ⑪ G. Noble boat building shed

Fig. 77 (opposite page): Map of Thornbury's sheds - 1925



HURON STREET

wood & coal shed

fruit shed

cooling sheds

loading sheds

BAY STREET

KING STREET

lumber shed

flour feed storage shed

auto shed

ARTHUR STREET

auto shed

coal shed

storage shed

cow shed

auto shed

community shed

MILL STREET

BRIDGE STREET

BRUCE STREET

oil shed

auto & ice shed

auto shed

KING STREET

LOUISA STREET

drive shed

161

fruit shed

freight shed

GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY





## BIG SHED

### Site

The proposed site for intervention is the expansive parking lot located at the rear of Main Street (east side). Currently, there exists a break in the built form to allow direct access from Bruce Street to off-street parking. The removal of the Canada Post Office building, which once sat at this very location, was an initiative implemented by the C.A.U.S.E project. The existing structure was deemed no longer suitable for use and, secondly, its appearance was not “consistent with the preferred architectural character of the core area” (Town of Blue Mountains 2000). In its place, a small seating area and parkette was constructed in order to beautify the link to the parking lot; the study further argued that such a project could help to establish a visual and physical connection between the Mill Pond and the shopping area (Note: In reality, the pond has become obscured from view by a decorative wall, a layer of cars and an abundance of bushes).

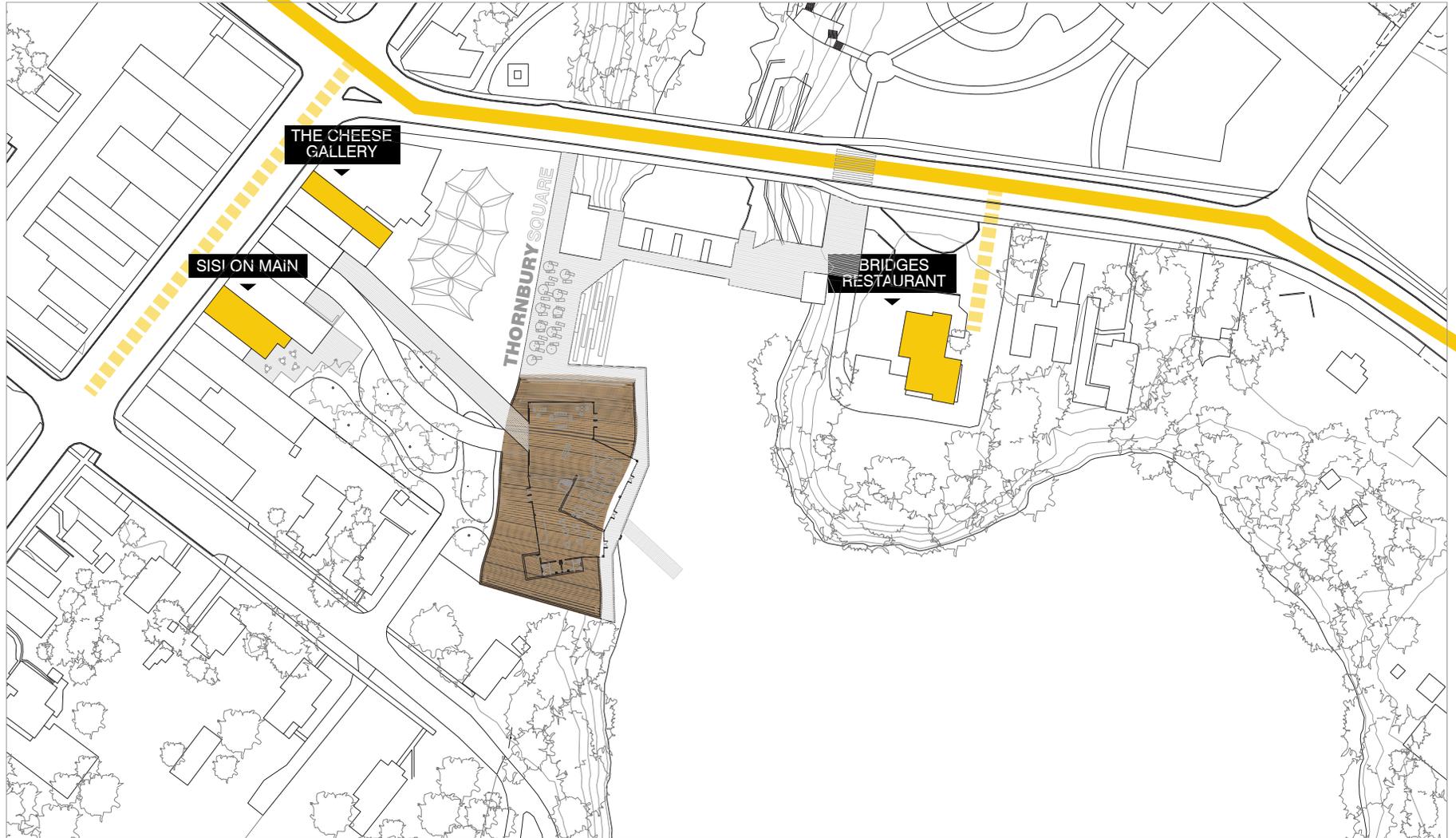
This lot was selected partly because of its size and partly because the location enables the project to both straddle the river’s edge, establish a certain proximity to Main Street and signal the entrance into the downtown core from Highway 26. Furthermore, the placement of a proposed structure in a locality which is encircled by institutions highly frequented by newcomers (i.e. Bridges restaurant, Sisi on Main and The Cheese Gallery) rendered this site a logical choice for establishing a junction point for connectivity. Finally, the juxtaposition of the proposal to the Thornbury dam further creates the potential to emphasize the significance of this large-scale infrastructure to the community.

Fig. 78 (top left): Parkette on Main Street with Decorative wall (© Rebecca Lu 2011)

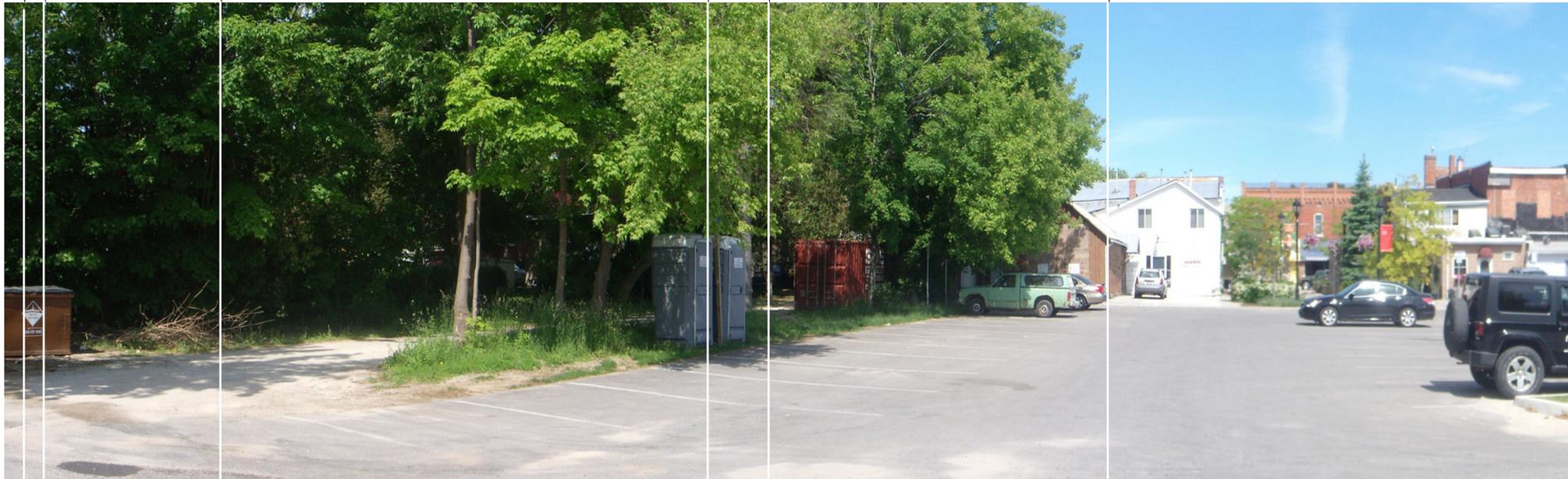
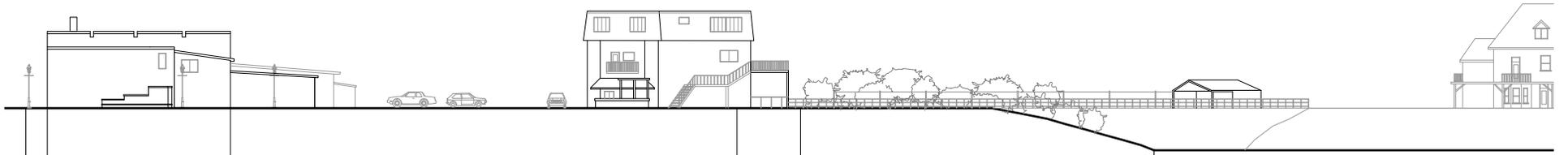
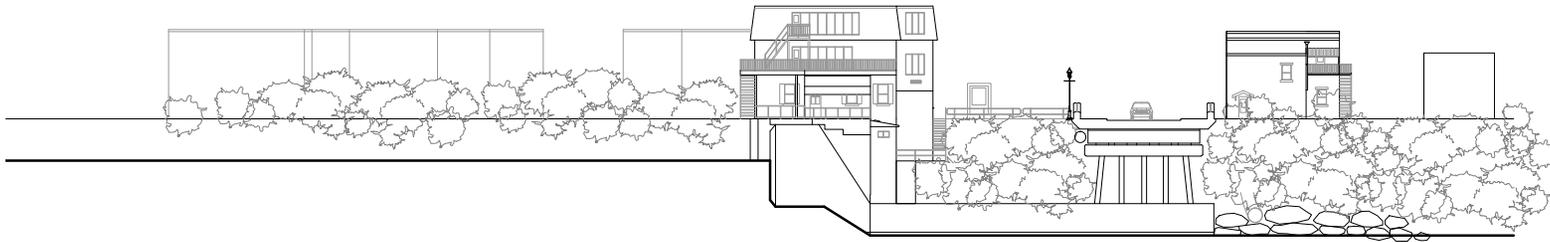
Fig. 79 (top right): Parking lot at the rear of Main Street (© Rebecca Lu 2011)

Fig. 80 (bottom): Plan of proposed site - BIG SHED SCALE 1:5000

**Fig. 81 (opposite page):** Map of visitor anchors and their patterns of movement  
SCALE 1:1500



- VISITOR ANCHORS
- PRIMARY PATTERNS OF TRAVEL (NEWCOMERS)
- SECONDARY PATTERNS OF TRAVEL (NEWCOMERS)



**Fig. 82 (top left):** Section of the proposed site looking West - BIG SHED SCALE 1:650  
**Fig. 83 (middle left):** Section of the proposed site looking North - BIG SHED SCALE 1:650  
**Fig. 84 (bottom):** A photograph of the existing site (© Rebecca Lu 2011)



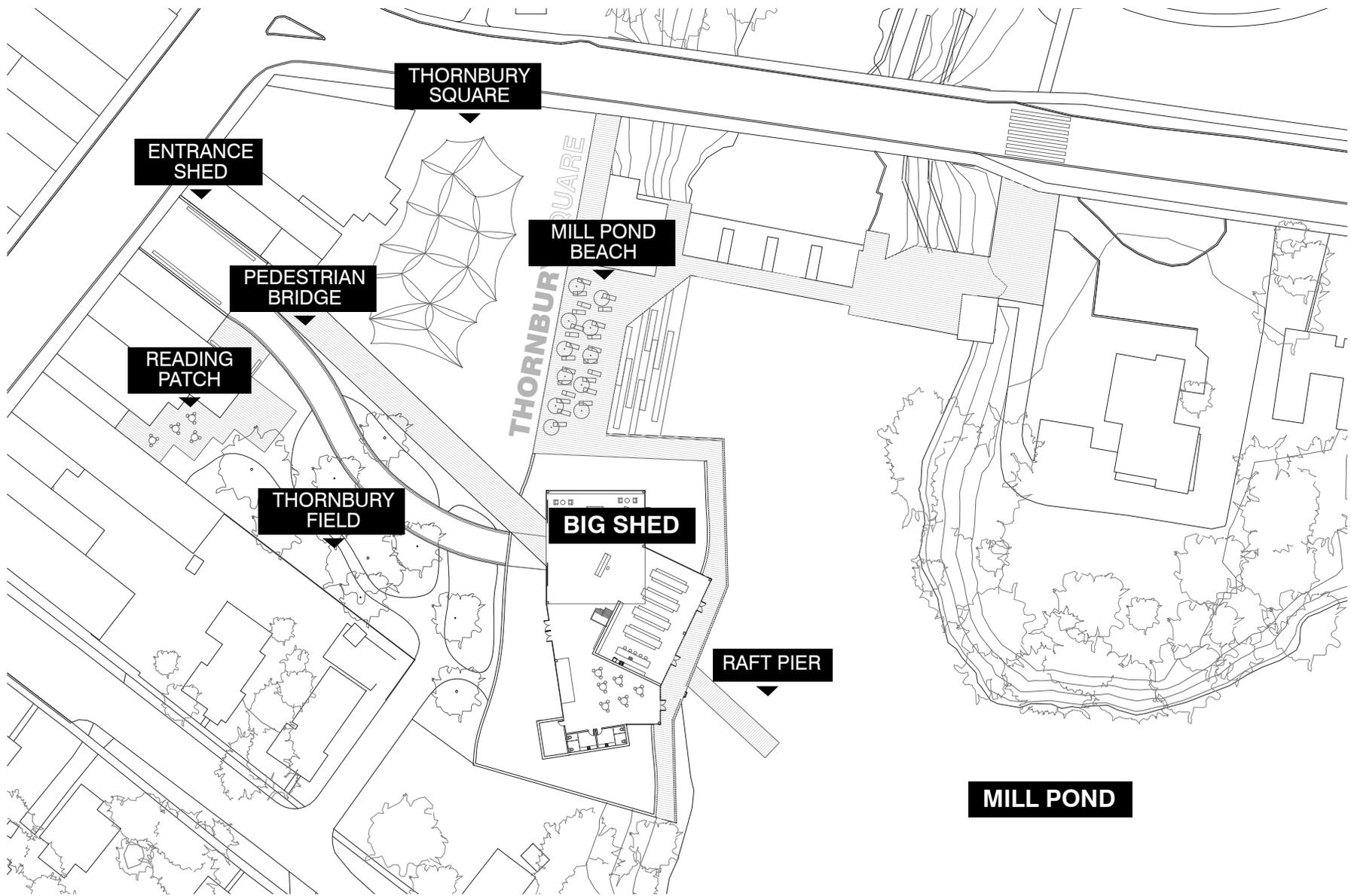


Fig. 85: Site plan of the BIG SHED proposal  
SCALE 1:1000

### *Description*

First of all, it was critical for the structure to be identifiable from a distance in order to anchor its position as a prominent site within the village, to establish itself role as a place of convergence and to achieve the visibility needed for the success of the project. As such, the building is conceived as a large shed, a simple volume whose presence is striking, yet does not impose itself as a foreign object in the landscape. Its fluid form is reminiscent of the salmon and trout that populate the waters and is also designed to encourage unexpected visual relations with the river. The shed's relationship to the terrain is such that the structure is placed to overcome the river's edge and allow its users a proximity and accessibility to the river that did not otherwise exist. Furthermore, its directionality properly negotiates the established axes of the town, adjusted so as to act as a place of convergence for existing paths of travel.

The BIG SHED is conceived as a community centre that is designed to house functions that will accommodate those needs of the community, as outlined throughout this work. First of all, the project is conceived as a semi-open air pavilion – a construction of large wooden arches, which hinges on a fully enclosed steel and glass structure. The exterior skin acts as a large scale shade structure, or screen, while the interior volume, at night becomes a lantern, as a gesture to the lighthouse that once stood on the concrete pier in the harbour. Furthermore, the spacing of the arches is irregular so to create differing and ever-changing qualities of light that mimics a barn-like space, much like those sheds once used for the storage of apples and other fruits. This area, which is partially exposed to the elements, is intended to serve as a gallery space for art exhibitions, informal community events occurring in mild weather, private gatherings, etc. A promenade area envelops the building, creating additional outdoor spaces for standing and viewing. A **raft pier** is added at water level to provide parking for kayaks, rafts and canoes and access to the platform is achieved through use of an attached ladder (which further makes reference to Thornbury's beloved concrete pier). The addition of this feature will serve to restore life to the Beaver River, as the now obsolete Beaver River Rat race once did, and create new links between Thornbury and the rural communities along the Beaver Valley.

