

Life After Hell: Restoring Hope & Self-Sufficiency

in Red Deer's Michener North

by

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Life After Hell

RESTORING HOPE AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN RED DEER'S MICHENER NORTH

Karissa Noselski

Every time I'm here there's just something almost enchanting that I can't quite explain. I find myself intrigued by the setting - from the buildings to the beautiful trees - it's a place that makes me wonder... what really happened here? It's the kind of place I can't wait to return to as it makes me feel like I'm uncovering small pieces of its story, little by little: another great adventure in a peaceful and slightly eerie space. My first impression was a memorable one, as were the rest of the impressions it left on me. North Michigan lies in a very unique area of Red Deer, surrounded on two sides by dense forests, and on the other two sides by residential development. On the lands that surround it, I should say, seem to be in contrast to one another. On one hand peaceful and serene, and on the other hand slightly scary and mysterious. There are so many different elements and landscape experiences to be had. The birds have also found a haven here, and they greet you with a song every single visit. But there are so many that it's always a surprise as to which ones you might spot. On a cold winter afternoon in January, just as the sun was going down and the fog was setting in, I listened to the coyotes howl, ominous... and my signal to head home for the night. Only to return again to a family of deer and a beaver building his dam in one of the elbow lakes. It's without a doubt a place worth saving and protecting - ecologically. But the structures there too evoke the same feeling for me. The brick is simple but beautiful. The arrangement of the buildings and the landmarks inspired me and led me to ask so many questions.

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Parallel Stories

Top: Saerbeck Bioenergy Park Storage Bunkers in Germany - Noselski, 2019

Bottom: Abandoned Michener North Root Cellars in Red Deer - Google Image Capture, June 2014

MOTIVATION BEHIND THE PROJECT

Following an exchange in Germany in the spring of 2019, I was inspired by stories that I heard and places I visited all across the country that demonstrated sustainability and innovation in action. I studied the transition of different places with a dark past into something positive and communicative of what once happened there, but with a focus on the stories they tell us and what they can be moving forward. I felt compelled to find a site back home that was vacant or neglected but held great opportunity, where I could build on those lessons I learned of overcoming obstacles and finding and revealing hidden potential.

Upon arrival back to Canada, I was reminded of a site in Red Deer where my family currently lives that has a dark past but an important story to tell. The site is known today as Michener North. Local nonprofit ReThink Red Deer has been arguing for the great potential the site holds and for it to become a community asset and urban agriculture demonstration site, but they needed help to keep the project alive. However, the land, home to an abandoned mental health institution, was on track to be demolished and erased rather than protected and strategically preserved. I have since stumbled upon several different community activists that have expressed an interest in saving the Michener North site from demolition - people that believe that there is something better that can be done with this place. I am constantly reminded that I am not the only one who sees the value and potential of this unique property. This worthwhile project has the potential to build off existing resources to create a movement in the community - a catalyst for a different approach to development at this scale.

This project is an extension of the lessons I learned from my own experiences with the land, both in my education and my upbringing, in addition to the inspiration I gained through my travels. I hope this project resonates with others and pushes the boundaries of what a landscape architecture practicum can be.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the following supporters and contributors:

- ReThink Red Deer - in particular Rene Michalak, I am so grateful that you brought this project and site to my attention. I must thank local activists like Rene and Heidy Panameno for continuing to fight for the protection of unique and important places in their communities, for telling important stories, and for sharing resources - architectural, socio-cultural, and especially ecological.
- My family - who I simply could not have done this, or anything for that matter, without.
- My committee - Anna Thurmayr, Dietmar Straub, and George Berry - thank you for pushing me to design and inspiring me to strive for excellence in everything I do. Our meetings were a joy and brought an important spark into my work and year. I am forever grateful for the amount of time you dedicated to helping this project progress.
- My professors and mentors - in particular Marcella Eaton, who has had a huge influence on my thinking, and Harry Harker, who has been a great connector - both have been so supportive and motivating in this journey. All the professors I have had at the University of Manitoba have had a bigger impact on my education than they know.
- The generous financial support that helped me complete this project - from The University of Manitoba, the Manitoba Association of Landscape Architects Fellowship, the Charles H. Thomsen Award in Landscape Architecture, and the Ted McLachlan Community Engagement Scholarship. Thank you!
- My friends, peers, and partner - while too many to name, you have kept me on my toes, supporting and motivating me to keep going even through the toughest times, significantly helping me through this process. All the people I have talked to along the way about this project and that have shared knowledge, photos, memories, and ideas continue to remind me why I'm here and how important this work is. Thank you all for listening, contributing, and helping me get to this moment.

NOTE

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viewing and click 'view cover page.'

ABSTRACT

This practicum explores Red Deer's vacant Michener North and its potential to become an educational and interpretive community resource and urban agriculture hub. The 132.2-acre site has a controversial past, operating as a mental health institution in central Alberta for well over 60 years. It was closed for good in 2014, with access to the public restricted since 2017. Today, it consists of various abandoned structures slated for demolition, parking lots, and open spaces with mature vegetation and well-used pathways. There is a community movement building around the topic of Michener's fate as groups and activists fight to save this place, or at least pieces of it. An analysis of the site, its surroundings, and how it echoes the patterns and stories of other asylum landscapes reveal that the relationship between the architecture of the buildings and the landscape here tell an important story that must not be forgotten. This project creates a vision for the site through the exploration of a few strategic design interventions. The proposal demonstrates how retaining and protecting as much of the existing infrastructure, topography, and landscape features as possible can create a learning opportunity and a catalyst for the region. Inspired by the local community, the project approach is grounded in celebrating and revealing the story of this site and its potential to be an asset to the people of Red Deer and beyond by creating a series of gardens and orchards - a beautiful place for people to walk, explore, engage, and reflect.



DEFINITIONS

Adaptive Reuse *noun*

“The renovation and reuse of pre-existing structures (such as warehouses) for new purposes” (Merriam-Webster, 2020)

Asylum *noun*

“An inviolable place of refuge and protection giving shelter to criminals and debtors: Sanctuary” (Merriam-Webster, 2020)

Catalyst *noun*

“An agent that provokes or speeds significant change or action” (Merriam-Webster, 2020)

Escarpment *noun*

“A long cliff or steep slope separating two comparatively level or more gently sloping surfaces and resulting from erosion or faulting” (Merriam-Webster, 2020)

Forest *noun*

“A dense growth of trees and underbrush covering a large tract” (Merriam-Webster, 2020) “trees with average height greater than 15 ft with at least 60% canopy cover” (Marsh, 2005, p.358).

Grove *noun*

“A small wood without underbrush” or “a planting of fruit or nut trees” (Merriam-Webster, 2020)

Orchard *noun*

“A planting of fruit trees, nut trees, or sugar maples” (Merriam-Webster, 2020), which is the “same as woodland or forest but with regular spacing” (Marsh, 2005, p.358).