Outside, the space features an area dubbed as the **Mill Pond beach** which is characterized by a sloped grassy section that delves into the water to form a "hill" of sorts. Multiple railroad ties are embedded within this mound to create a stepped terrain on which to sit, lie, fish or nap. This design alludes to the train tracks that once that ran through Thornbury's landscape. A Timber deck is featured above, with beach chairs and parasols for additional outdoor seating area. Adjacent to this segment is the **Thornbury Square**: a large paved plaza which acts as a multi-purpose open square. On the weekends, it is designed to house the local farmer's market – a lieu for tourists, newcomers and rural residents alike to purchase local goods and products such as fruit, produce, meats, cheeses, specialty baked goods, wine from micro-wineries and crafts. (It is important to note that, currently, there exist farmer's markets in all the surroundings but Thornbury, including Owen Sound, Collingwood, Clarksburg and Meaford). This multi-functional space can also double as an open space for school fundraiser, community BBQs, community garage sales, outdoor movie nights and a region-wide destination for walk-a-thons or others event. More importantly, this large gathering space has the potential to become the official home of Thornbury's most popular event: The Chili ribfest/cookoff. A flexible system of poles and sailcloths ensure that the temporary shade structures will be able to accommodate any configuration – the imagery of white fabrics waving in the wind is designed to create visual reference to the sailboats that dot the Thornbury harbour.



Greenery

Timber deck

Stone pavers

Poured concrete

To the south of the square is the **Thornbury field** – an all-season park, complete with trees, lush greenery and small mounds of grass to lie on in the summer and, in the winter, for tobogganing. A wooden deck, acting as a **reading patch**, connects this space with the institutions on Main Street. It serves primarily as an outdoor space that underlines the importance of the bookstore – Jessica’s Book Nook – a popular institution for rural residents. On the other hand, this gesture also creates an opportunity for shops to develop their rear access and benefit from the foot traffic and vibrant activities occurring in the square.

A pedestrian bridge marks a subtle division between the field and the square and serves to link the exterior spaces to an indoor café located on the second floor of the BIG SHED. This walkway is linked to an outdoor terrace, which creates the potential to enlarge the café’s useable space in the summer and culminates in magnificent views overlooking the Mill Pond. Below, the enclosed space features a **community lodge** area for lounging, complete with a fireplace and comfortable seating. This area spills into the **Great hall**, which is located at the entrance of the shed; together, these rooms are intended to serve as gathering spaces winter events. The adjacent spaces include a community kitchen and dining area for monthly pancake breakfasts, strawberry socials and community suppers. **Meeting areas** for community groups and social organizations are located at the rear of the shed for added privacy; such functions are much needed particularly when the time comes for Wong’s restaurant to close its doors. The interior volume as a whole is conceived as a transparent glass enclosure to makes visible all the internal doings and activities of the community, as part of the concept plan to expose the qualities of everyday ruralism. In addition, the transparency and multiple openings to Mill pond and the semi-outdoor space mark a desire to make blend the indoor and outdoor spaces. Regarding the volumetrics of the space, the morphology was inspired by the footprints of certain “disappeared” structures in Thornbury’s historic landscape. Utilizing the outline of these buildings – namely, the Parkinson oatmeal mill, the A. Davis seed cleaning mill, the Snetsinger’s apple shed and the community shed – will serve to re-introduce elements of the town’s past as a manufacturing/processing center.

The overall project includes the making of an **entrance shed** to fill the gap in the built form of Main Street. It can be described as a small yellow shelter which both occupies the void left by the destroyed post office and signals the existence of a large public space positioned behind the shops.

Finally, the proposal includes re-inhabiting the obsolete infrastructure of the Thornbury dam. The idea is that, perhaps by transforming it into a usable public space, the community will be better armed to fend off movements to destroy the dam. Furthermore, this configuration allows more space viewing the salmon and trout run during the fall and features multiple seating areas to allow its users to enjoy the view of one of Thornbury’s most prominent features. The idea of a new “dam bridge” also creates a natural link between the BIG SHED and the river **edge walk** (described in a later section).

In sum, this central facility and large public congregation space is primed to act as a socializing hub, a source of informal gatherings and a space where newcomers and long-timers can invariably have chance encounters.

**Fig. 86 (opposite page):** Material palette diagram – BIG SHED  
SCALE 1:1500

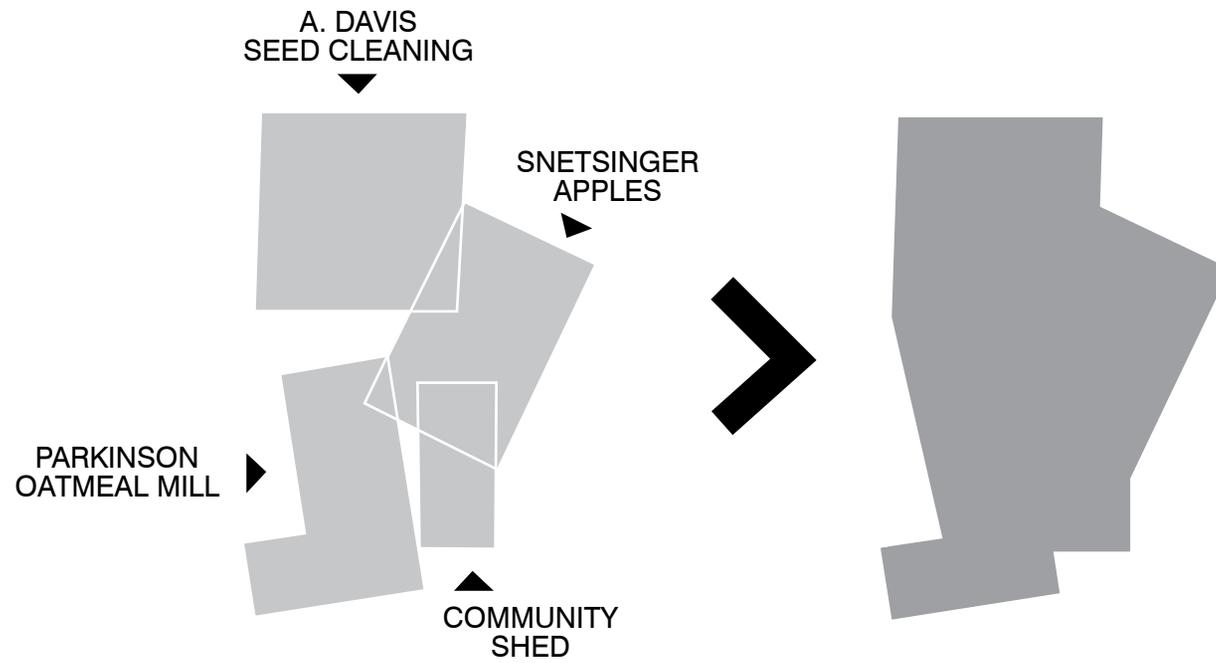
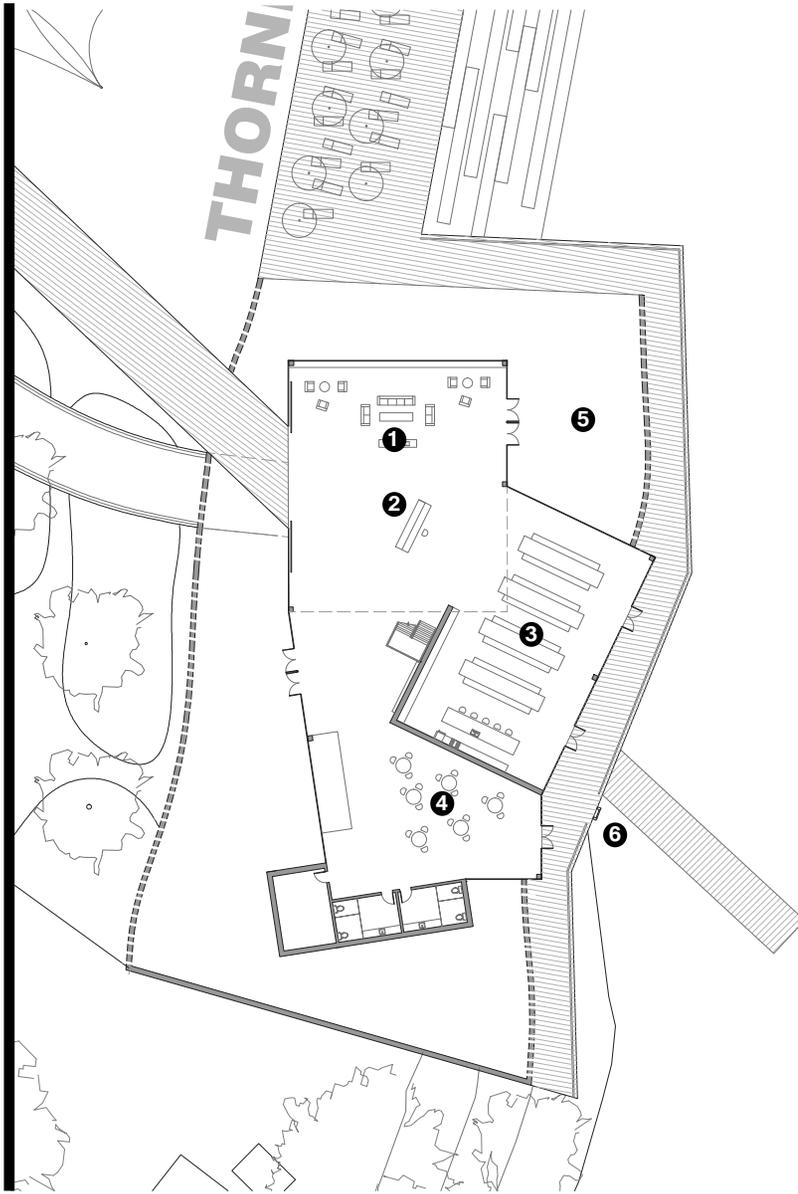
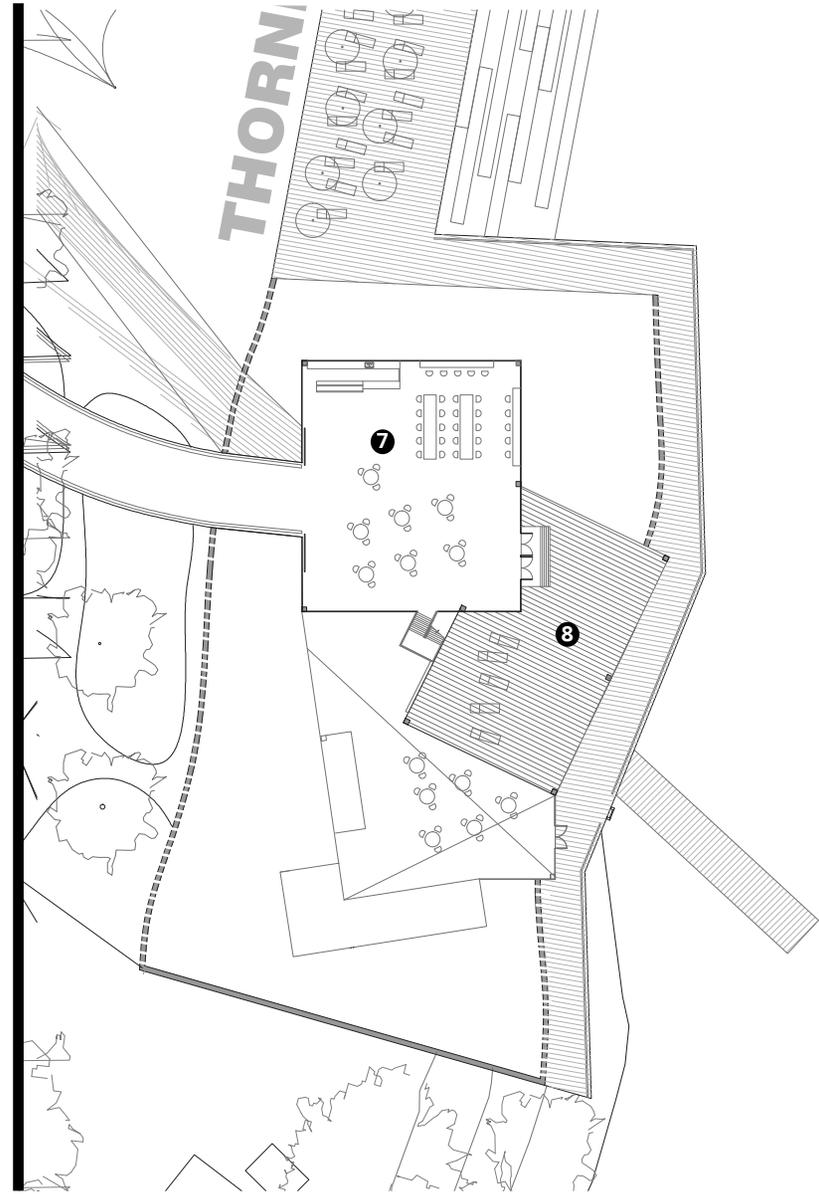


Fig. 87 (above): Morphology of the BIG SHED

Fig. 88 (right): BIG SHED floor plans SCALE 1:650



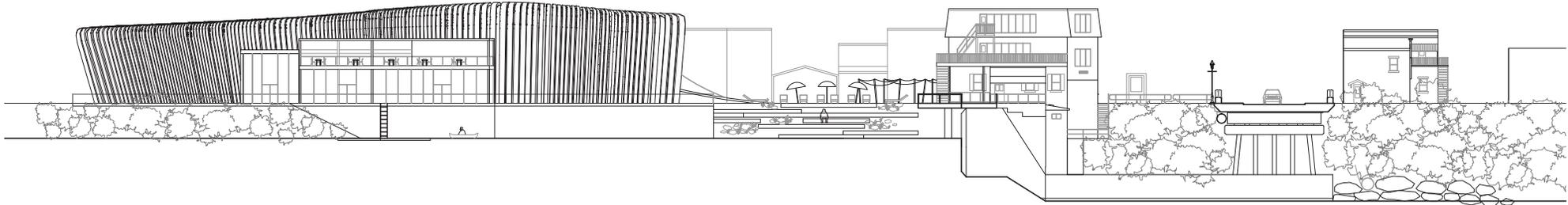
- 1 communal lodge
- 2 great hall
- 3 community kitchen
- 4 meeting room
- 5 semi-outdoor space
- 6 ladder to raft parking



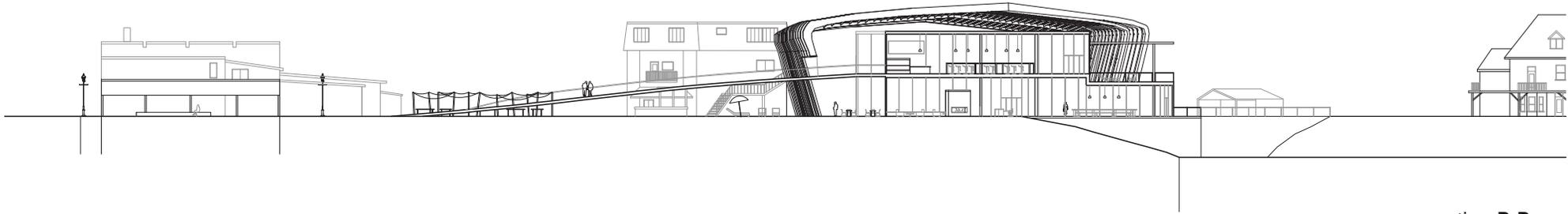
- 7 shed cafe
- 8 shed cafe (outdoor terrace)



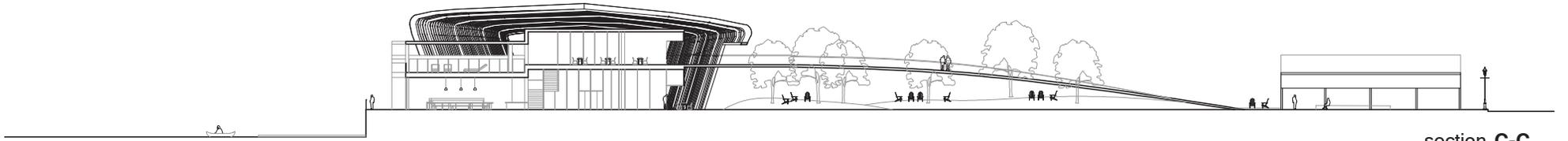
Fig. 89: BIG SHED sections SCALE 1:5000



section **A-A**  
SCALE 1:650

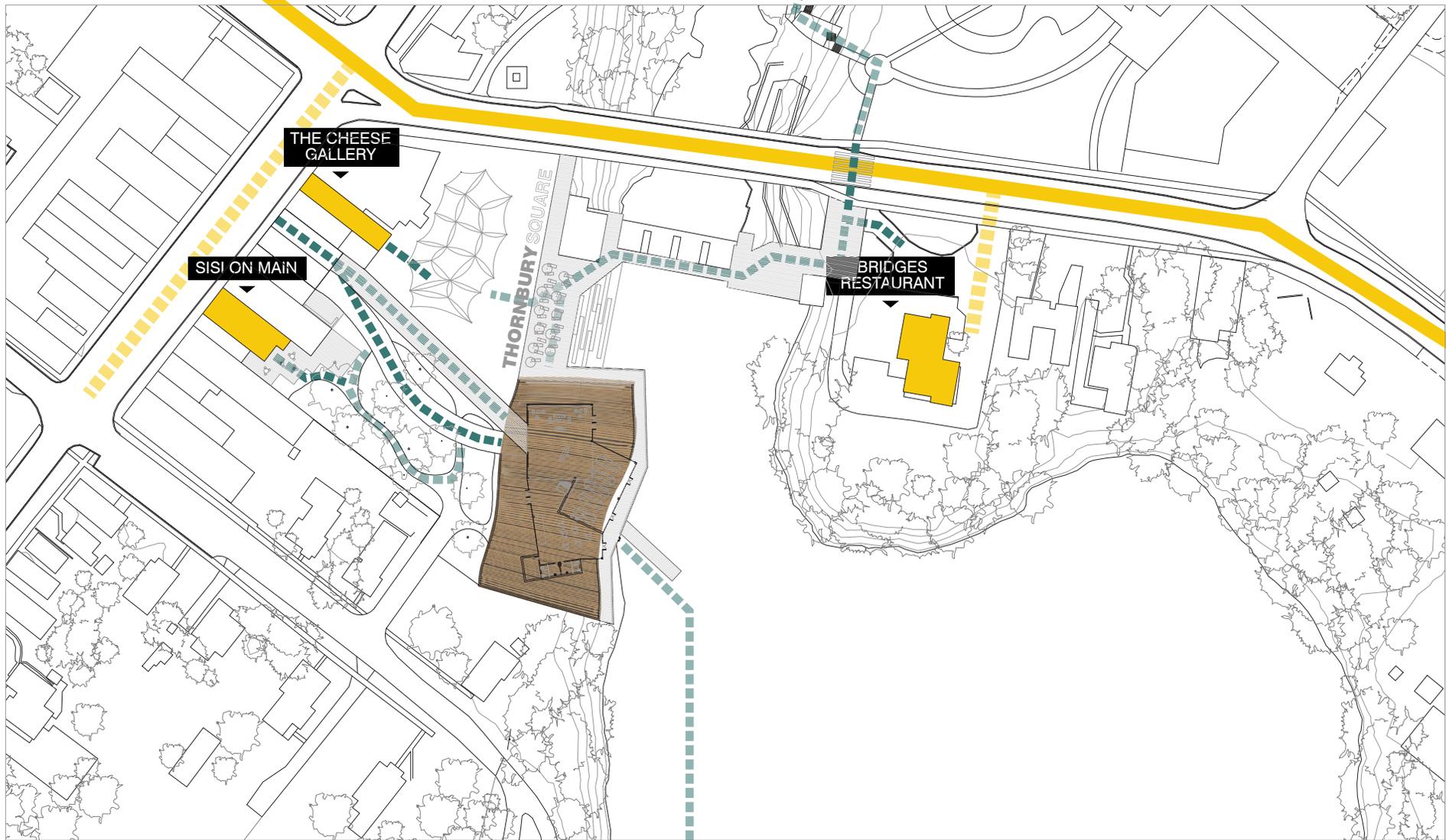


section **B-B**  
SCALE 1:650



section **C-C**  
SCALE 1:650

**Fig. 90:** Modified patterns of movement resulting from the BIG SHED intervention  
SCALE 1:1500



- VISITOR ANCHORS
- PRIMARY PATTERNS OF TRAVEL (NEWCOMERS)
- SECONDARY PATTERNS OF TRAVEL (NEWCOMERS)
- NEW PATTERNS OF TRAVEL



Fig. 91: BIG SHED east elevation render





Fig. 92: BIG SHED south elevation render







Fig. 93: BIG SHED interior render



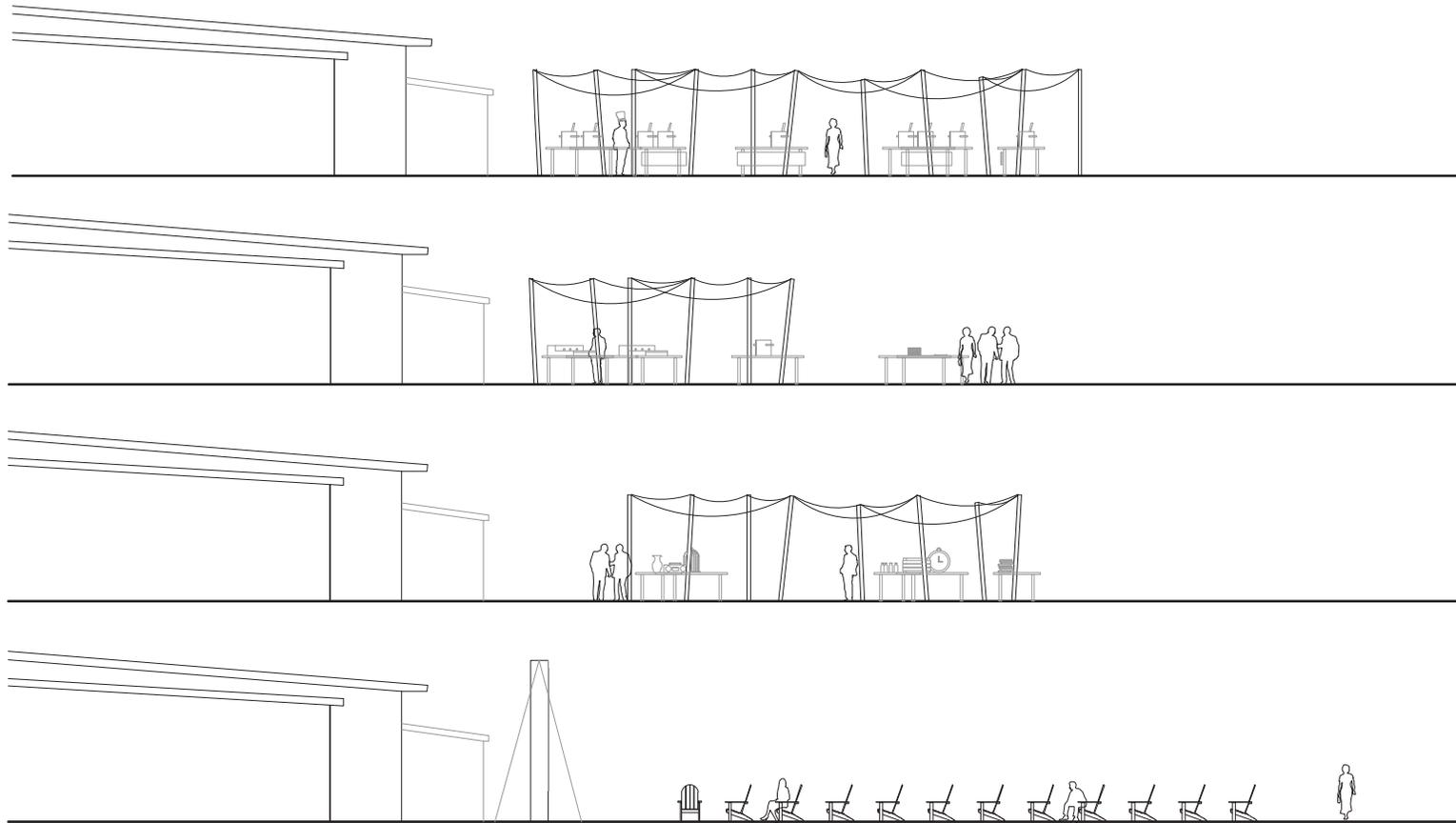


Fig. 94: ENTRANCE SHED render



#### POTENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF THORNBURY SQUARE

- ① Strawberry socials
- ② Thornbury Chili Ribfest/cookoff
- ③ Pancake breakfasts
- ④ Outdoor movie nights



**Fig. 95:** Diagram illustrating the flexibility and functionality of Thornbury Square  
SCALE 1:200





**Fig. 96 (left):** Photograph of the coal shed  
 © Rebecca Lu 2011

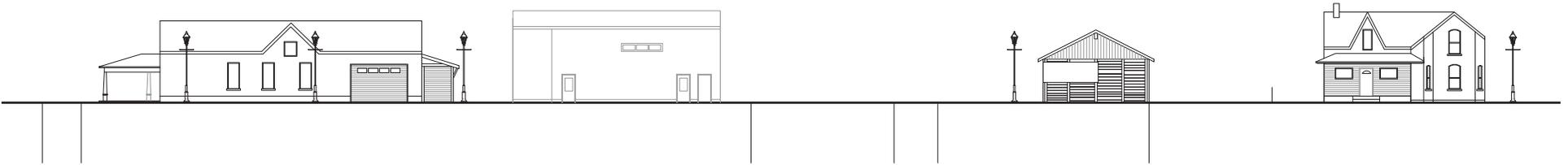
**Fig. 97 (right):** Plan of proposed site - PARTY SHED  
 SCALE 1:5000



## PARTY SHED

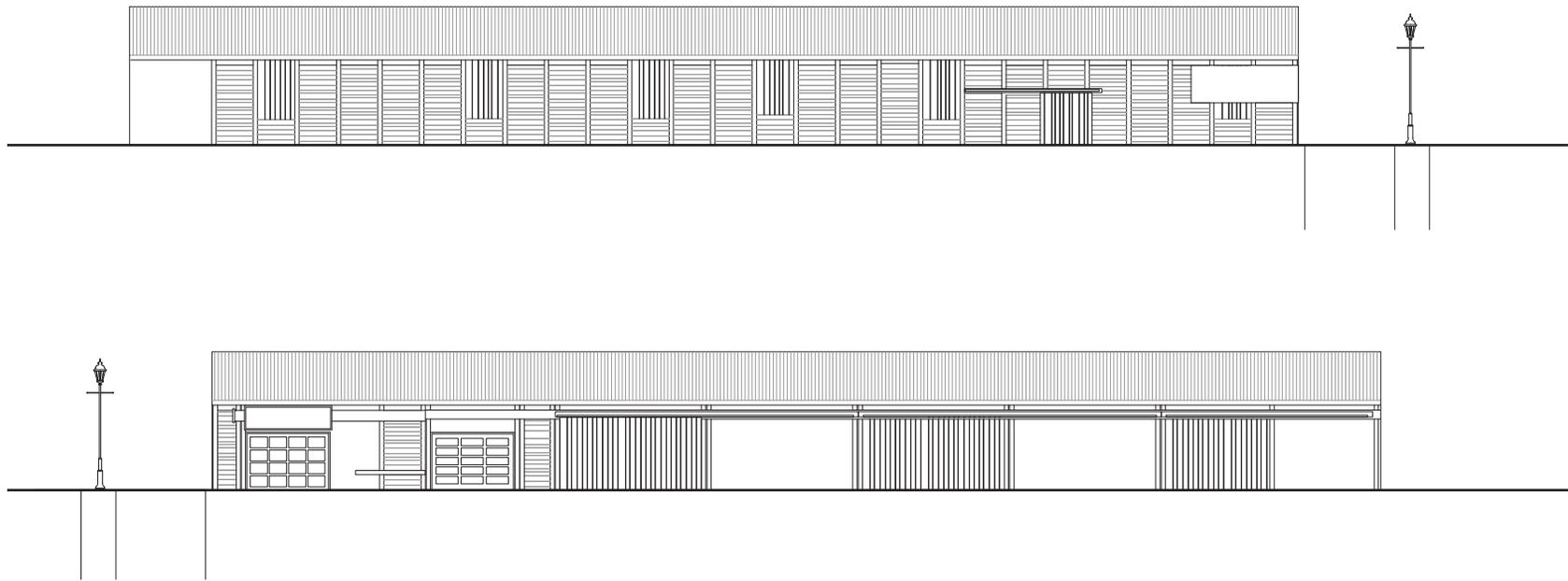
### Site

The proposed site is that of the old wood & coal shed, which has been a part of Thornbury's landscape since the 1920s. Although it is an important piece of the town's heritage, it is currently abandoned, derelict and is at risk of being demolished. The idea for the PARTY SHED is to re-inhabit this unwanted structure and turn it into a "stop-over" along the Georgian Trail. This site offers the opportunity to not only mark the entrance to the town, but further direct interest to the downtown core and harbourfront. This is a strategic point for development as the Georgian Trail links Thornbury to the outermost developments such as Trail Woods and Lora Bay Phase I, II and III as well as the adjacent communities of Meaford and Collingwood. As mentioned, the Georgian trail is also significant as a heritage feature because of its location on the former rail lines.



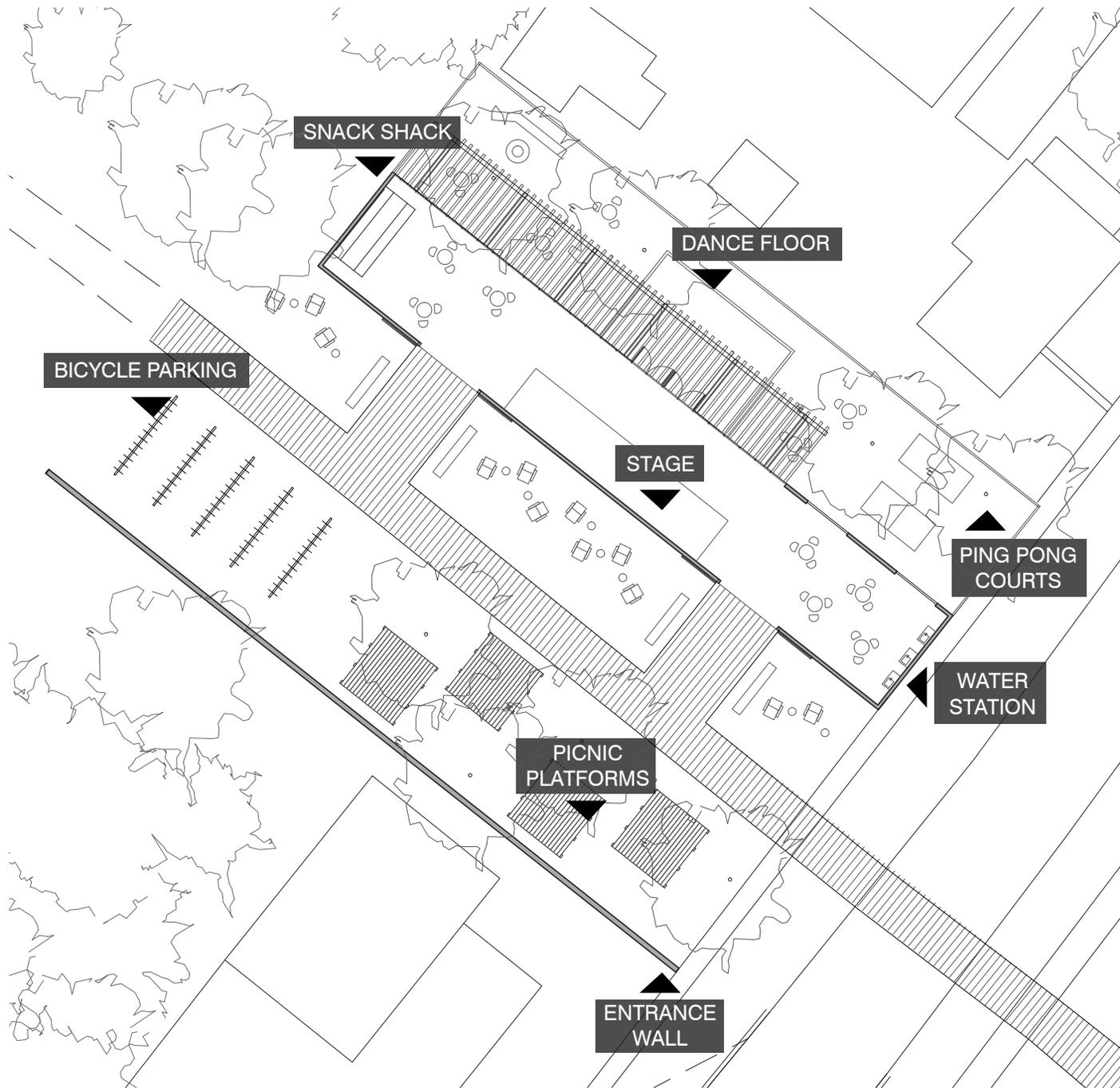
**Fig. 98 (top):** Section looking West of the proposed site - PARTY SHED  
SCALE 1:400

**Fig. 99 (bottom):** Photograph of the existing site - PARTY SHED (© Rebecca Lu 2011)



**Fig. 100 (top):** South elevation of the coal shed SCALE 1:250

**Fig. 101 (bottom):** North elevation of the coal shed SCALE 1:250





### *Description*

The proposal consists of re-using an existing building and erecting a wall structure flanking the Georgian trail that signals the entrance into Thornbury. The portion of the path leading up to the coal structure is conceived as a wood deck; this change in material from gravel to timber is aimed at creating a proper transition into Thornbury. On the south side of the site, there is ample bicycle parking to encourage stopovers in the village and, as well, to inspire newcomers to employ the Georgian trail as a transit route between the resort developments and Thornbury. Adjacent to this space are planted a series of apple trees interspaced by large wooden picnic platforms which can be shared amongst different parties. This simple gesture functions to insert a snapshot of the apple orchards that exist outside the downtown area and to acquaint visitors to Thornbury's heritage as "apple country". Apple picking, picnicking and resting are amongst the various activities that can occur in this space. The concept of picnic platforms is further inspired by the parties of picnickers which would congregate while waiting to catch the North Grey Railway passenger train on route to Collingwood station (see Fig. 103).

Inside, the old coal shed will be retrofitted for use as an ice cream shack, a water station and a party area. The design calls for two sets of sliding barn doors which allow for the larger part of the façade to be opened up during the summer. A timber deck will be constructed on the south side of the building for added outdoor space. Inside, there is a stage to accommodate weekly theater presentations from the Thornbury community theater group and, potentially, local bands as well. Outside, in the 'backyard', there are seating areas for smaller outdoor festivities as well as well as a dance floor and a ping pong court, designed to bring people together through play. In the evenings, this volume is conceived to transform into an indoor/outdoor party shed - a night-time informal hangout space with music for the entire community or a space for fundraiser parties, dances, mixers, etc.