Parkland *noun*

“Land with clumps of trees and shrubs in cultivated condition used as or suitable for use as a park” (Merriam-Webster, 2020)

Mixed Grass Prairie *noun*

A type of prairie found between Tall Grass Prairie and Short Grass Prairie with a variety of grasses intermingling (The Manitoba Museum, 2014).

Meadow *noun*

“A large area covered with randomly growing prairie or meadow species including both grasses and wildflowers” (Credit Valley Conservation, 2013).

1 Introduction to the Michener Centre

A Visual History of a Red Deer Institution in Context



FIG 1.1 The Michener Centre's north site - Noselski, 2019

The Michener Centre's north site as it stands today is fenced in with three layers of barbed wire along the top, actively patrolled by 24/7 on-site security to keep the public out. While it might not look like much upon first impression, there is certainly more than meets the eye.

A RICH AND VARIED HISTORY

The Michener Centre in Red Deer has a complicated past. From the surface, the Michener Centre's north site (to be referred to as 'Michener North') looks like a cluster of semi-abandoned brick buildings with boarded-up windows, signs of graffiti, and early decay. It sits near new residential areas, fenced in on all sides and tucked in amongst the trees. In reality, the site's history goes much deeper than what can be seen from the outside.

The Michener Centre operated primarily as a mental health institution for well over 60 years. The Centre has seen a lot of transformational changes over time. In its early years, the Michener Centre opened to provide care and shelter for developmentally disabled individuals (Martindale, 1982). The Centre and its practices were significantly influenced by widespread changes in philosophy and mental health care, including the debate around whether institutional or community-integrated living was better. Upon initial research, it becomes clear that Michener has had a dark past. However, extensive evidence shows that it served as an important place and home to many in the community. Michener played a key role in Red Deer's history and was one

of the City's major employers for many years (Martindale, 1982). It was designed to be a positive and transitional space, where patients would come to live until they could eventually be moved back into the community. However, the Michener Centre was seen early on as a successful model and experienced external pressure to grow, which soon led to overcrowding and several controversial issues that came along with it (Malacrida, 2015).

Shut down for political and economic reasons for good in 2014, Michener North now hangs in a state of uncertainty. While the City of Red Deer and the Province of Alberta debate about what will happen here, the sensitivity of the site and its complex history have made it challenging to address. Additionally, Alberta's economic downturn following the closure has delayed decisions on the most appropriate approach to the site's future. Answering the question of what should happen here - to preserve or demolish in part or entirely, requires a much deeper understanding of this place's story over time.

FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTABLE

The Michener Centre in Red Deer has had many different names and uses over the years. From its early beginnings as an all-girls school (the Alberta Ladies College), to a home for soldiers returning from the war, it was utilized for various purposes that were deemed necessary in the community at those times (Dawe, 1996; Malacrida, 2015). As witnessed in the timeline below, the story of the Michener Centre was also significantly influenced by global institutionalization and deinstitutionalization movements.

Global Movements

INSTITUTIONALIZATION



1905

Alberta Beginnings

Alberta becomes a province (The Canadian Press, 2019).

1913

Early Adaptive Reuse

Red Deer becomes a city and in the same year "the provincial government purchased the Alberta Ladies College (...) [to be used] as a sanatorium for veterans" in Red Deer (Dawe, 1996, p.7).

1923

Opening

Michener Centre opens in Red Deer, then called the Provincial Training School (PTS) on the south site, occupying the old Alberta Ladies College facility and surrounding lands (Simons, 2015).

108 residents
1 building (Malacrida, 2015)

1928

Sexual Sterilization Act

Alberta's Sexual Sterilization Act was enacted, which "allowed for the sterilization of people deemed [...] mentally defective," a practice that became very common here and at other institutions like this one (Hahn, 2003, para.3), remaining active until 1972 (Malacrida, 2015).

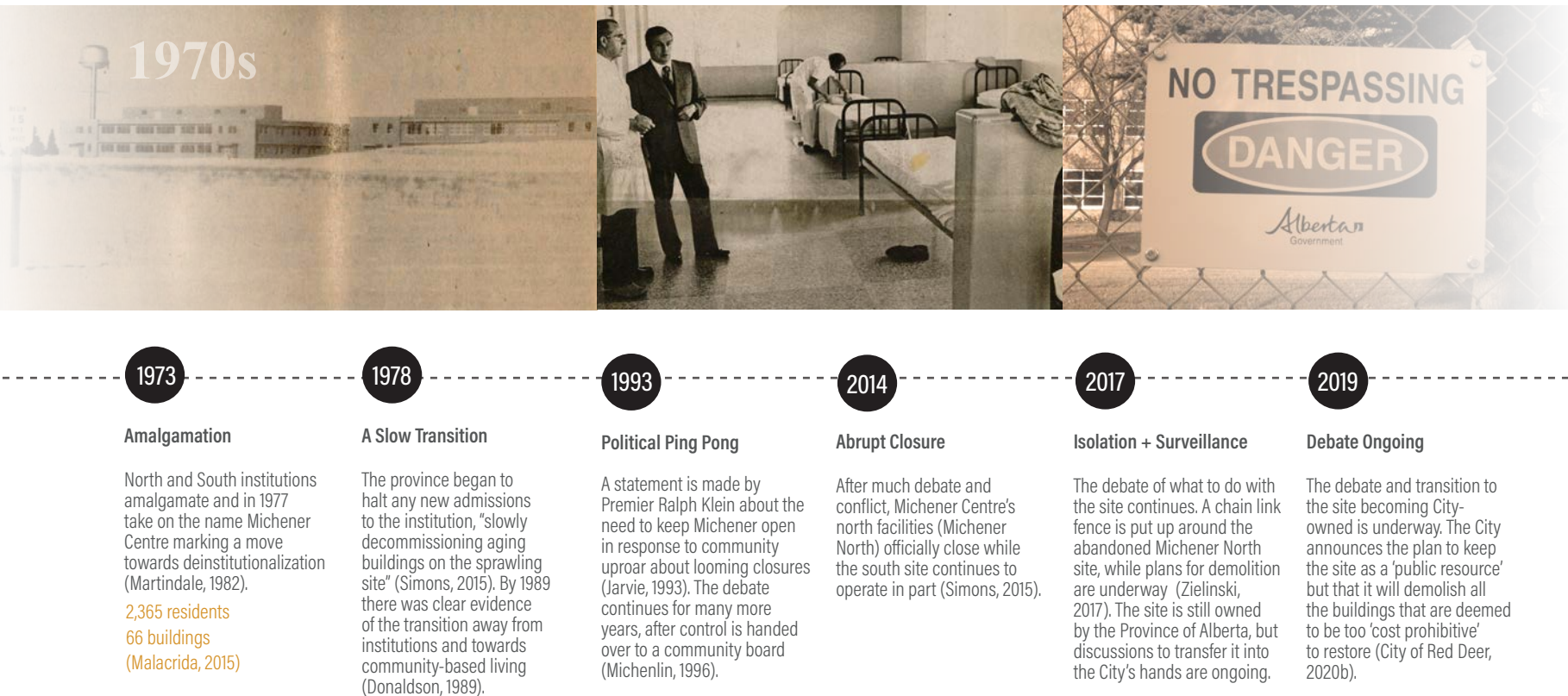
1950s

Expansion

Deerhome is built as Michener Centre expands north of 55th Street (Martindale, 1982), today known as Michener North.