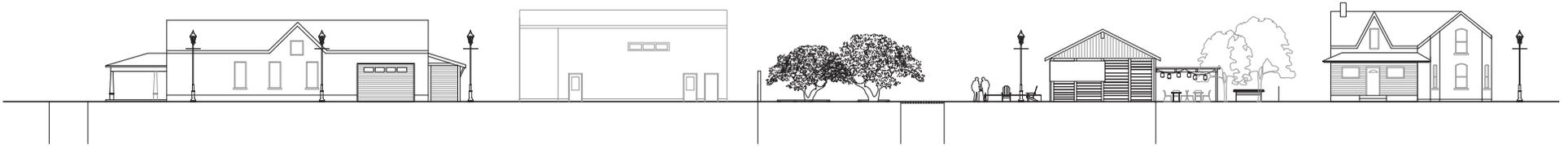
**Fig. 102 (opposite page):** Floor plan and program - PARTY SHED  
SCALE 1:350

**Fig. 103:** Historical photograph of people picnicking by the North Grey Railway (Trail Woods Community 2011)

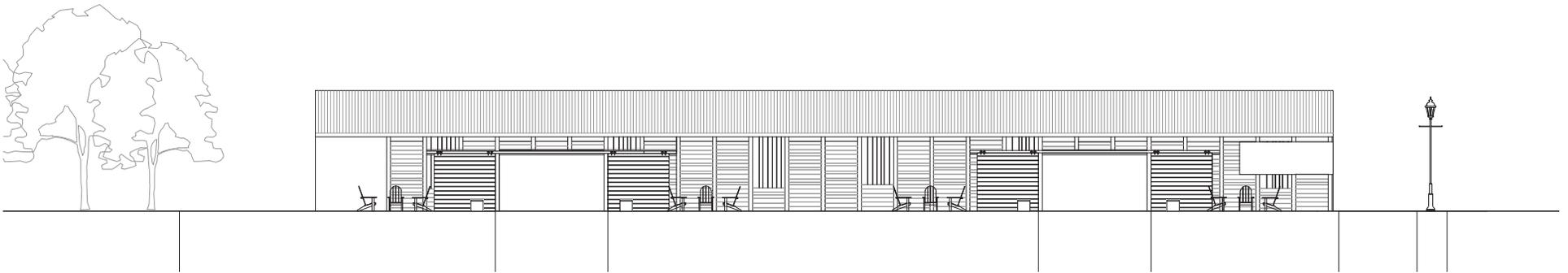


SCALE 1:5000

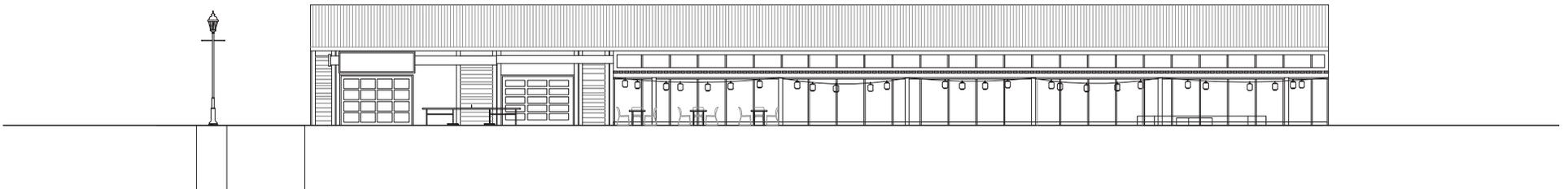
Fig. 104: PARTY SHED sections



section **A-A**  
SCALE 1:400



section **B-B**  
SCALE 1:250



section **C-C**  
SCALE 1:250



Fig. 105: PARTY SHED east elevation render

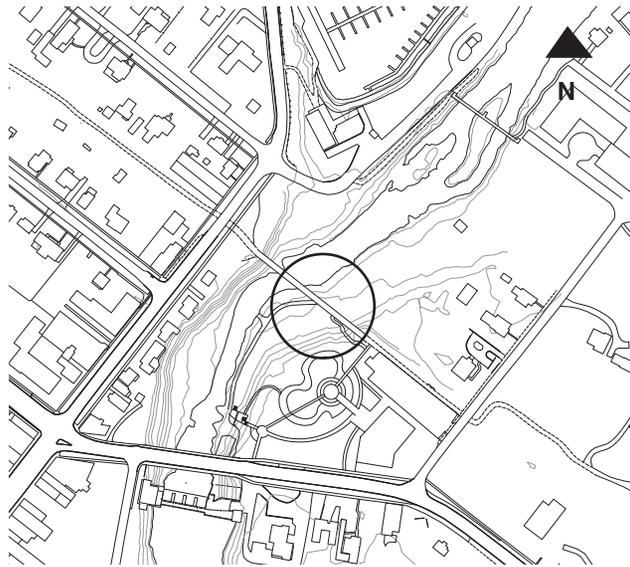






Fig. 106: PARTY SHED backyard night render





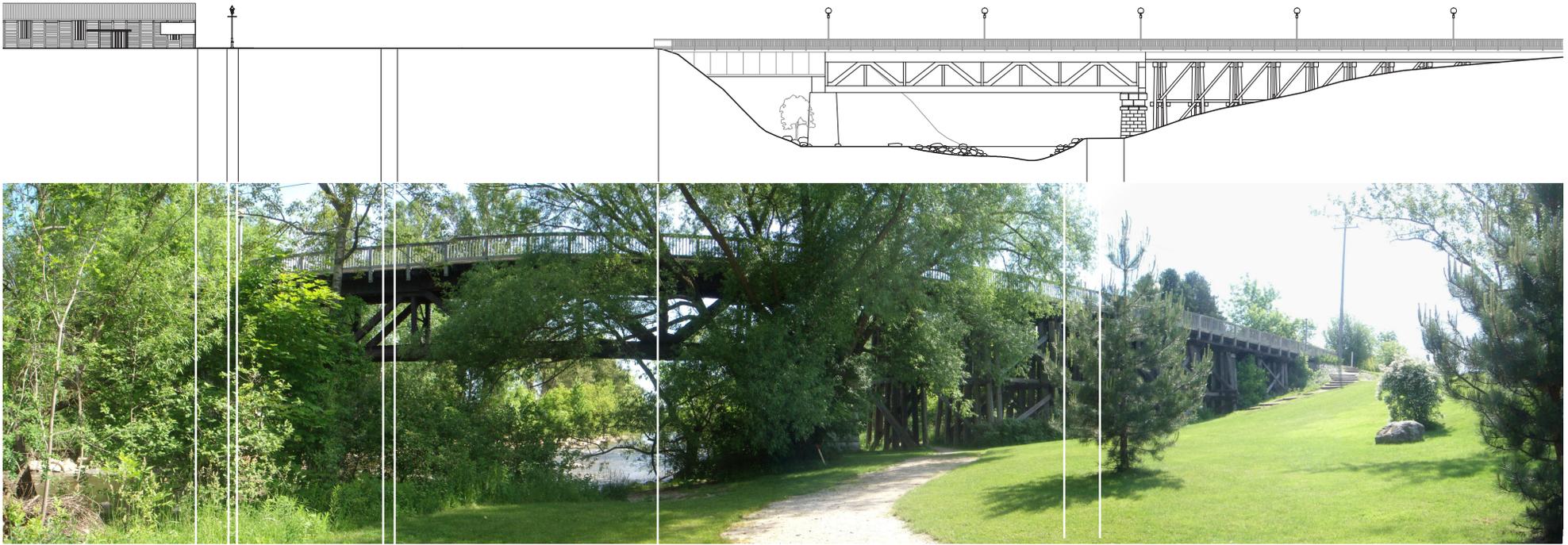
## FISH SHED

### *Site*

The proposed site is located along the river's EDGE WALK, at the junction of the bridge along the Georgian Trail. This location provides access to and from the Georgian Trail from the Beaver River and is the opportune placement to create a point of reference, or a link to the EDGE WALK. An architectural intervention at this spot could create the opportunity for travellers along the trail to step down into the underbelly of the Beaver Valley and explore all that this body of water has to offer.

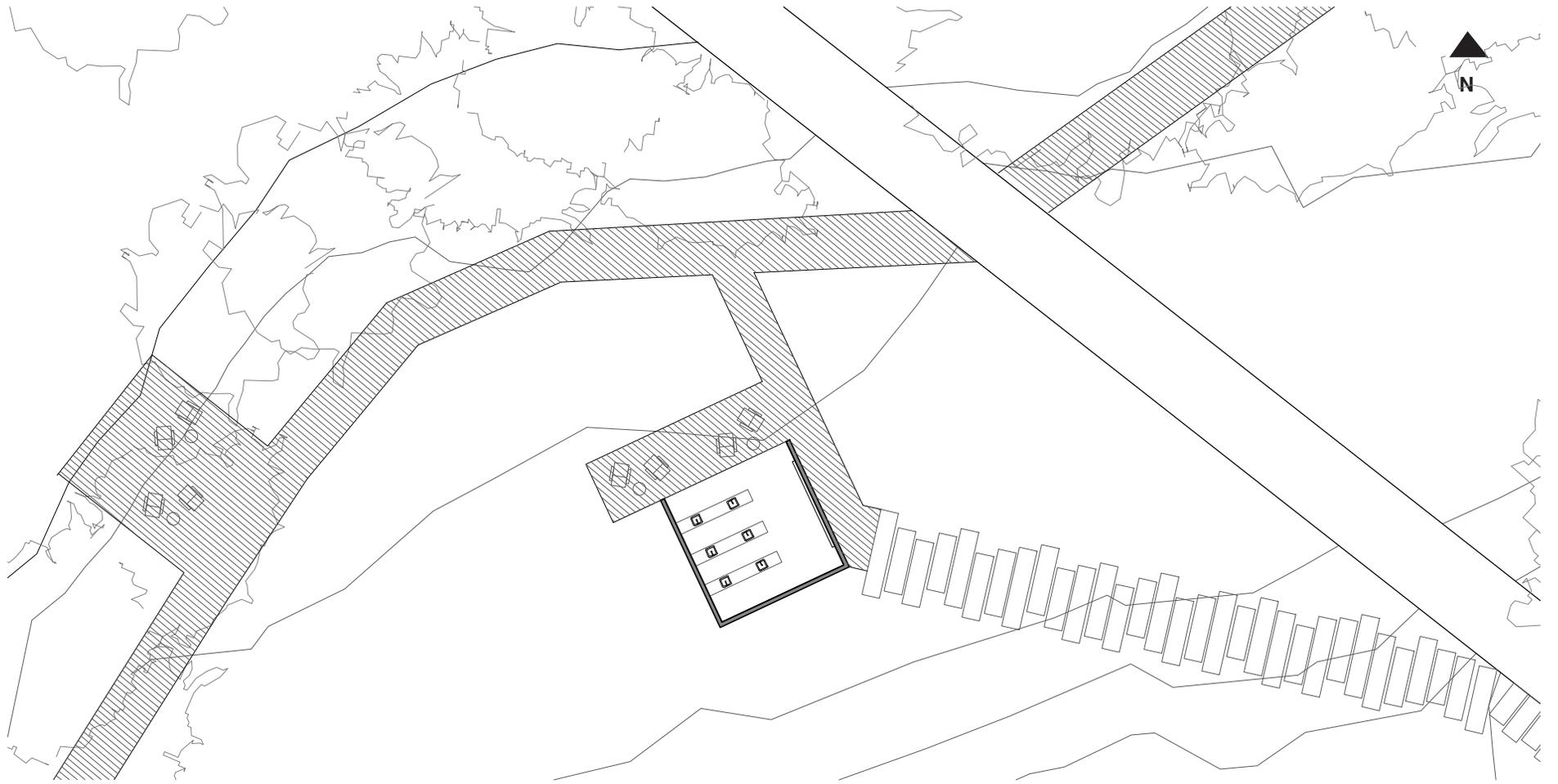
**Fig. 107:** Plan of proposed site - FISH SHED  
SCALE 1:5000





**Fig. 108 (top):** Section of the proposed site looking North - FISH SHED  
SCALE 1:650

**Fig. 109 (bottom):** Photograph of the existing site - FISH SHED (© Rebecca Lu 2011)



SCALE 1:300

### *Description*

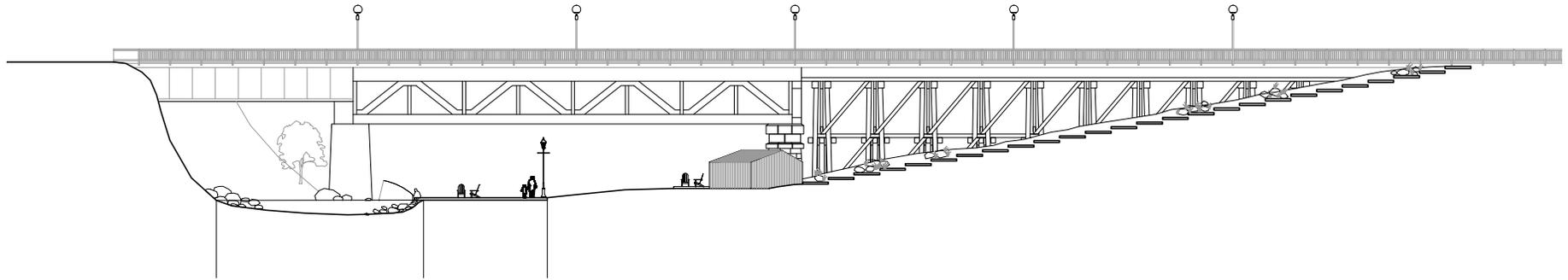
Much like the previous schemes, this project makes reference to the typology of the shed. It is designed as a small, simple, shelter of wood construction with a pitched roof. The entire volume is painted a vibrant yellow and is embedded into the sloped terrain to draw attention to the EDGE WALK from above. The FISH SHED will serve as a resting and cleaning station for Thornbury's many fishermen, anglers and passer-bys. Fishing is as an important sport to the community and, by creating a public space that makes such activity visible and accessible, conversations amongst fishermen and newcomers are encouraged. Furthermore, it becomes easier to partake or simply view the fishing experience that is authentic to Thornbury. A fishing platform with minimal seating is further added opposite to the shed to enable users to establish a close proximity to the river. And, as part of the overall scheme, the FISH SHED will contribute to intensifying the use of the bridges, stimulating appeal for the new path along the river and making reference to the neighbouring sheds.

**Fig. 110 (opposite page):** FISH SHED site plan

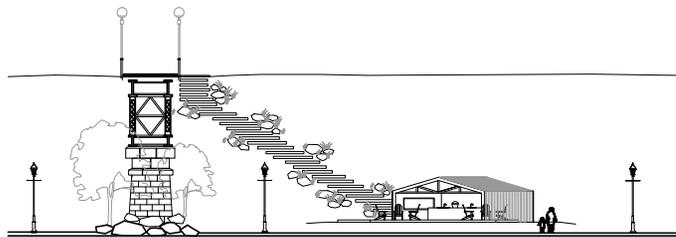


SCALE 1:5000

Fig. 111: FISH SHED sections



section A-A  
SCALE 1:500



section B-B  
SCALE 1:500



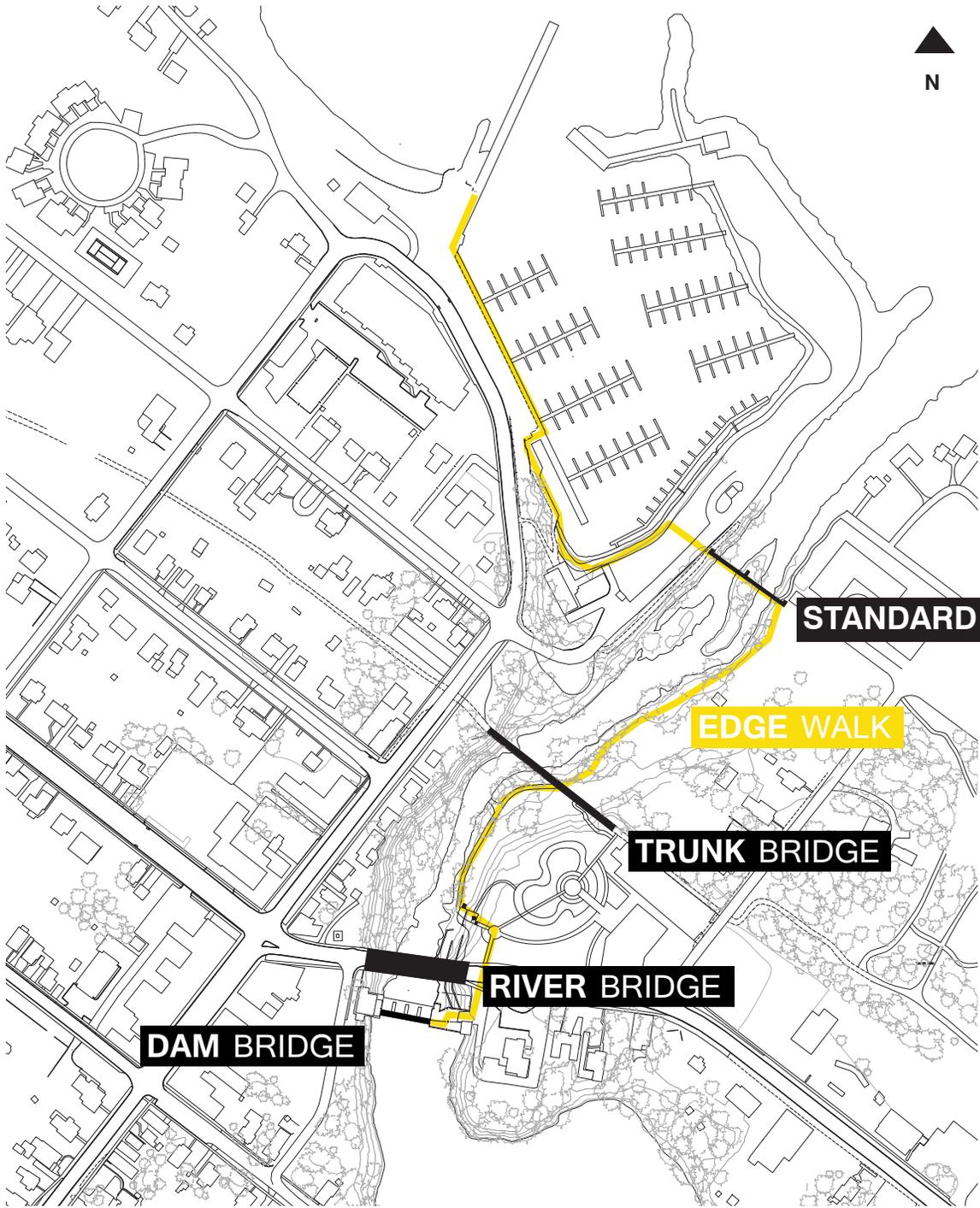
Fig. 112: FISH SHED south elevation render







Fig. 113: FISH SHED render, viewed from the Georgian Trail



**DAM BRIDGE**

**RIVER BRIDGE**

**TRUNK BRIDGE**

**EDGE WALK**

**STANDARD BRIDGE**



## FOUR BRIDGES

### *Description*

The project consists on expanding the 'Riverwalk' which currently exists, magnifying its importance and generating new relations between Thornbury and the Beaver River. The intent is to be able to intensify the use of Thornbury's bridges through the creation of a public promenade that links these structures and creating new patterns of travel which is shared by newcomers and residents, so as to inspire an overlap in experience, movement and knowledge of local culture. Essentially, this public promenade negotiates the threshold between the natural landscape and the village, which resides on the ground high above the river. The second component of the proposal is to endow each bridge structure with a name in order to demonstrate their importance to community identity and to allude to their historical associations.

**Fig. 114:** Site plan illustrating the FOUR BRIDGES proposal  
SCALE 1:3750

1



2



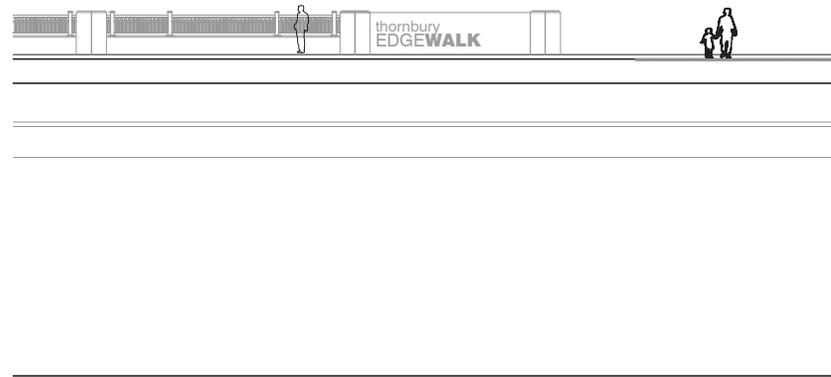
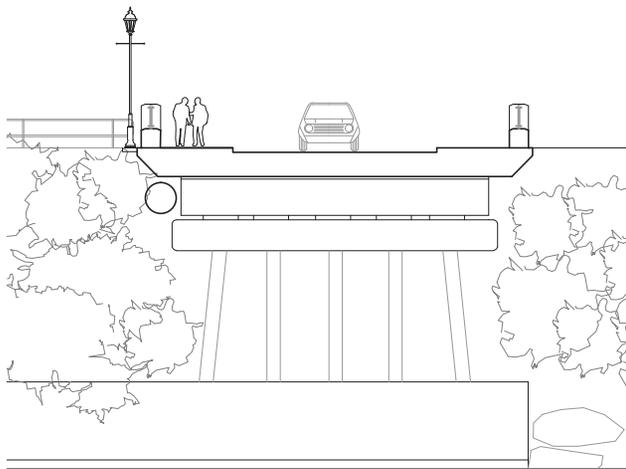
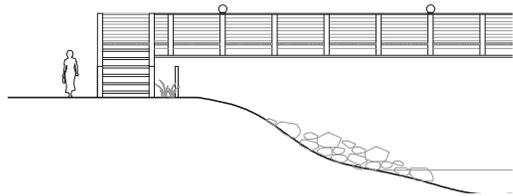
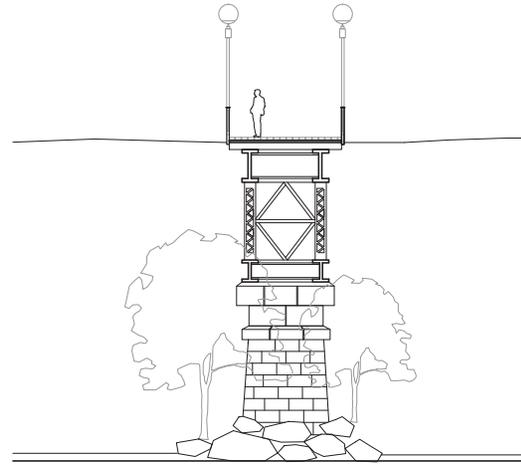
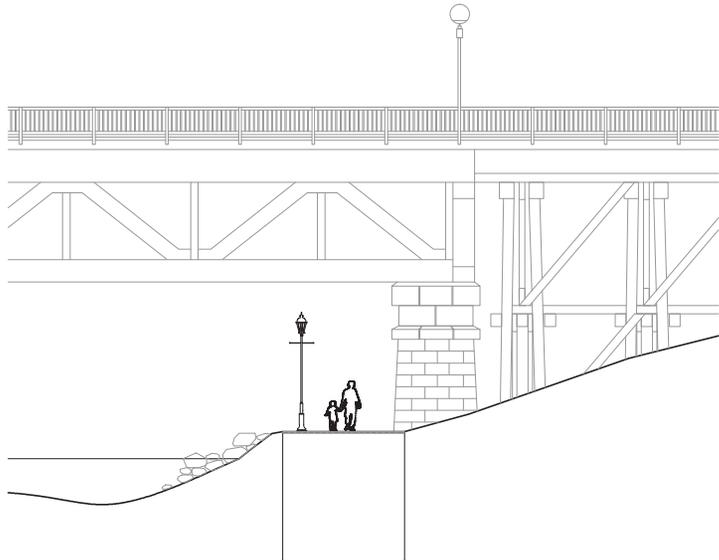
3



- 1 **STANDARD BRIDGE:** It is a wooden, pedestrian bridge that was built around 1909 to service the Standard Chemical plant, which was responsible for distilling processes to make charcoal, acetate of lime, acetone and wood alcohol.
- 2 **TRUNK BRIDGE:** The name makes reference to the Grand Trunk Railway which took over the North Grey Railway in the late 1800s. Today, this bridge allows users of the Georgian trail to span the Beaver River.
- 3 **RIVER BRIDGE:** Thornbury's first bridge was erected in this place and was, originally, dubbed the 'River Bridge'. Prior to this, inhabitants on the west side of the river had to be ferried across the pond in a canoe.
- 4 **DAM BRIDGE:** (Introduced earlier, as part of the BIG COMMUNITY SHED proposal).

Fig. 115 (opposite page): Photographs of Thornbury's bridges (© Rebecca Lu 2011)

**Fig. 116 (opposite page):** Sections through the FOUR BRIDGES proposal  
SCALE 1:250 for all drawings  
(from top to bottom: Trunk Bridge, Standard Bridge & River Bridge)



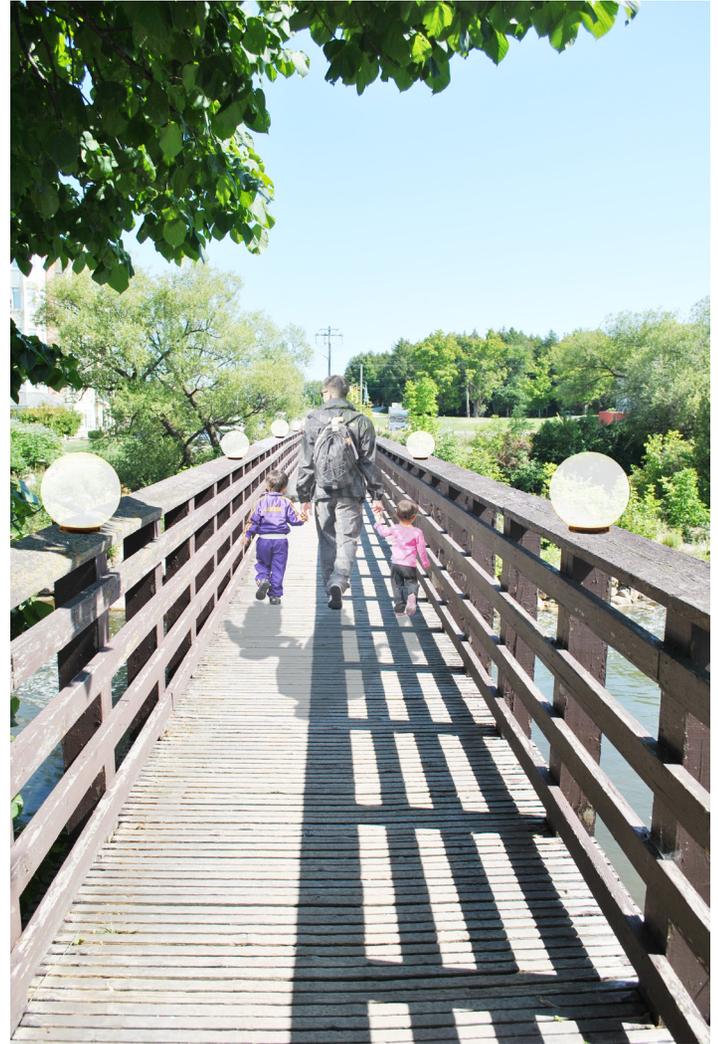


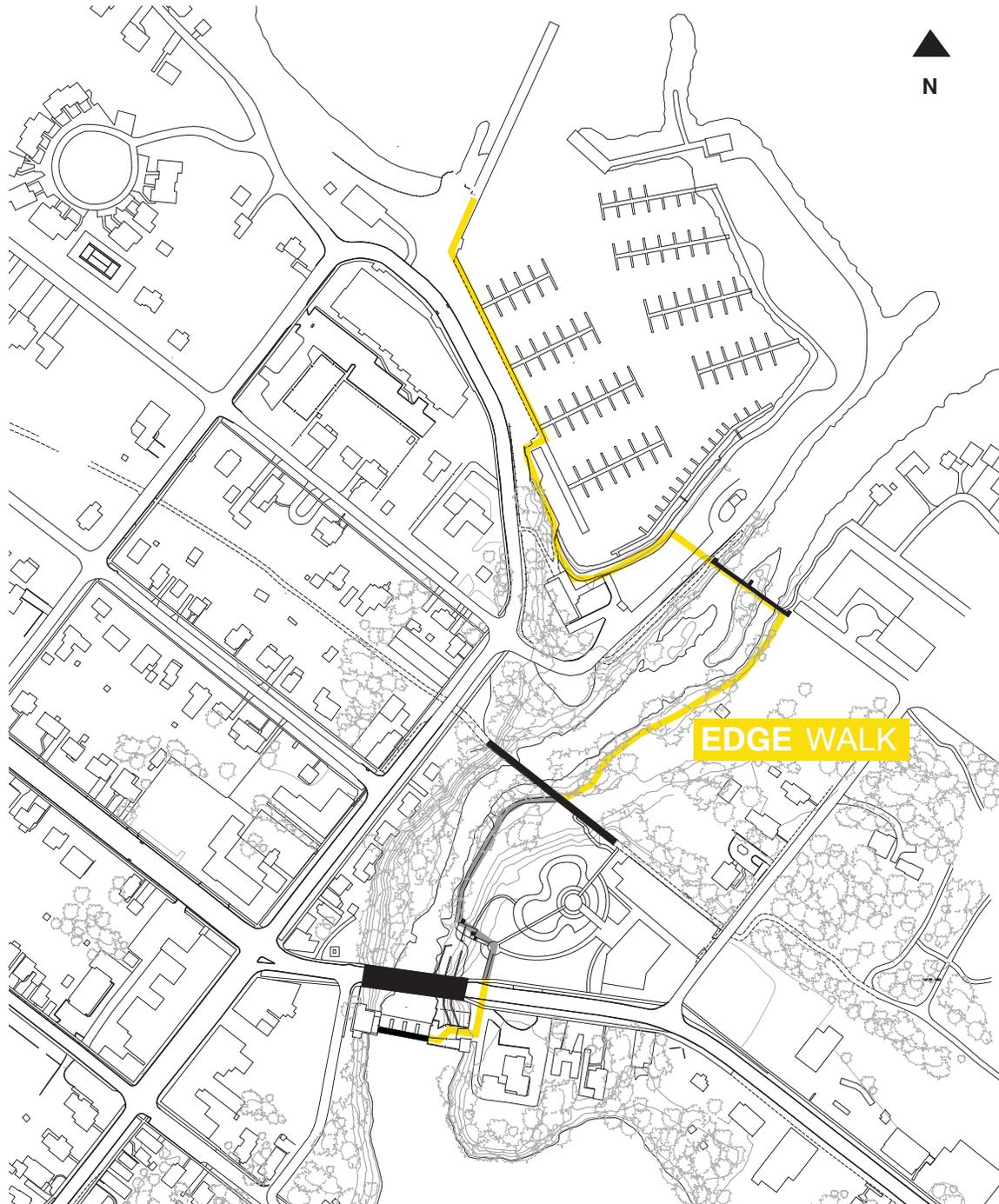


Fig. 117: Renderings of the Standard Bridge



Fig. 118: Rendering of the River Bridge and Dam Bridge





- Existing river walk path
- Extension of the river walk path (EDGE WALK)

## EDGE WALK

Thornbury's 'Riverwalk' is a sinuous gravel path which runs along the Beaver River, stretching from the fish ladder to the underside of the Georgian trail (see Fig. 119 and Fig. 120). The 'Riverwalk' project was inaugurated by the Town of the Blue Mountains soon after the dam was rehabilitated in 2003 – the scheme consisted of constructing a wooden staircase and a series of viewing platform which link the area adjacent to Town Hall and the riverbank.

As previously mentioned, the EDGE WALK component of the proposal consists of extending and revitalizing the existing river path for the purposes of knitting together Thornbury's bridges with the BIG SHED, THE PARTY SHED, the FISH SHED as well as the APPLE PIER. In the same vein, it was necessary to establish a connection between the Harbourfront and downtown core to further underline the significance of the Georgian Bay and the marina. This intervention aims to weave the theme of PIERS, BRIDGES and SHEDS into the landscape and establish a continuous narrative for the project – one which enables a personal discovery and understanding of Thornbury's heritage and local culture.

The idea is also to reinvigorate this trail by creating a wooden promenade that establishes both a visual and material continuity amongst the various interventions. This type of surface is not only consistent with the overall character of Thornbury, but allows for pedestrian traffic to occur more readily and comfortably. Essentially, this path is designed for leisurely strolls, with views and facilities to enjoy along the way as well as places for sitting, talking, learning, watching and interacting. As mentioned throughout the thesis, incoming populations must enter downtown areas by car and thus are prone to travel to and from specific destinations in motorized vehicles, which further amplifies the disconnection between population subgroups. Thus, it becomes critical to encourage enhanced pedestrian channels and opportunities for convergence within the downtown core. Increased foot travel in and amongst core areas is likely to intensify the use and awareness of special places as well as amplify closeness and commonality between newcomers and locals.

On a final note, the decision to rename Thornbury's 'Riverwalk' to, simply, EDGE WALK stems from the desire to dissociate the project from the area's residential projects Riverwalk Phase I and II.

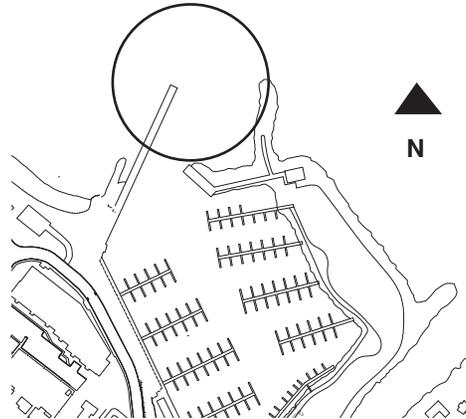
**Fig. 119 (left):** Map of the existing Riverwalk versus the extended EDGE WALK  
SCALE 1:3750





**Fig. 120 (left):** Photograph of the exiting Riverwalk (© Rebecca Lu 2011)  
**Fig. 121 (right):** Rendered view of the EDGE WALK





## APPLE PIER

### *Site*

As mentioned earlier, the thin concrete pier is a local landmark which enables users to wander at a distance from the shore and enjoy a wide view of the harbour. It is dotted with a ladder, allowing children to jump off the end of the pier, climb back up and repeat. For many years, the Thornbury lighthouse was situated at the end of the long pier, marking the entrance to the Harbour and serving as a gateway to the town. This site was chosen as the Thornbury harbour serves as an entry point for many visitors and creates the opportunity to forge a link between the Georgian Bay and the downtown core.