FIG. 1.2 Michener Centre timeline - Red Deer and District Archives and Red Deer Advocate, various years. Used with permission & Noselski, 2019

DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION



OPTIMAL LOCATION

Originally a mixed prairie grassland, this land was transformed early on into agricultural land by European settlers (Dawe, 1996). The Michener institution was originally built up on a hill on the edge of Red Deer, along an escarpment and adjacent to a protected sanctuary - today known as the Gaetz Lakes Sanctuary. Then it was surrounded by agricultural fields. The Centre began on the south site, which opened in 1923 and was known as the Provincial Training School, (Hahn, 2003) and then was renamed the Alberta School Hospital in 1965 (Dawe, 1996). The Centre eventually expanded into two 1/4 section portions of land that straddled 55th Street. The north site housed mentally disabled adults, referred to as Deerhome, and the south site housed mentally disabled children (both highlighted in Figure 1.3 (Malacrida, 2015)). This map shows these sites in 2001 when they were both still in use, with agricultural fields to the north. The north site was and still is primarily surrounded by parkland.

1. *Michener South*



2. *Michener North*

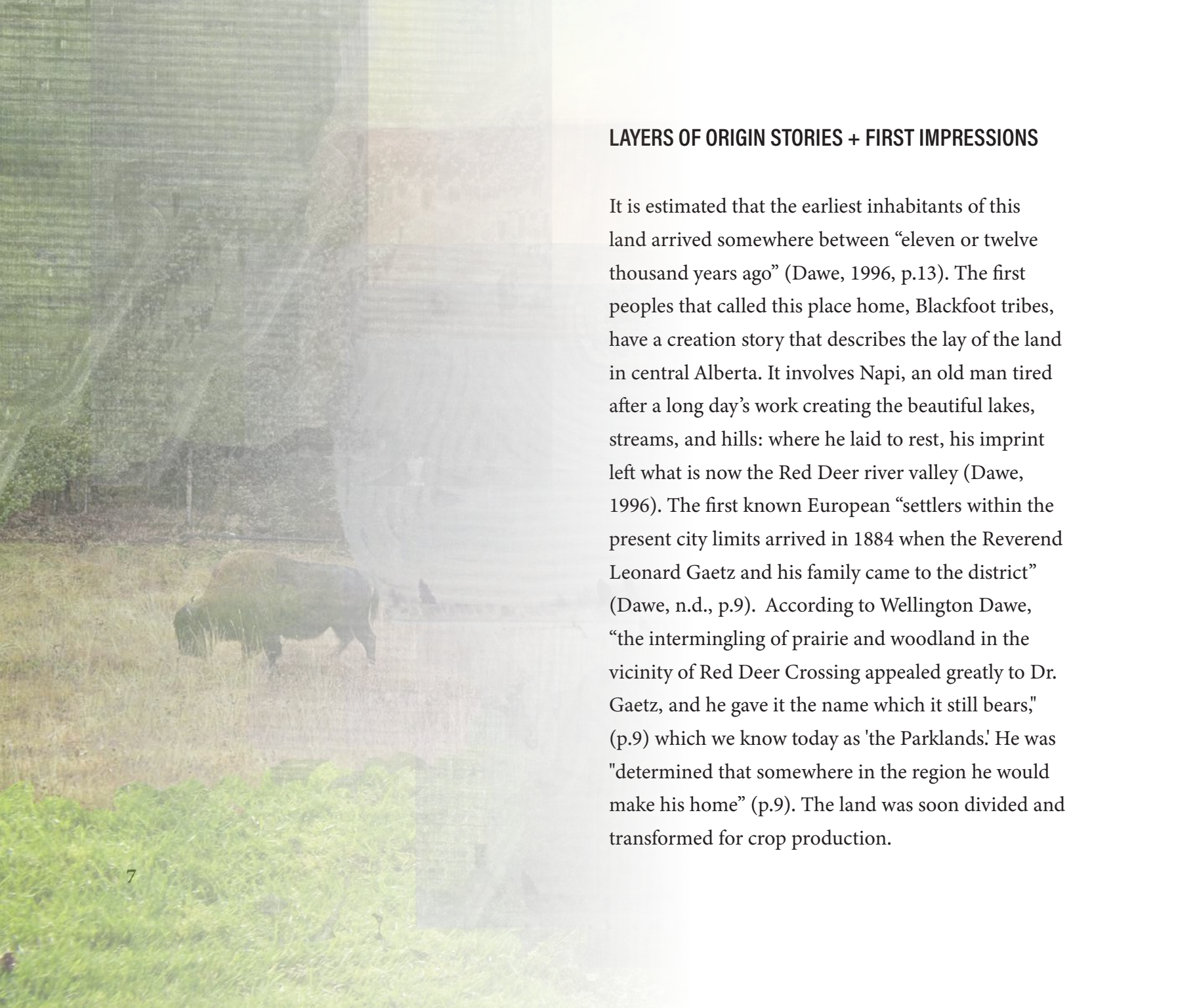


FIG. 1.3 2001 Aerial photograph of Michener North and South -
Adapted from the City of Red Deer Engineering Department data, 2001



*Michener
North*

*Michener
South*



LAYERS OF ORIGIN STORIES + FIRST IMPRESSIONS

It is estimated that the earliest inhabitants of this land arrived somewhere between “eleven or twelve thousand years ago” (Dawe, 1996, p.13). The first peoples that called this place home, Blackfoot tribes, have a creation story that describes the lay of the land in central Alberta. It involves Napi, an old man tired after a long day’s work creating the beautiful lakes, streams, and hills: where he laid to rest, his imprint left what is now the Red Deer river valley (Dawe, 1996). The first known European “settlers within the present city limits arrived in 1884 when the Reverend Leonard Gaetz and his family came to the district” (Dawe, n.d., p.9). According to Wellington Dawe, “the intermingling of prairie and woodland in the vicinity of Red Deer Crossing appealed greatly to Dr. Gaetz, and he gave it the name which it still bears,” (p.9) which we know today as 'the Parklands.' He was "determined that somewhere in the region he would make his home” (p.9). The land was soon divided and transformed for crop production.