**Fig. 122 (left):** Photograph of people jumping off the pier (Pipher 2006)

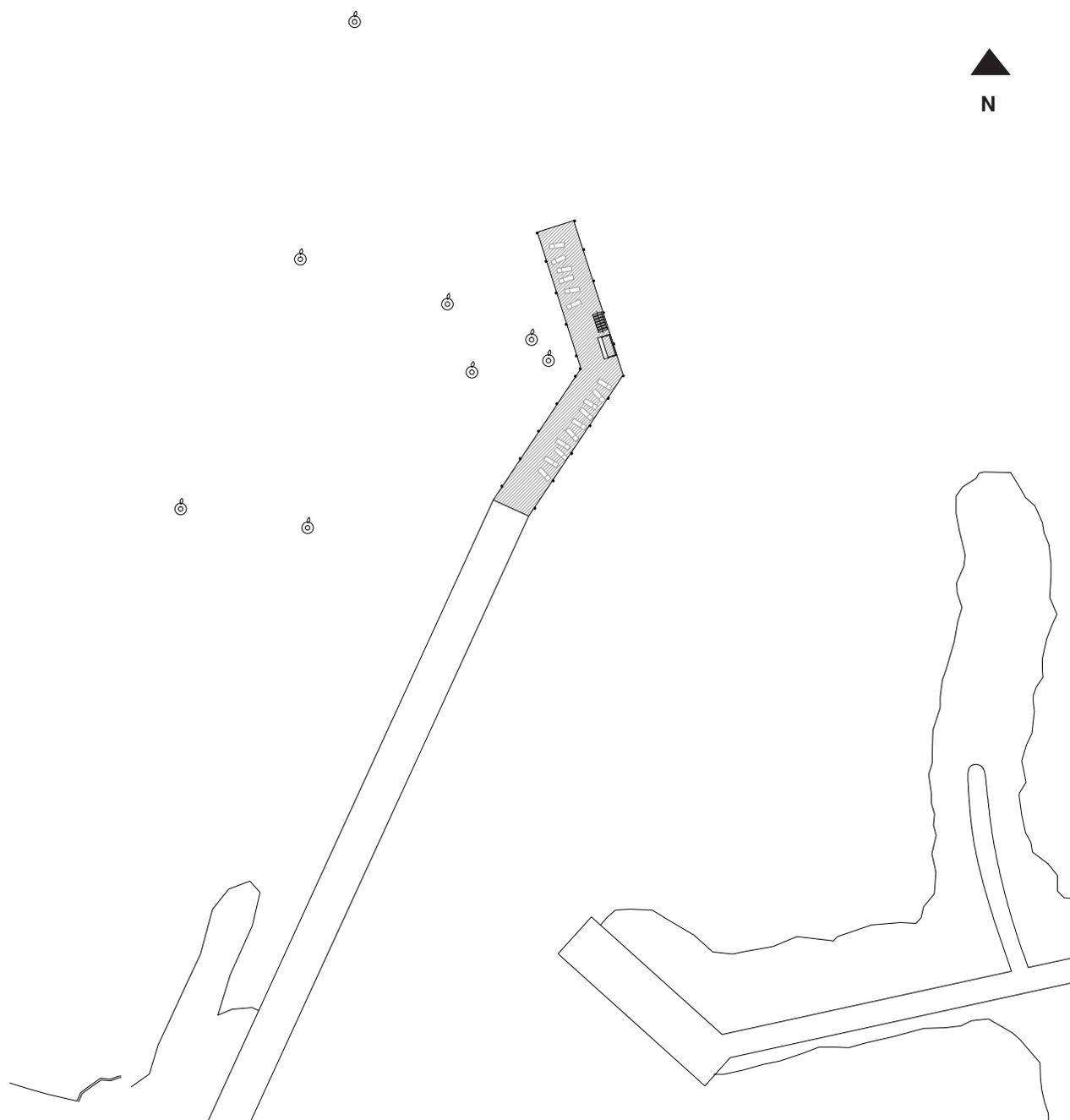
**Fig. 123 (right):** Plan of proposed site - APPLE PIER

SCALE 1:5000



**Fig. 124:** Photograph of the existing site - APPLE PIER (Thornbury Royal Harbour Resort 2011)  
**Fig. 125 (opposite page):** Section looking south of the proposed site  
SCALE 1:1000





SCALE 1:1000

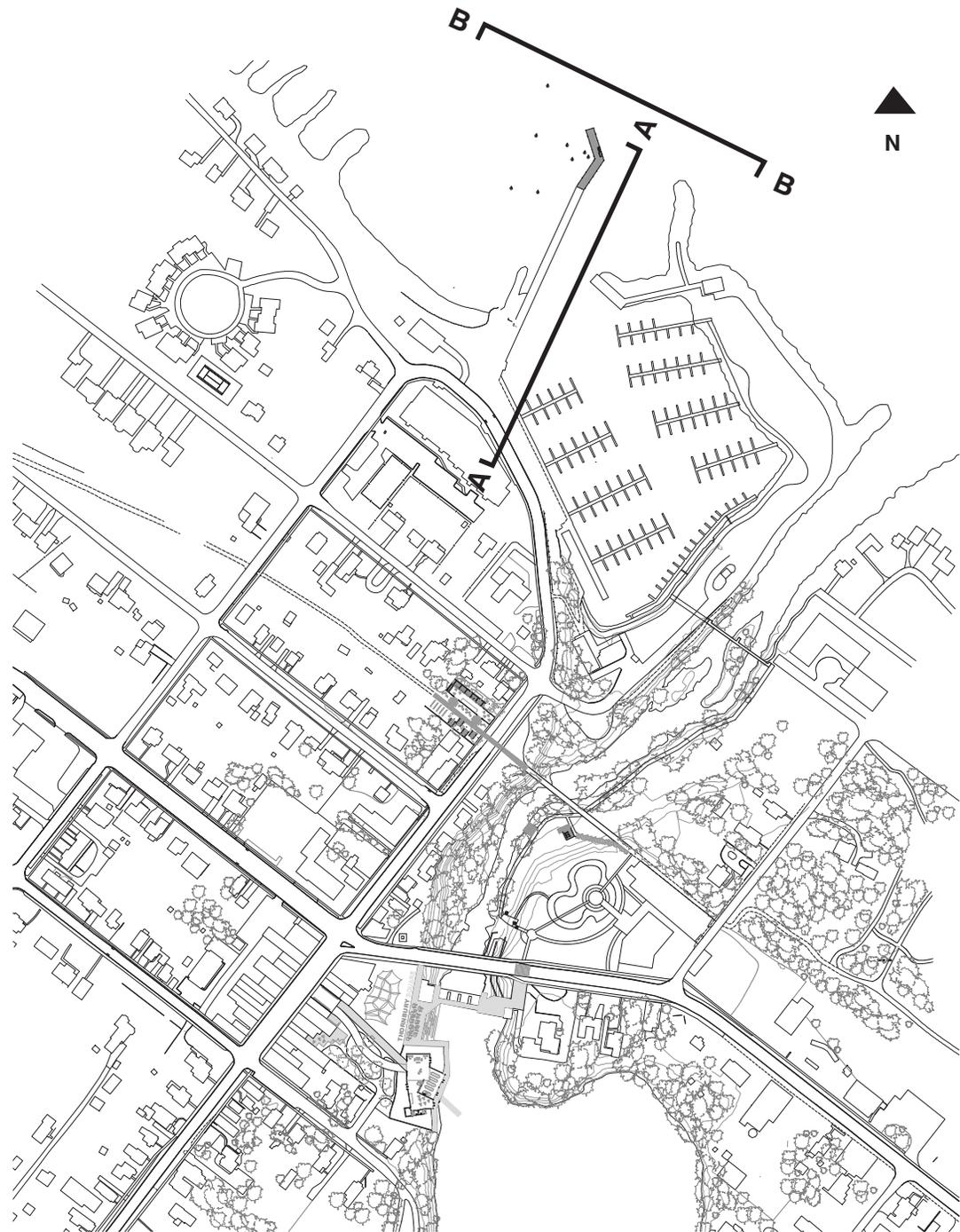


### *Description*

The proposal is to extend the concrete pier using timber construction and adding a small 'kink' to its configuration to create a resting and relaxing area for parents guarding the children jumping on and off the pier and playing on the beach. A modest shed, conceived as an **Apple Bar** is placed at the end of the pier. The purpose of this project is to imagine a new tradition for the village of drinking apple cider on the waterfront and to underline the importance of the Peeler Cidery along Highway 26 (Thornbury, being the birthplace of this nationally known brand). This type of destination has the potential to lure both newcomers and locals; as well, residents can further introduce incoming populations to the beauty of Thornbury's cobblestone beach and its reputation as "apple country". Furthermore, inflatable tubes shaped like apples are available for use and will function to create a transient and interesting landscape of floating "apples" dispersed in the blue waters of the Georgian Bay, thereby branding the village and stimulating the necessary interest to attract passing boaters to venture from the Harbourfront to downtown Thornbury.

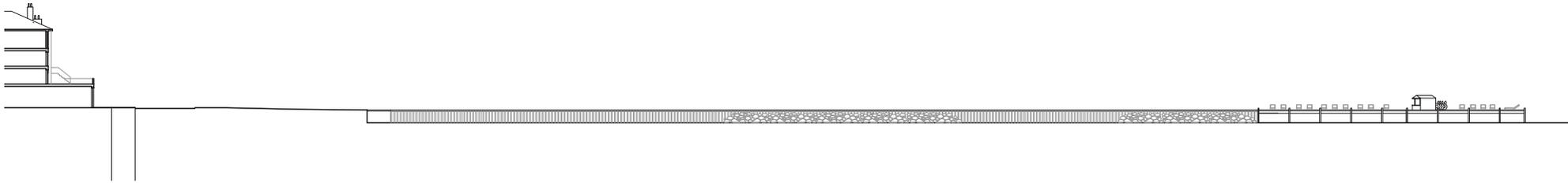
**Fig. 126 (opposite page):** Site plan - APPLE PIER

**Fig. 127:** Photograph of the Peeler Cidery (Peeler Cider 2009)

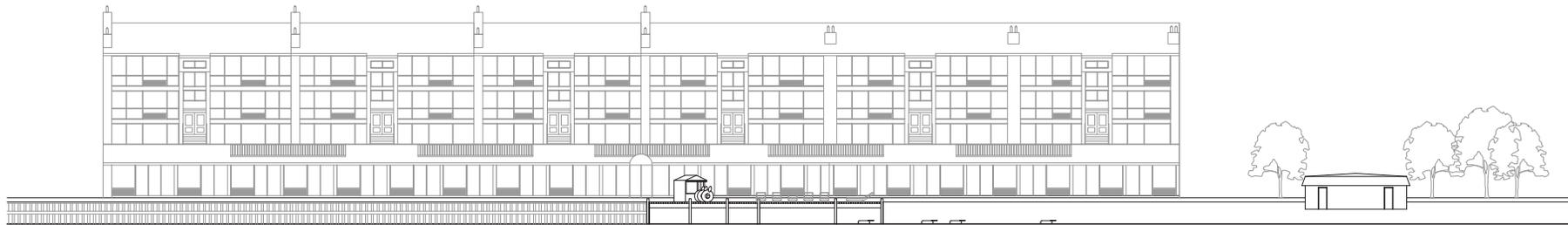


SCALE 1:5000

Fig. 128: APPLE PIER sections



section **A-A**  
SCALE 1:1000



section **B-B**  
SCALE 1:600

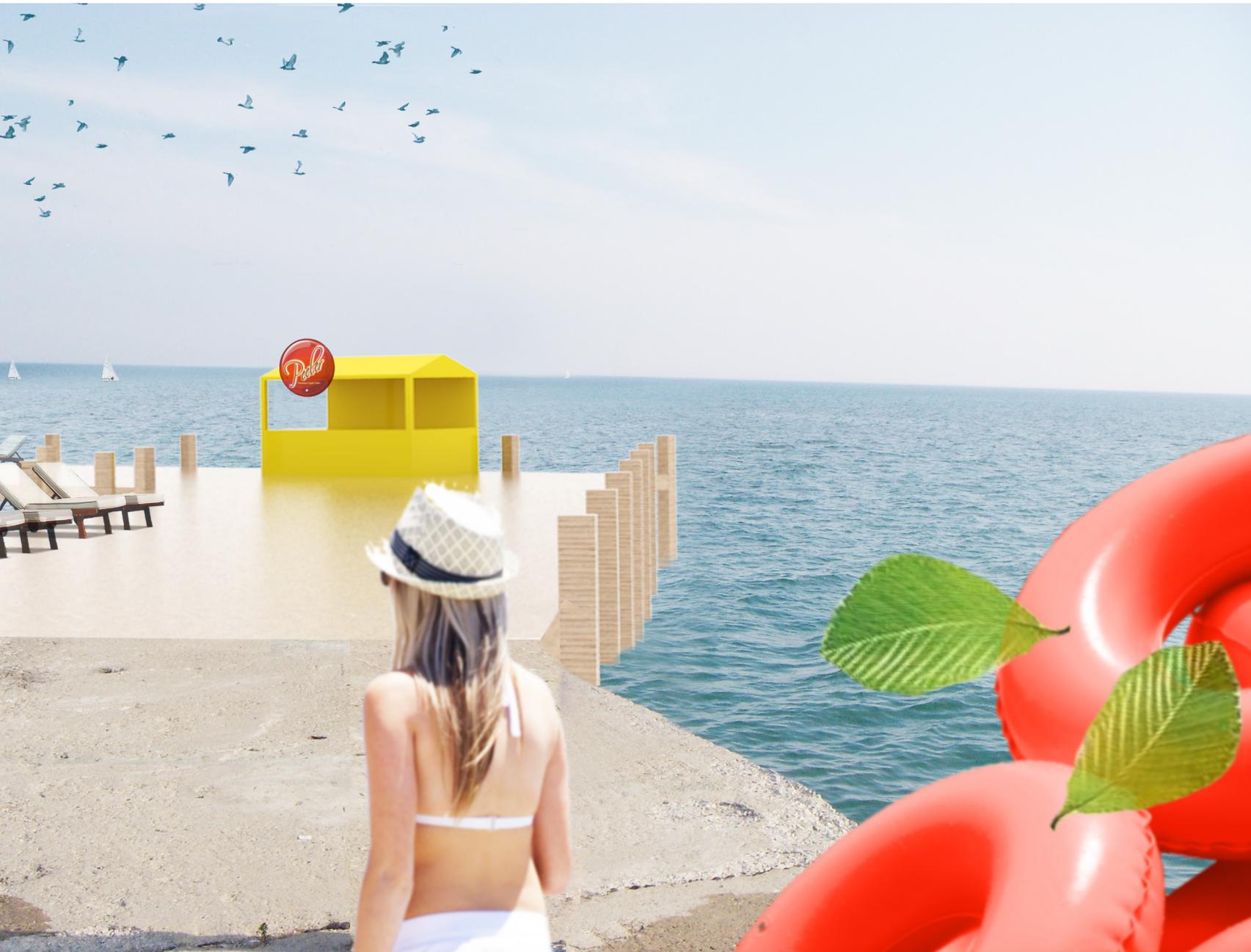




Fig. 129: View of the APPLE VIEW from above



Fig. 130: Rendered view on the APPLE PIER





## **Conclusion**

*It's a Saturday morning in June and Thornbury Square has been bustling with activity since sunrise. People hurry back and forth, shuffling antique clocks, rocking chairs and old comic books around in preparation for the annual community garage sale. Earlier, the men had set up a temporary structure for shade whose thin white fabric now blows gracefully in the wind. The children play a game of tag in the grassy field, carelessly propelling themselves from one mound to another. The shopkeeper of the bookstore on Main Street emerges from the rear entrance, carrying a box of used books to be sold. The air is crisp. A man walks his dog along the shed's promenade and waves to a family arriving on an inflatable raft. It's the Potters from Clarksburg. "We're here for the garage sale!", they yell.*

*Inside the big shed, the women of the Thornbury-Clarksburg Rotary Club are hard at work in the community kitchen. Onions are being chopped, potatoes are being peeled, pasta is being boiled and a large pot of chilli is being stirred. Tonight, a "post-garage sale community supper" will be held here. If the weather holds, people will most likely be eating in the semi-outdoor space or on the Mill Pond Beach.*

*As the morning draws to a close, people begin arriving into the downtown area and, soon enough, the square begins to fill up. Curious onlookers on Main Street come via the entrance shed to see what the commotion is all about. The sounds of laughing and bartering fill the space. Various, dusty, goods are being examined. On the other hand, many have chosen to watch the excitement from the coffee shop located on the second floor of the big shed. Two girls sit at a table, nibbling at a chocolate croissant. They share a laugh over the story the stock girl at the dress shop over on Main Street had told them earlier.*

*Meanwhile, a child holding her mother's hand stands on the Dam Bridge. She squeals from delight when she sees anglers fishing below. "Patience, honey, we'll go join them in a minute", the mother says. The two of them follow the wooden path of the edge walk - across the street, down the stairs and onto the underbelly of the Beaver River. Suddenly, it's as if the noise of the people and the traffic had subsided. All that can be heard is the sound of the wind blowing against water. Up ahead lies a little yellow shed. The space smells faintly of fish and rubber. Bernard, an avid fisherman and long-time resident of Thornbury, is inside cleaning up his catch of the day. He's been up since 5:00 am this morning, he tells the mother and child, but it's well worth it because his wife is baking trout casserole tonight.*



*Up above, on the trunk bridge, are joggers heading towards the party shed to use their water station. They decide to sit outside on the Adirondack chairs and people-watch... Cyclists arrive along the Georgian trail. They park their bicycles and begin unloading their cargo onto one of the picnic platforms. Grapes, cheese, Perrier and tomato sandwiches emerge from their baskets and they sit under the shade of apple trees to enjoy a light-hearted conversation. Inside the party shed, the attendant of the ice cream shack serves a root beer float to an elderly couple. The sound of ping pong balls resonates throughout the wooden structure. "By the way, don't forget that there will be a dance party here tonight after the community supper", the attendant says. "Oh, we'll be there!", the seniors chime in.*

*During this time, a family of four reach the Standard Bridge while on their stroll along the edge walk. "It says on this panel that the Standard chemical Factory used to stand at this very place" the youngest son says, while pointing to the Riverwalk Condominiums (Phase I).*

*Skipping ahead, the sound of splashing, screaming and laughing can be heard at the concrete pier, as children jump off and climb back on using the ladder. The parents of the children smile and chat amongst each other while lounging on the apple pier. They sip on apple cider and discuss dinner plans at Bridges restaurant. A woman floats on an inflatable tube shaped like an apple and poses for the camera as her husband snaps a picture of her. "After this, can we pass by that garage sale at the square? I've been looking for an old typewriter", the husband adds.*



The discourse surrounding the subject of changing rural geographies have led to certain conclusions regarding methods of mitigating conditions of rapid change and demographic alteration, of challenging the current context of tourism and to address the decline of small-scale lifestyles. More precisely, the consequences of increased visitation were discussed with a focus on the way in which repercussions are more pronounced in rural communities whose identity resides in fragile institutions, temporal or non-physical attributes.

To reiterate, the thesis proposes the celebration of **everyday ruralism and ordinary landscapes** as an overarching strategy to contend with such issues. To this effect, the line of questioning throughout has been: In what ways can such a model, when applied to architectural interventions, intervene in reforming dynamics of tourism? How can the entrenched dynamic between upscale tourist facilities and low-density land-use patterns be modified? Are the ideas put forth (in relation to rurality) contingent upon small scale environments? If so, how will they withstand conditions of ever-expanding populations over time? In this concluding statement, these concerns will be expounded upon in detail.

First of all, it is necessary to revisit the manner in which the notion ‘uplifting aspects of everyday ruralism and ordinary aspects as a motif for design’ addresses all facets of the problematic. The following paragraphs will reiterate, citing examples from the design, how this strategy represents both the constancy, the confirmation of identity and the inherent opportunity for connectedness needed to mitigate transformative processes.

The core of the issue lies in the separation in social and geographic space between rural and upscale residential landscapes. The literature has revealed that divisions between population subgroups could potentially result in the destruction of established lifestyles, communal values and social relations. In the case of Thornbury, the repercussions have been made manifest through shifts in the character and purpose of Main Street as well as a decentralization of social and economic activity. It has been made apparent that this separation exists because of “resort-based” visitation; thus, the appropriate response must be to initiate a **reform of the current culture of tourism** – and, accordingly, stimulate one that is formed on the basis of the local. To this effect, community culture is most visible in aspects of everyday rurality and the town’s most cherished spaces are, in fact, very ordinary landscapes.

Ultimately, the aim is to **build a robust infrastructure of identity** for Thornbury in order to consolidate its status as a “place to visit” (thereby encouraging visitation that is motivated by interest in the local) and to endow it with added resiliency over time.

As such, the concept of PIERS, BRIDGES AND SHEDS emerged as a branding formula for the community – to market the village in a way that reinforces a community’s own understanding of its identity and, in the same fashion, is valued by those who experience it or who live there on a part-time basis. The idea of PIERS, BRIDGES AND SHEDS both summarizes and personifies Thornbury’s assets and character and the architectural interventions associated with this generative scheme serve only to amplify and to further make visible what already exists. In this manner, the proposal will remain authentic to the community and, at the same time, be rendered progressive enough to propagate tourism and stimulate appeal from outsiders. As such, every single design decision alludes to this model and, by extension to Thornbury’s heritage and community culture. For instance, the idea of FOUR BRIDGES actually refers to existing structures; yet, the very act of grouping, categorizing and naming of such elements extracts their inherent value and concretizes their importance to the community. In fact, place names further “create an image, portraying features of [a community’s] identity and influencing how the place is understood” (Hough 1990, 19). Furthermore, although the typology of the shed may be foreign to Thornbury’s younger generation, its dominant purpose is to arouse an interest in the village’s historic landscape and to propel the desire to further local knowledge (on the part of rural residents as well as newcomers). In the same vein, ‘new elements’ attempt to stay in tune with the existing character; an example would be the raft pier and ladder that is incorporated into the design of the BIG SHED and which make reference to the concrete pier – a typology that residents know and can appreciate. In sum, architectural interventions take these elements, interpret their contemporary significance and refashion them in a way that is readily accessible and appreciable. For instance, the EDGE WALK represents a promenade into discovery, conceived in a way that forces one to accost, engage in, discover and subsequently appreciate, Thornbury’s bridges, the Dam and the Beaver River.

On this note, as mentioned in the thesis, “we attach positive feelings of connection and of being grounded to physically distinctive and recognizable locales” (Lynch 1981). As such, the proposition places an emphasis is on the **experience as the manner in which one acquires local knowledge**. For instance, the design interventions are not meant to romanticize or glorify aspects of the landscape – to turn Thornbury’s ‘special places’ into landmarks, artefacts or pieces to be admired or viewed from a distance. Instead, the architecture strives to engage users with the landscape in such that one can come to his/her own appreciation of the village’s natural and cultural assets. In this manner, newcomers can come to “love” these places as well – The beautifully aging of the wood of the Standard Bridge. The coolness of the water and the slippery rocks in the Beaver River. Watching the Trout Run at the Fish ladder for the very first time. Seeing the Thornbury Dam up close. The lazy afternoons at the Mill Pond Beach. Doing Backflips on the concrete pier...

Essentially, these represent authentic structures which keep a record of heritage and, by extension, provides meaning and place knowledge. Furthermore, the historical associations implied by many of the spaces facilitate the absorption of local knowledge into the mainstream.

### *Community*

The following discussion will center on the idea of everyday ruralism, which is key in creating environments that have the ability to overturn the current culture of tourism and ignite a newfound appreciation for the local.

First of all, the concept of 'everyday ruralism' essentially translates into "community culture" or "small-town lifestyle" and can be understood by studying the nature of local events, rituals, traditions, social groups, cherished institutions, citizens interactions, acts of support, sharing and reciprocity amongst rural residents, etc. In order to initiate a transformation in the style of visitation, Thornbury must capitalize on these rural assets and adopt a stance of inclusiveness for the merging of population subgroups is critical to reducing the social divide between resortscapes and core areas.

The literature asserts that 'community sentiment' can be advanced through active participation in the rituals of rural towns and immersing in the local culture. And that meaningful social interaction and frequent personal contact are critical factors in inducing feelings of attachment towards community and nurturing social networks. Thus, by setting up structures and mechanisms that both promote closeness and interaction and mitigate competing interests, new relationships and traditions can be formed collectively and organically amongst incoming populations and rural citizens. Implementing **porous institutions, cross-boundary activities** and introducing overlapping patterns of movement are examples of such initiative. Furthermore, developing a hybrid culture, areas of intersection and a context of cooperation between the full-time and part-time inhabitants can also contribute to the merging of populations.

As such, the design proposal attempts to insert a range of permeable activities within its intended programs, in a manner that **enhances visibility**. For instance, interventions such as the BIG SHED and PARTY SHED are set up as multifunctional spaces in order to promote an organic unfolding of activity and development of social relationships (in the same manner that Main Street had evolved into a rich and layered place). As such, new traditions and rituals may be forged over time, in a manner that incorporates newcomers and reflects shared community. In the project, for instance, new programs are proposed that did not otherwise exist, which enables both newcomers and rural residents to collectively partake in the initial experience. These include watching an outdoor movie at the Thornbury square, participating at a "luncheon in the shed" event, playing ping pong outside, etc. Likewise, the concept of an apple bar, which introduces the idea of a new cider-drinking tradition, exemplifies the potential formation of a newly conceived local culture.

Visitor paths of travel  
Rural residents paths of travel



'Community sentiment' can be understood as a personal realisation of belonging to a group stems from residing in the same environment, enjoying shared histories and experiences, maintaining regular interactions, upholding collective norms and values, etc. The project makes reference to this aspect by attempting to create places where **"everybody in Thornbury goes to"** and instances in which there are overlaps between the patterns of movement of full-time and part-time residents.

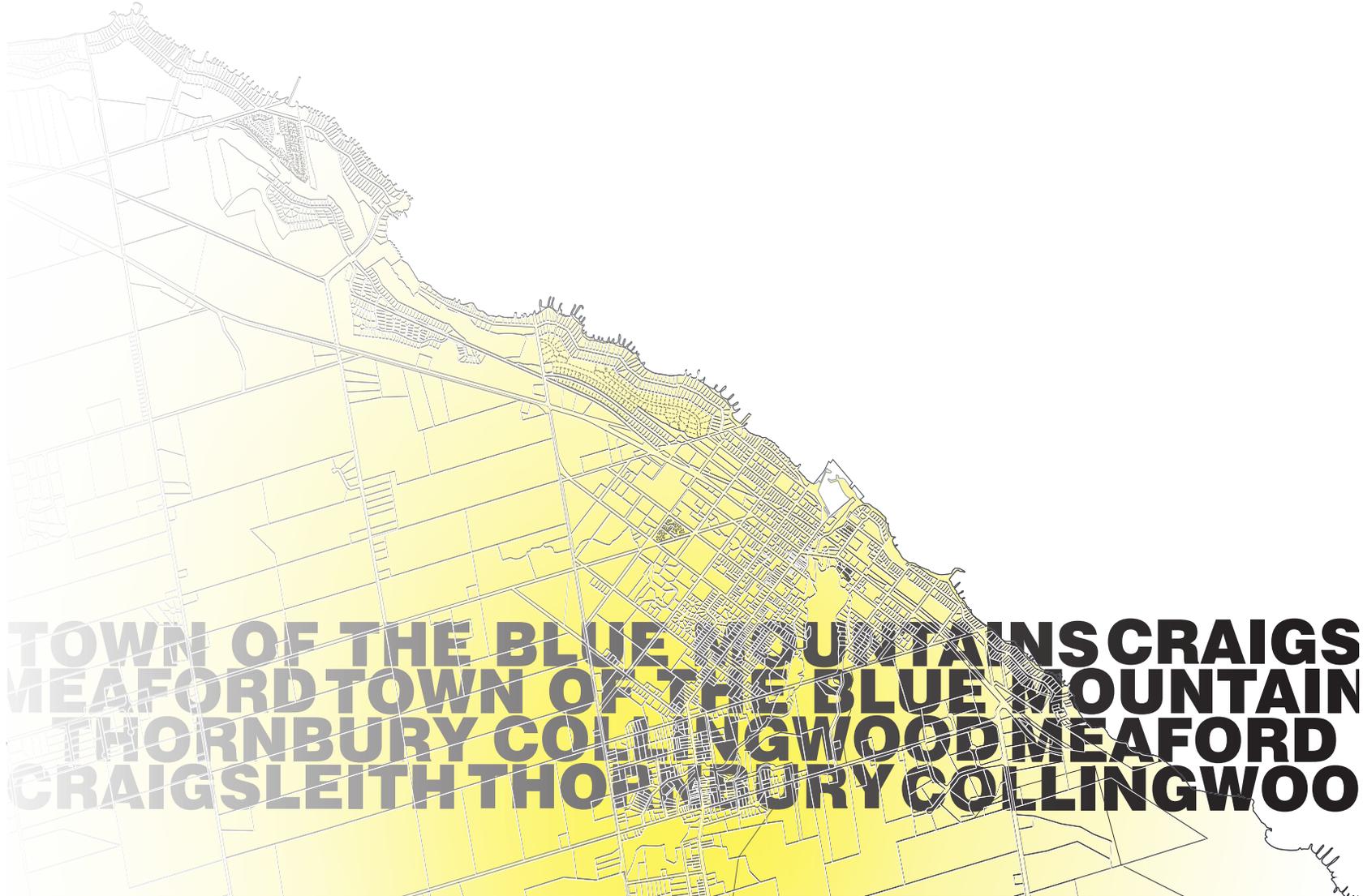
Finally, it is important to note that a culture of tourism which is based on the local hinges upon delivering a tourist experience that is not contrived, sanitized or highly controlled. Instead, the experience should be one of connectedness, community and sharing of rural traditions. For this reason, a tourist information desk has been omitted from the project. This notion is further alluded to in the narrative preceding this subsection, where there is no mention of who is a 'newcomer' and who is not.

#### *Main Street Revitalization*

As mentioned, the project intends to act as a catalyst for Main Street revitalization in order to address certain social elements of the problematic. For one, the conditions in which Main Street functions have deteriorated at the expense of upscale tourism, jeopardizing its social importance and deteriorating its baseline character, must be contended with. Likewise, with the removal of businesses on Main Street that have acted as longstanding testaments to the community, one can anticipate that the sentiment of knowledge and ownership of place will subside, along with feelings of commitment and attachment.

As described in the thesis, revitalization is a process which must occur organically. Only then, can Thornbury's Main Street can be restored to a context where local shops and institutions cater to the needs of rural residents, reflect the aspirations of the community and whose owners become "characters" within the area. Thus, the design interventions are not designed to compete with the institutions on Main Street, but rather inspire the shopping area, through its vibrant activities, to evolve into a truly social space. For instance, the proposal for the BIG SHED was sited at the rear of Main Street in order to create the potential for shops to develop a rear access and truly benefit from the vibrant activities and foot traffic occurring in the square. In the same vein, the merging of populations can lead to a unified group that collectively shapes the future of Main Street. As part-time residents become socially invested in the locality and begin to build personal relationships in the same manner as rural residents, the realization that there is a need to discard functions such as luxury furnishing and upscale clothing boutiques in favour of stores that serve more basic and immediate needs will ensue. Given that much of the transformations are aligned with the likes and dislikes of the affluent population, they undoubtedly have the power to stimulate such changes.

**Fig. 131:** Diagram illustrating overlapping patterns of movement  
SCALE 1:5000



**TOWN OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS CRAIGS  
MEAFORD TOWN OF THE BLUE MOUNTAIN  
THORNBURY COLLINGWOOD MEAFORD  
CRAIGSLEITH THORNBURY COLLINGWOOD**

### *Fragile Landscapes*

To reiterate, the notion of **building an infrastructure of identity** is critical for the fragility of Thornbury's landscape (as described throughout the work) is synonymous with the 'loss of identity'. And this, in turn, predisposes the town for drastic alteration; as stated by Lynch: "the loss of information [further] increases as the rate of development rises" (Lynch 1981, 53). Likewise, the limits and definition of Thornbury are in constant flux; as the village expands onto previously undeveloped areas, it slowly dissolves into surrounding communities. One can pinpoint that such a condition is caused by the village's amalgamation with the Town of the Blue Mountains. Thus, given that the boundaries of Thornbury no longer correlate with the administrative boundaries imposed by the local government, the town must find **other means to manifest itself as an identifiable settlement**. The design proposal attempts to negotiate this condition through the mechanism of "naming". For example, in the design proposal, spaces are purposely given names such as **Thornbury** square and **Thornbury** field.

### *Reconciling smallness with growth*

Finally, one must address the issue of **reconciling aspects of smallness with a context of growth**. First of all, it is assumed that, when speaking of aspects of community and rurality, small-scale environments are implied. Thus, can rural institutions and the same feelings of attachment and community prosper with an ever-increasing population?

It can be argued that, in the present context, because the enlargement of the population occurs on a transient and temporary basis, rural institutions can still prosper. In fact, the design interventions are conceived so as to serve the real needs of full-time residents yet be able to accommodate the necessary numbers on weekends. The proposals are limited in number and are in keeping with the scale of the neighbourhood in such that, during the week, the rural environment should remain relatively unchanged. There still exists but a very focused range and scale of activities and facilities; for this reason, the creation of social bonds and frequency of exchanges should not be affected. Likewise, for most of the year, the population base in rural towns remains relatively small, which allows for familiarity to be maintained; furthermore, should the project achieved its goals in revitalizing Main Street and restoring the presence of "local characters", the existence of small-scale commerce will also contribute to preserve regular face-to-face contact and frequent, spontaneous and informal interactions amongst residents. In sum, despite a rapidly expanding context, aspects of smallness and every ruralism can be conserved by full-time citizens, so long as the necessary infrastructure exists for them to do so.