PATTERNS OF CHANGE: LAND USE + LANDSCAPE EVOLUTION

Red Deer lies within “the heart of the aspen parkland,” which marks a transition point between the Boreal forest of the north and southern prairie grasslands (Dawe, 2013, p.2). Often described as “Alberta’s Central Parkland [...], rich black and brown soils have attracted farming and settlement since the late 1800s. As a result, detrimental farming practices, oil and gas development, and rural and urban growth have contributed to habitat degradation and conversion” (Government of Alberta, 2017, p.1). This “is also the most productive agricultural region in Alberta” (Natural Regions Committee, 2006, p.116). It is no surprise that this area is one of the most populated and fast-growing in the province and has been extensively developed over the years with heavy reliance on primary extraction industries.

FIG. 1.4 Landscape succession collage - Noselski, 2020



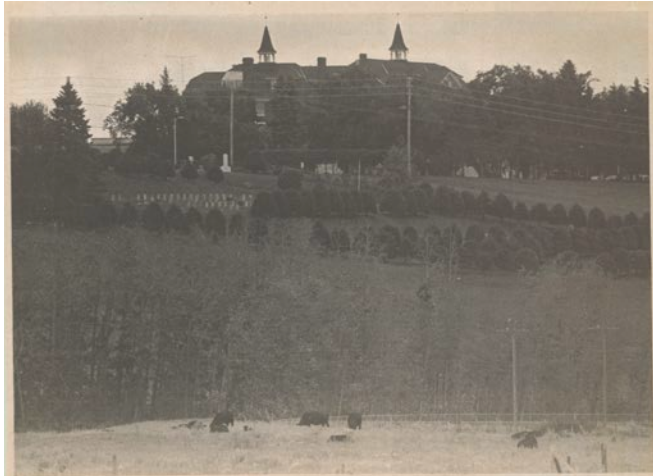


FIG. 1.5 The main administration with highly manicured grounds, cemetery, and cows grazing in foreground - Red Deer and District Archives, 1981. Used with permission



FIG. 1.6 The old 130 foot water tower and childrens' playground surrounded by spruce forest - Foto Arts Studio, 1955. Courtesy of Red Deer and District Archives. Used with permission

EXTENSIVE GROUNDS: A HISTORY OF PRODUCTION

From the onset of early development at Michener, there was a mindset of production. From the outside, the Michener Centre grounds appeared well kept and portrayed a pleasant and pristine image (Malacrida, 2015). There was a certain level of production required to create and sustain the operations at Michener, and to maintain the extensive grounds and run the diverse facilities. The patients were put to work here to help out with a variety of these tasks (Malacrida, 2015).

9

An annual report from 1957 described the extent of the grounds and required efforts surrounding the Michener Centre as follows:

“An estimated total of some 25 acres [10 hectares] have been seeded to lawn, 53,000 bedding plants were set out last Spring, all of which were started from seed in the School’s greenhouse. Twelve hundred yards [nearly 1100 metres] of black dirt were levelled in various areas [and] approximately 1,000 shrubs and trees were set out” (LeVann, 1957, p.133 cited in Malacrida, 2015, p.161).



FIG. 1.7 Order, precision, and repetition inside Michener - Malacrida, 2005. Used with permission



FIG. 1.8 A look inside a typical ward at Michener - Malacrida, 2005. Used with permission

BROKEN PROMISES INSIDE THE INSTITUTION

The unfortunate reality behind closed doors was that many of the people that came to the Michener Centre never ended up leaving. While they were promised a good education and job training, “less than 20% of Michener residents ever received any form of education” (Alberta Social Services and Community Health, 1985 cited in Malacrida, 2015, p.13). The Michener Centre referred to this as vocational training or work-training programs. However, stories from survivors

lead us to believe that the Michener Centre never followed through “on its promise of inclusion and improvement for these individuals” (Malacrida, p.14). Malacrida states that “once inside Michener, most inmates’ educational experiences were inadequate at best and exploitive at worst” ‘menial’ unpaid labour disguised as training (p.14). Yet research reveals that this was not an unusual occurrence at institutions like this across the world.



FIG. 1.9 View looking southwest at the Michener South site that spans a 1/4 section of land - Red Deer Advocate, 1983. Used with permission

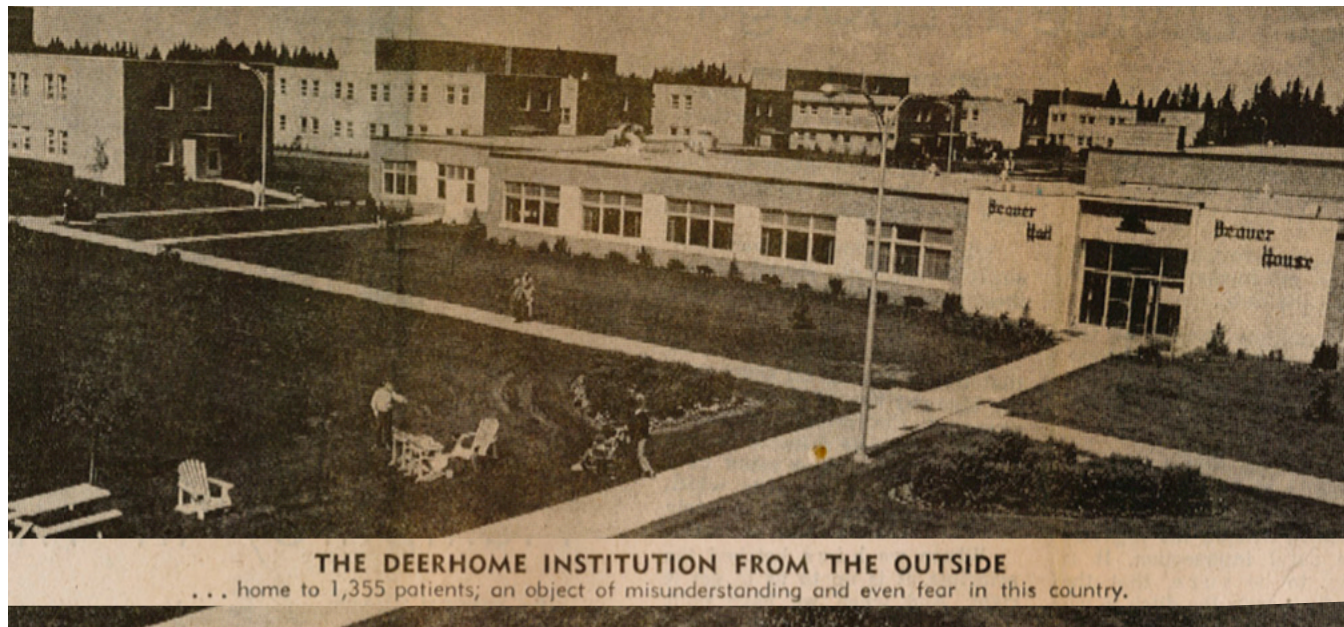


FIG. 1.10 A newspaper article showing a view of the early Michener North site (then called 'Deerhome') - Red Deer Advocate, 1968. Used with permission