**Fig. 132:** Diagram illustrating Thornbury's expanding physical boundaries  
Base map source: (Town of the Blue Mountains 2008)



### *Imagining the future*

The concept of building a resilient and sustainable rural community hinges on overturning the concept of the 'community of limited liability' – the idea of the impermanent, landless tenant or the sojourner. It is imperative that the gap between opposing population segments be bridged for newcomers to grasp the social costs of interconnectedness. The current tendency is for these incoming populations to view small towns as interchangeable – places to move to and from, without any form of sentimental attachment. By implementing processes through the mechanism of PIERS, BRIDGES and SHEDS that enable a greater understanding and appreciation of the landscape allows for citizens to extract positive aspects of their community to celebrate. Furthermore, the personal realisation of belonging to a group inspires people to **actively invest in collective well-being**. As such, if part-time residents are to become socially invested in the future of Thornbury, the village would be endowed with added resiliency against change, given that much of the changes occurring are directed towards them. On that note, one can imagine that the resortscapes will slowly begin to lose their appeal and that the entrenched dynamic between upscale tourist facilities and low-density land-use patterns will eventually dissipate. And, in the future, perhaps a different type of settlement pattern will emerge...

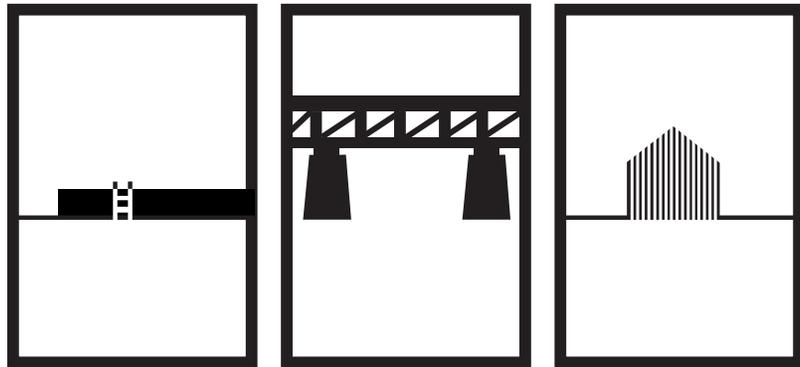
### *A thesis for towns like Thornbury*

On a final note, the thesis aims to put forth ideas that can be useful to many rural communities in Ontario. A set of design guidelines, methods and resources for contending with changing rural geographies was developed in a loose and 'principle-based' fashion in hopes of creating a system of response that is capable of being applied to a variety of settings. By using Thornbury as a case example, the work has demonstrated how such theories can be tested, how a community's inherent properties can be assessed, how existing resources can be measured how rural assets can be harnessed and how such findings can be applied and translated into a place-specific concept plan or 'vision' for downtown areas. As such, using this thesis as a resource, individual communities can extract creative solutions that are unique, grounded and authentic to their locality.

**Fig. 133 (opposite page)** : Proposed advertisements for Thornbury under the PIERS, BRIDGES & SHEDS scheme



**Fig. 134 (opposite page)** : proposed iconography for the PIERS, BRIDGES & SHEDS scheme





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# Appendix A

### **Proposed plan of action**

As part of the thesis' intent to produce a grounded and realistic design scheme, the following section will explore the ways in which such a project may take fruition and be subsequently implemented by the Town of the Blue Mountains.

#### *Specific Objectives*

First, it is necessary to outline the potential benefits and functions of the proposal in order to provide adequate grounds for arguing that such a project can (and should) effectively be incorporated into the urban landscape of Thornbury.

It can be maintained that the proposition of PIERS, BRIDGES & SHEDS responds to real needs – in particular, ones which cannot be satisfied or met by existing conditions or infrastructure. Together, its components and implications form a plausible solution for addressing a changing social structure, weakening rural lifestyles and identity as well as a declining downtown. The following points summarize, from a pragmatic perspective, those measurable and tangible benefits:

- Need: A great space for housing community functions, large-scale events and meeting places for social organizations to ensure that rural institutions can prosper in an era of social change

Solution: A shed structure of significant size capable of accommodating private meetings as well as indoor and outdoor activities of various size and scope, all season round.
  
- Need: To overcome barriers to the preservation of heritage structures, resources and traditions. To introduce the history of Thornbury into mainstream knowledge in order to strengthen local knowledge and identity.

Solution: An edge walk, which acts as a promenade into discovery of the Thornbury distinctive natural landscape and bridges. The revival (by the re-use) of the old wood & coal shed and the Thornbury Dam. The historical associations implied by inserting the typology of the shed as a distinctive element of the landscape.
  
- Need: To establish new partnerships or linkages created amongst newcomers and rural citizens. To create an environment of inclusivity needed to provide town with resiliency. And to strengthen community investment from the perspective of seasonal populations.

Solution: A large shed structure which invites participation in rural institutions, the conception of various areas of intersection, the design of additional meeting places, collective spaces and the creation of places “where *everybody* in Thornbury goes to”.

Need: To stimulate tourist interest in local amenities which, in turn, creates jobs and retains or spurs new investment within the community proper.

Solution: To forge a legible urban landscape through the vehicle of PIERS, BRIDGES and SHEDS - a scheme that serves to structure the environment in a manner that produces a vivid and integrated setting, capable of producing a sharp image and heightening the human experience. This can effectively stimulate appeal and invite tourists to greater participation and exploration

Need: To induce a form of Main Street revival in order to enhance the success of the local economy (counter decentralization tendencies) and restore its traditional role as the cultural and social core of the community.

Solution: An overall scheme which, through its siting, methods and programmatic functions is designed to act as a catalyst for Main Street revitalization.



### *Funding*

It is equally critical to discuss how such endeavour can be realized from a financial perspective, how the revenue contributions are intended to be distributed and how the project will aim to achieve self-sufficiency in the future.

1. First, it is assumed that the project can effectively achieve seed funding from the Town of the Blue Mountains, given that the described design proposal represents a course of response to the community's ailments. Additional funding and financial aid through sources such as donations, government incentives and grants to boost rural communities can also be anticipated.
2. One can also speculate that the necessary funds can be procured by redirecting the (misguided) financial efforts devoted to stimulating tourism in Thornbury. For instance, once shown that the Downtown Thornbury improvement plan set forth by the municipality to intensify the commercial district negates the role of Main Street as the social core of the community, the funds allotted to implement this plan can be transmitted towards a more viable and sustainable option.
3. In terms of spending, the core of the resources achieved from government funding and financial aid will be directed towards capital expenditures for design elements that cannot be constructed by members of the community. The architectural scheme incorporates many structures of simple construction intended to be erected by the public such as the FISH SHED, the PARTY SHED, the APPLE PIER and the retrofits to EDGE walk – though, it also comprises components such as the BIG SHED project which, by nature, requires professional input and will, therefore, be more expensive to construct.
4. From then, the overall scheme can aspire to self-sufficiency, as the returns expected from certain targeted programs can be utilized both to maintain the buildings and infrastructure and to subsidize certain of its functions. For instance, the BIG SHED is a facility intended to be occupied year-round and which is capable of housing various revenue-generating events – in essence, increased foot traffic and tourism within the village can effectively support the success of these events and activities (see Fig. 135-140). As a result, the expected revenue from facility rental, fundraisers and event profits can be substantial and contribute to subsidizing free community events. On a separate note, the value of the project is further verified by its ability to enable the community of Thornbury to achieve a form of independence, with time, from the larger municipal fabric.

# SEPTEMBER (FALL)

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
						1 farmer's market TC rotary cycle to walk campaign roast beef dinner United Way fundraiser
2 cycle to walk fundraiser	3 library used book sale yoga mondays line dancing class	4 TC rotary meetings afternoon tea	5 senior wednesdays yacht club meeting	6 thursday flicks TC rotary meetings	7	8 farmer's market luncheon in the shed Beaver Valley Fall Fair Changing colours art show & sale
9 Fall Fair Changing colours art show & sale	10 Shakespeare in the park (by Thornbury community theater) yoga mondays line dancing class	11 TC rotary meetings coffee hour	12 senior wednesdays scrapbooking group	13 thursday flicks TC rotary meetings	14 Community-wide garage sale pancake breakfast community kitchen event	15
16 garage sale kitchen event post-sale celeb.	17 yoga mondays line dancing class	18 TC rotary meetings coffee hour	19 senior wednesdays thornbury social	20 thursday flicks TC rotary meetings	21 Peeler Cider anniversary celebration community arts & crafts market	22 community supper wine-making event & workshop
23 cider celebration arts & crafts market wine-making event & workshop	24 yoga mondays line dancing class	25 TC rotary meetings men's breakfast	26 senior wednesdays	27 TC rotary meetings	28 Home & garden show Thornbury Dam Expo	29
30 H&G show Dam Expo						

- BIG SHED** ACTIVITIES
- THORNBURY SQUARE ACTIVITIES
- SEMI-OUTDOOR PAVILION ACTIVITIES
- REVENUE GENERATING EVENTS

Fig. 135: Typical calendar of events for the Fall (September)

# OCTOBER (FALL)

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3 senior wednesdays quilting club afternoon tea	4 thursday flicks TC rotary meetings	5 Thanksgiving Applefest	6 BBQ dinner
			South Georgian Bay photography exhibition & sale			
7 Applefest	8 community leaf-raking bonanza yoga mondays candle-making workshop	9 TC rotary meetings	10 senior wednesdays yacht club meeting	11 TC rotary meetings turkey dinner prep.	12 Squash & pumpkin sale	13 luncheon in the shed Community apple-pressing weekend
	South Georgian Bay photography exhib. & sale				Apple Harvest craft show	
14 apple pressing annual turkey dinner	15 Shakespeare in the park (by Thornbury community theater) yoga mondays	16 TC rotary meetings coffee hour	17 senior wednesdays scrapbooking group	18 TC rotary meetings Vegetable food box sale	19 Pumpkin mania (bowling, tossing)	20 Run for the cure
	Apple harvest craft show				Peeler Cider tasting event	
21 pumpkin mania BVCS bake sale Cider tasting event	22 yoga mondays line dancing class	23 TC rotary meetings coffee hour	24 senior wednesdays thornbury social	25 TC rotary meetings	26 Halloweenfest	27 sausage BBQ event pumpkin pie sale
	Community collectibles exposition					
28 sausage BBQ event Halloweenfest	29 Music in the square (courtesy of TC orchestra) yoga mondays line dancing class	30 TC rotary meetings men's breakfast	31 senior wednesdays Halloween social			
	Community collectibles expo.					

Fig. 136 : Typical calendar of events for the Fall (October)

- BIG SHED ACTIVITIES**
- THORNBURY SQUARE ACTIVITIES
- SEMI-OUTDOOR PAVILION ACTIVITIES
- REVENUE GENERATING EVENTS

# DECEMBER (WINTER)

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
				1 christmas tree sale TC rotary meetings	2 Victorian Christmas bazaar BBQ dinner	3 amateur photography exhibition (winter theme)
4 tree sale xmas bazaar amateur photography exhibition (winter theme)	5 community tree decorating & holiday get-together yoga mondays cooking classes by simplicity bistro	6 TC rotary meetings	7 senior wednesdays quilting club	8 christmas tree sale TC rotary meetings	9 Annual YMCA holiday craft show Thornbury jewelry & stained glass expo	10 xmas social
11 tree sale craft show Thornbury jewelry & stained glass expo	12 winter clothing giveaway yoga mondays line dancing class	13 TC rotary meetings coffee hour	14 senior wednesdays scrapbooking group banquet prep.	15 TC rotary meetings banquet prep.	16 Santa Clause parade Thornbury winter Antiques show Hot chocolate & hot apple Cider event	17 winter banquet
18 parade Antiques show	19 Community secret santa yoga mondays line dancing class	20 TC rotary meetings coffee hour	21 senior wednesdays afternoon tea	22 christmas carolling	23	24
25	26	27 Thornbury winter CARNIVAL	28	29	30	

Fig. 137 : Typical calendar of events for the Winter (December)

- BIG SHED** ACTIVITIES
- THORNBURY SQUARE ACTIVITIES
- SEMI-OUTDOOR PAVILION ACTIVITIES
- REVENUE GENERATING EVENTS

# APRIL (SPRING)

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
1 Antiques roadshow	2 yoga mondays yacht club	3 TC rotary meetings afternoon tea	4 senior wednesdays quilting club	5 thursday flicks TC rotary meetings	6 Trout run festivities Hunting & fishin Expo	7 roast beef dinner
Barn raising exhibition						
8 fishing expo	9 morning tai-chi yoga mondays Sushi making lessons & party	10 music in the square TC rotary meetings	11 senior wednesdays book club	12 thursday flicks TC rotary meetings	13 pancake breakfast Classic car show	14 farmer's market
Rural ontario photography competition						
15 car show	16 morning tai-chi yoga mondays	17 TC rotary meetings coffee hour	18 senior wednesdays scrapbooking group	19 thursday flicks TC rotary meetings	20 Gas engine & tractor show	21 farmer's market annual pig roast
Rural ontario photography competition						
22 tractor show luncheon in the shed	23 morning tai-chi yoga mondays line dancing class	24 TC rotary meetings coffee hour	25 senior wednesdays thornbury social	26 thursday flicks TC rotary meetings	27 Georgian Sound festival	28 farmer's market supper & dance
Antique clocks showcase						
29 BBQ event sound festival	30 business owners networking picnic yoga mondays line dancing class	TC rotary meetings men's breakfast				
Antique clocks showcase						

Fig. 138 : Typical calendar of events for the Spring (April)

- BIG SHED ACTIVITIES**
- THORNBURY SQUARE ACTIVITIES**
- SEMI-OUTDOOR PAVILION ACTIVITIES**
- REVENUE GENERATING EVENTS**

# JULY (SUMMER)

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
1 family fireworks Canada day celeb.	2 yoga mondays yacht club	3 TC rotary meetings afternoon tea	4 senior wednesdays quilting club	5 thursday flicks TC rotary meetings	6 Georgian Bay Steam & Gas show	7 farmer's market Strawberry social
Ten Thousand villages						
8 steam & gas	9 music in the square (courtesy of TC orchestra) yoga mondays cooking classes by simplicity bistro	10 TC rotary meetings	11 senior wednesdays yacht club meeting	12 thursday flicks TC rotary meetings	13 Annual CHILI RIBFEST/COOKOFF	14 farmer's market
Georgian Bay microwineries show & tasting						
15 Ribfest/cookof	16 Annual street fair yoga mondays	17 TC rotary meetings coffee hour	18 senior wednesdays scrapbooking group	19 thursday flicks TC rotary meetings	20 Blue Mountains half-marathon & 5k run	21 annual pig roast Beaver Valley kinette breakfast
microwineries show & tasting						
22 street fair BVCS bake sale	23 yoga mondays line dancing class	24 TC rotary meetings coffee hour	25 senior wednesdays thornbury social	26 thursday flicks TC rotary meetings	27 Annual corn festival Foodstock: Public food event	28 Lobsterfest
annual chocolatefest exhibition & sale						
29 corn festival arts & crafts market chocolatefest	30 dog owners get-together yoga mondays line dancing class	31 TC rotary meetings men's breakfast				

Fig. 139 : Typical calendar of events for the Summer (July)

- BIG SHED** ACTIVITIES
- THORNBURY SQUARE ACTIVITIES
- SEMI-OUTDOOR PAVILION ACTIVITIES
- REVENUE GENERATING EVENTS

# AUGUST (SUMMER)

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
			1 senior wednesdays quilting club	2 thursday flicks TC rotary meetings	3 thornbury's annual boat show & sale	4 farmer's market BBQ dinner
			amateur photography exhibition			
5 boat show & sale	6 library used book sale yoga mondays cooking classes by simplicity bistro	7 TC rotary meetings	8 senior wednesdays yacht club meeting	9 thursday flicks TC rotary meetings	10 thornbury/clarksbury food & wine festival North Grey Railway exhibition series	11 farmer's market luncheon in the shed
	amateur photography exhibition					
12 wine & food fest.	13 Shakespeare in the park (by Thornbury community theater) yoga mondays	14 TC rotary meetings coffee hour	15 senior wednesdays scrapbooking group banquet prep.	16 thursday flicks TC rotary meetings banquet prep.	17 Meaford/thornbury Salmon & Trout derby BVCS bake sale Peeler Cider tasting event	18 farmer's market charity banquet
	North Grey Railway exhibition series					
19 salmon & trout derby BVCS bake sale Cider tasting event	20 yoga mondays line dancing class	21 TC rotary meetings coffee hour	22 senior wednesdays thornbury social	23 thursday flicks TC rotary meetings	24 Peak to Shore music festival	25 farmer's market awards ceremony
	community 'hall of fame' event					
26 sausage BBQ event arts & crafts market community 'hall of fame' event	27 annual community food drive yoga mondays line dancing class	28 TC rotary meetings men's breakfast	29 senior wednesdays	30 thursday flicks TC rotary meetings end of summer social United Way fundraiser		

Fig. 140 : Typical calendar of events for the Summer (August)

- BIG SHED** ACTIVITIES
- THORNBURY SQUARE ACTIVITIES
- SEMI-OUTDOOR PAVILION ACTIVITIES
- REVENUE GENERATING EVENTS