A SELF-SUSTAINING OPERATION

The Michener Centre operated almost entirely independently and was in the past described as “a city within a city” (Martindale, 1982, para.1). It once spanned across 360 acres with 62 buildings and was “practically self-sufficient, with its own fire department, barbershop, laundry and food service, and road maintenance crews” (Martindale, 1982, para.1). The Centre had its own horticultural program where residents tended to house plants and helped grow seedlings to be planted around the grounds. Operations were once described as follows:

“On site greenhouses stock the well-kept flower gardens which dot acres of lawns. Both the greenhouses and flower gardens are frequently tended by residents in

vocational training at the institution. A shop markets the crafts and wooden lawn furniture that are produced by some residents in their leisure time craft classes and in the woodworking shop” (Martindale, 1982, para.12). The Michener Centre had the required components to produce what they needed internally with little help needed from the outside, and operated as such for many years (Malacrida, 2015). It even ran a ‘Grow-A-Row’ campaign, growing produce on-site, and storing vegetables in the root cellar to feed those hungry and homeless, ran by the Community Roots Coalition (source unknown, 1993). However, debates over the government funding it required to run made it highly political from the start.

Presbyterian Ladies College Now P.T.S. Building

Shift leads to funding tug of war

Klein's Michener comments spark debate

"Debate about institutions renewed"

**Vocational Education
New Trend In Red Deer**

**P.T.S. Is Model For Similar
Schools In North America**

**Attitudes Change
On Mental Health**

*Institution may
be developed into
neighborhood*

Change in store for Michener

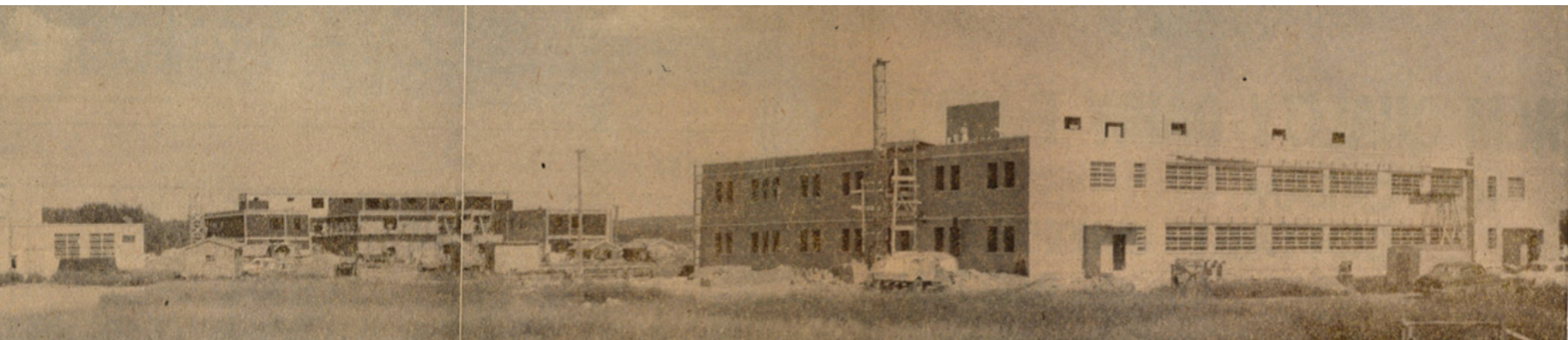


FIG. 1.12 The Michener North site (referred to as 'Deerhome') under construction - Red Deer and District Archives, 1956. Used with permission

POLITICAL BY NATURE

As you trace back the history, there was a lot of controversy over whether or not the Michener Centre should continue to operate or be dissolved entirely (Michelin, 1996). The political ping-pong that went on in Alberta over the years didn't help the situation and resulted in a series of budget cuts, staff shortages and turnover, protests, and government promises to patients and citizens (Malacrida, 2015). Subsequently, the fate of and happenings at the Michener Centre became a recurring election issue, and it was consistently in the news headlines. There was inherently a fear about what did and might happen here. After the closure of the institution, the debate remains about what should be done with the aging buildings and remaining infrastructure.

THE ONGOING DEBATE Demolish

Many of the arguments for demolition of the Michener facilities are rooted in social or economic factors. Sociologist Claudia Malacrida says that **“eliminating the physical buildings is the only way to prevent its legacy from living on, unlike the etched images that remain in survivors’ memories”** (University of Lethbridge, 2015, para.23).



FIG. 1.13 Maple residence, built in the early 1930s, being demolished after a lifespan of approximately 50 years (1 of 7 slated for demolition in the 80s) - Red Deer Advocate, 1984. Used with permission

According to local reports, “many of the north site buildings, built in the 1950s and ’60s, contain asbestos, a factor that could make their demolition very expensive” (Red Deer Advocate, 2014, para.24). Many of the buildings once standing have already disappeared, and many more are slated to be demolished.

Preserve

Those that have seen the value these facilities provided to the community continue to argue for the Michener Centre's place within Red Deer and the importance of retaining and working with what is there now. While the economic argument, especially in Alberta, for adaptive reuse of remnant infrastructure is an uphill battle, the ecological and socio-cultural arguments have far greater potential in building a convincing case for preservation. For example, “reducing urban sprawl while protecting forests, wildlife, farms, and other natural environments” is one of the major gains from adaptive reuse rather than demolition and new development, stated among many options for building local resilience (Federal Provincial Territorial Ministers of Culture and Heritage in Canada, 2016, p.11). According to the Red Deer Advocate, “although many of the Michener buildings are 50-plus years old, millions of dollars have been spent on renovations within the last decade. Work to outfit each residence with its own brand-new kitchen wrapped up only in 2011” (Red Deer Advocate, 2014, para.17). While the buildings are neglected and deteriorating, their shells are still in sound condition and provide historic value. The site alone holds great potential, but bringing to the surface the story of this place and its connection to Red Deer's past increases the potential for this place to be a unique destination and even a potential tourism opportunity within the city.

Black &

What was supposed to happen here?

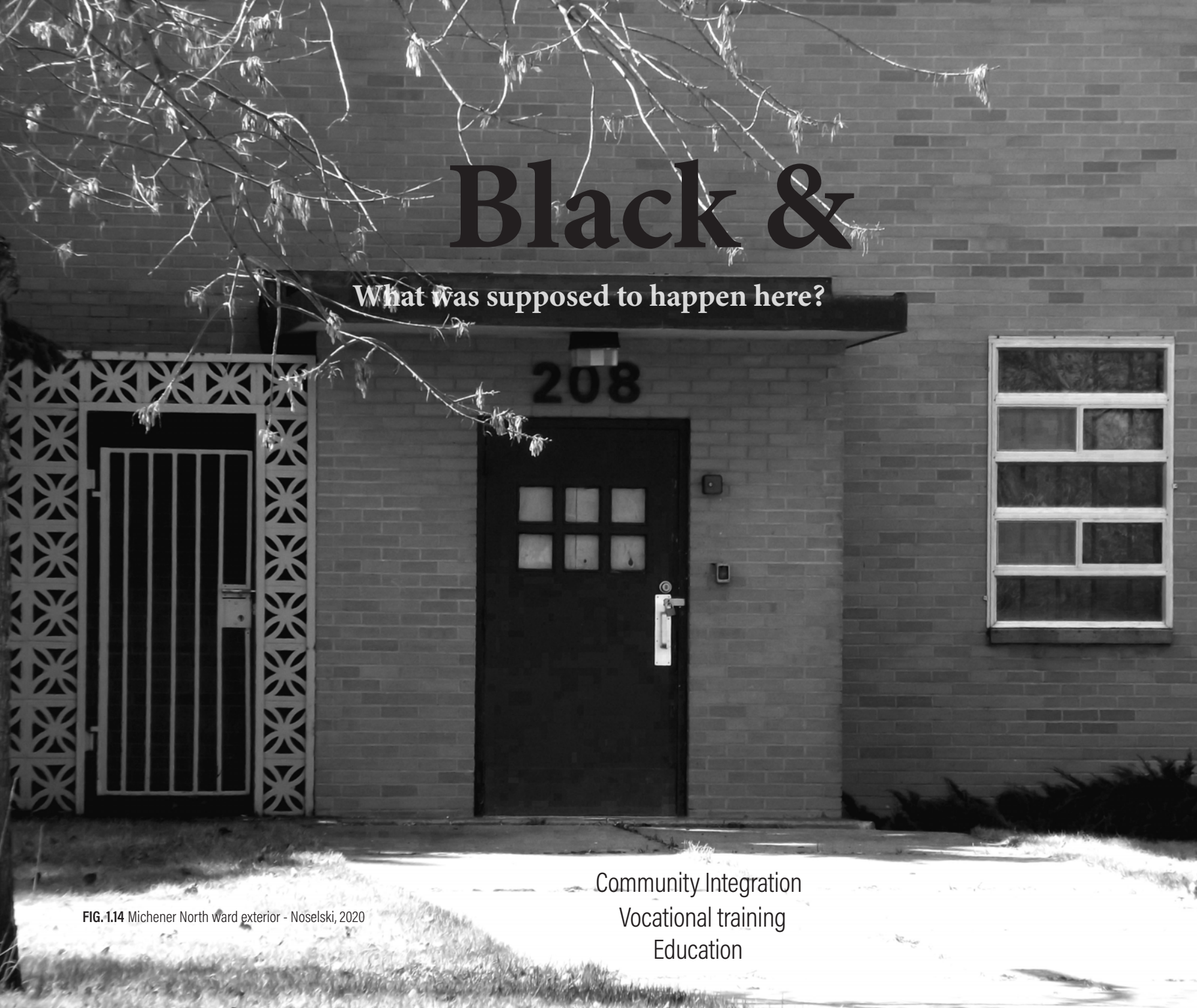


FIG. 1.14 Michener North ward exterior - Noselski, 2020

Community Integration
Vocational training
Education

White

What actually happened here?

Categorization

Sterilization

Surveillance

Segregation

Seclusion

Isolation

(Malacrida, 2015)

A DARK PAST

So what really went on behind closed doors? The constant debate about the operation of the institution created a divide that can be traced back to Michener's early years that is still evident today. On the one hand, there were those that believed it should no longer exist, but there were always those that saw the Michener Centre as an important part of the community and a necessary resource. What is really best? The answer lies somewhere between the darkness and the light, the good and the bad, and the details are highly complex. On the darker side, the Michener Centre had deep ties to the history of eugenics in Alberta (Malacrida, 2015).

CATEGORIZED: DEFINED BY LARGER SOCIETAL TRENDS

In 1983, Carolyn Martindale wrote: “since Michener Centre opened 60 years ago, it has been trying to mirror society’s changing philosophy of care for the mentally handicapped” (para.1). The Provincial Training School was originally “based on the philosophy that those with mental handicaps or behavioral problems would do best when separated from the rest of society” (Hahn, 2003, para.1). So who lived at the Michener Centre? According to research, “disproportionately large numbers of females and people who were impoverished, rural, or of First Nations, eastern European, or Mediterranean descent composed the institutional population” (Grekul, 2002, p.31 cited in Malacrida, 2015). Leilani Muir became one of the most well-known individuals that lived at the Michener Centre. She has a powerful story, as one of the first people to successfully sue the government for what they had done to her (involuntary sterilization to prevent the spread of “tainted stock” amongst the population (Malacrida, p.27)). She wrote an extensive account of her life on the inside, and outside of the institution after she got out - a memoir. Muir was wrongfully admitted because her mother didn’t want her, and spent ten years in the institution but was never mentally disabled (Muir, 2014). Her story demonstrates that there were others (that later came to the surface) that were also in the institution for the wrong reasons, but were never properly identified as such. The people that lived here over the years came from diverse backgrounds and from many different places with diverse stories, and were seen as ‘outsiders’ in society in some form or another. Malacrida describes how “recently, historians have begun to take a more critical perspective, arguing that the fates of individuals deemed to be mentally incompetent have been tied to economic changes in their societies” (p.155). Research suggests that wealthier times often led to an increase of perceived duty to care, in this case too.

FIG. 1.15 E-shaped buildings at Michener South (then known as PTS, ‘Provincial Training School’) - Woodhead, 2017



2 Mental Health Institutions in the North American Landscape

History of Institutionalization

The story of the Michener Centre in Red Deer echoes many other mental health institution's stories across North America and beyond. Asylums often had extensive underground tunnel systems linking different buildings together and circulating airflow, supplies, and people (Humber EtCetera, 2018). There are several layers to uncover beneath the surface of any asylum. While not commonly discussed today, the intricate details of how asylums were designed and how they evolved require just a little extra digging to uncover. Researching the history of asylums reveals some very striking similarities between them, regardless of where they are or were in the world.

TIES TO BROADER SOCIETAL SHIFTS

Various sources point to the fact that there were several different movements and changes in philosophy over time that significantly influenced the way people thought about and treated vulnerable populations, especially the developmentally disabled. Trends in the approach to development and treatment of these individuals were very much tied to changes in society and intertwined with the way people lived and thought, including the state of the economy and politics that had a mass influence on treatment regimes.

ASYLUM LANGUAGE

A lot of the terminology used both at the Michener Centre and in documentation about asylums throughout history is today offensive and understood to be inappropriate. Certain words are found throughout this document (like ‘mentally defective,’ ‘insane,’ etc.) in order to tell the story of what happened in the past, including an understanding of the way people thought and talked during these times. It is necessary to acknowledge this to emphasize the level of violence and offensive use of language that contributed to certain movements and happenings through history, especially in relation to asylum design and mental health care regimes (Malacrida, 2015). Perhaps most alarming, is that a lot of this language is still embedded within societal norms today where this occurred.

FIG. 2.1 Underground tunnels - Christopher Payne, 2002-2008, p.111. Used with permission

Recognizing + Identifying

DISTINCT RECURRING ASYLUM FEATURES

You do not have to look very far to discover that asylums across the world share an array of similar commonalities. Historic mental health institutions, or asylums, were impressively self-sustaining, grand, and have a certain quality of detail to them that is captivating, with the ability to make an impression (Payne, 2009; Allen, 2019). A quick look at Photographer Christopher Payne's work on asylums in the United States shows many of the similarities between different institutions and the state they are in today, or at least those that still remain (Allen, 2019). Some of the most prominent asylum features shown include:

Distinct in shape

Confined and enclosed

Administration at the core

Surrounded by 'parkland' - greenery & sky

Today abandoned and decaying, but beautiful

(Allen, 2019)

Large campus-like facilities
Built up on a hill with a view
Once on the edge of town...

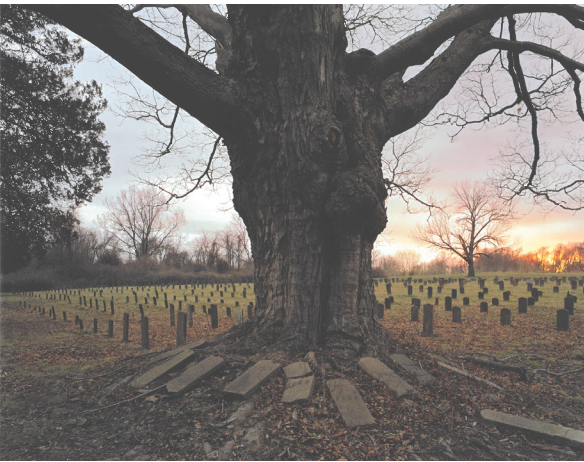


FIG. 2.2 Asylum photos from the United States - Christopher Payne, 2002-2008. Used with permission

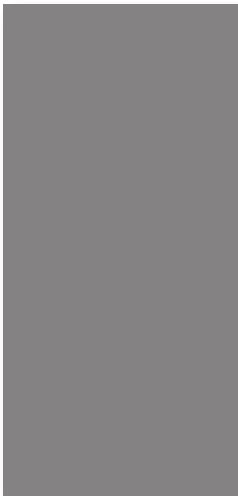
Cemeteries
Root cellars
Water towers
Power stations
Agricultural operations

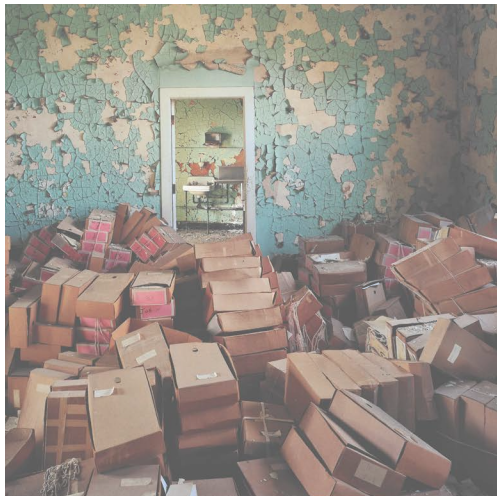
Echoes in the Void

ASYLUM COMMONALITIES

Chris Payne's photographs speak to not only the state that many of these facilities were left in, but also to how they are changing, and how nature has started to take back some of these spaces. He captures and discusses the inherent beauty that exists and the stories that these places tell us today. His images invoke a sense of drama and emotion as he reveals the paint peeling of the walls and scattered pieces of furniture strewn about, in addition to personal items left at these abandoned institutions. Some of the features shown here include long connective corridors, vents from root cellars, and administrative quarters and hallways undergoing decay - the aftermath of abandon.

FIG. 2.3 American asylum photographs - Christopher Payne, 2002-2008. Used with permission





THE KIRKBRIDE PLAN

One of the most widely talked about people when it comes to the design of mental health institutions in America is psychiatrist Dr. Thomas Story Kirkbride. Dr. Kirkbride developed what is known today as ‘The Kirkbride Plan,’ which is essentially a very detailed breakdown for how to build an insane asylum (Allen, 2019). In 1854 Kirkbride wrote an 84-page book detailing out everything from the size of buildings and the details of the landscape to the materials that should be used for the construction of asylums (Allen, 2019). Perhaps the most surprising, is just how many of these asylums were built across the United States that follow the suggestions outlined in his book titled ‘On the construction, organization and general arrangements of hospitals for the insane,’ today referred to as Kirkbrides (Allen, 2019). Between 1840-1880, 121 new asylums had popped up across the U.S., “most of them built with state funds according to the Kirkbride Plan” (Allen, 2019). However, today it is estimated that there are only around 40 of them left (Moersen, 2015). A few specific asylum examples will be presented here, including the Athens Asylum in Athens, Ohio.

FIG. 2.4 Postcard showing birds-eye view of lakes on grounds of Athens State Hospital - Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University Libraries, 1907-1913



Katherine Ziff (2012) writes about the Athens Asylum and its early beginnings being “deeply connected with nineteenth-century America’s far-reaching demographic changes” (p.x). The Athens Asylum was just one example of an institution developed to the standards set out in The Kirkbride Plan that “proposed to cure its patients with orderly routines, beautiful views of the countryside, exposure to the arts, a built environment with abundant natural light and plenty of ventilation, outdoor exercise, useful occupation, and personal attention from a physician” (p.ix). Dr. Kirkbride believed that in designing these types of spaces, designers should have to consult and seek approval from physicians that understood the impacts that altering the built environment had on mental health (Allen, 2019). It is clear that a lot of thought went into his plan as it was referred to and used as a design foundation for well over 100 years.

FIG. 2.5 Elements of the Athens Asylum in Ohio - Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University Libraries as found in Ziff, 2012, p.138, 141 & 140



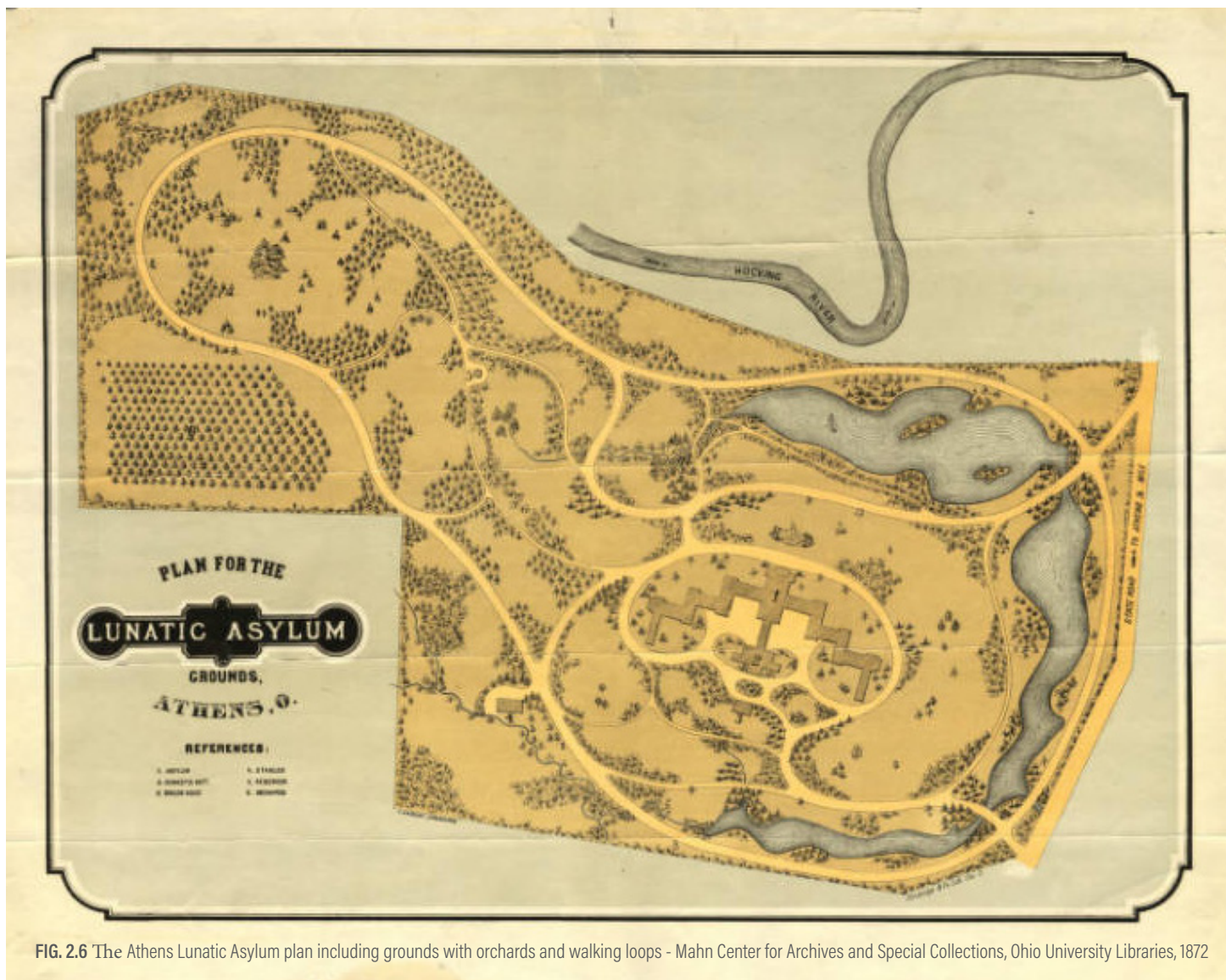


FIG. 2.6 The Athens Lunatic Asylum plan including grounds with orchards and walking loops - Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Ohio University Libraries, 1872

IMPORTANT ASYLUM FEATURES *According to Dr. Thomas Story Kirkbride (1854)*

- Security/privacy/enclosure

"To protect the patients from the gaze and impertinent curiosity of visitors, and from the excitement occasioned by their presence in the grounds," (p.9) but not obstructing views of the surrounding landscape, "the amount of land thus enclosed should never be less than thirty acres, while forty or even fifty acres will be a more desirable amount" (p.9).

- Access to materials (wood/tillable land/water supply)

"Facilities for drainage, and for enclosing the pleasure grounds" (p.7)

Buildings should be "constructed of stone or brick, as may be found most convenient and economical" (p.14).

- Views "should exhibit life in its active forms" (p.7).

- Extensive walking loops routes and drives 1 mile long (p.10).

- Small yards adjacent to buildings (p.10).

- Hold a maximum of 250 patients to ensure well-being of patients (p.10).

- Ample land for pleasure grounds, gardens + exercise

"Every hospital for the insane should possess at least one hundred acres of land, to enable it to have the proper amount for farming and gardening purposes, to give the desired degree of privacy and to secure adequate and appropriate means of exercise, labor and occupation to the patients" (p.7).

"Of the total amount, from thirty to fifty acres immediately around the buildings, should be appropriated as pleasure grounds, and should be so arranged and enclosed as to give the patients the full benefit of them, without being annoyed by the presence of visitors or others. It is desirable that several acres of this tract should be in groves or woodland," for shady summers and 'tasteful' character" (p.7).

- Good location

That is accessible to all that might arrive, through all seasons, and located "in the countryside, not within less than two miles of a town of considerable size" (p.7).

"In a healthful, pleasant and fertile district of country; the land chosen should be of good quality and easily tilled; the surrounding scenery should be of a varied and attractive kind, and the neighbourhood should possess numerous objects of an agreeable and interesting character" (p.7).

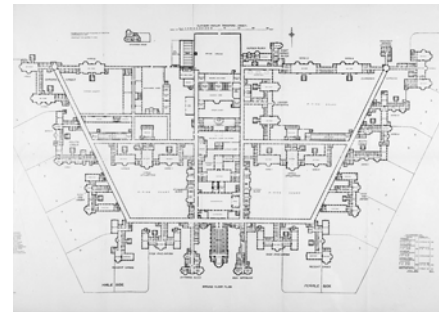
FORM + ORDER

Architectural historian Carla Yanni has written extensively on the architecture of madness and presents an interesting understanding of the thought process that went into designing these American insane asylums. According to Yanni (2007), mental hospitals in Europe were typically designed so that “the pavilions were incorporated into two parallel rows, a U shape, an E shape, a grid or a cross” (p.51). At the same time, many of the asylums in the United States were arranged in a V shape after the guidelines set out in the Kirkbride Plan (one example of that layout can be seen in Fig. 2.7). Kirkbride proposed a layout that was “bilaterally symmetrical, with men on one side and women on the other; a central building held administrative offices; most rooms had views of the landscape” (Yanni, 2007, p.78). According to Yanni, most of these Kirkbrides were carefully developed within “parklike settings,” and “thriving agricultural operations were a hallmark of Kirkbride-style asylums in the nineteenth century” (Ziff, 2012, p.143).

ALTERNATIVES TO KIRKBRIDE

Following the Kirkbride Plan (which was a more linear layout), the cottage plan got a foothold (more of a segregate cluster with ‘community-based care’), commonly described as a hybrid that “continued old practices in new buildings” (Yanni, 2007, p.79). The latter represents the move towards deinstitutionalization.

FIG. 2.7 Claybury Asylum ground floor plan - Welcome Collection, n.d.



ARCHITECTURAL STYLE + MESSAGING: INTENT

As discussed earlier, the designs of insane asylums and their surroundings are reflective of conflicting societal values and important transitional shifts that occurred over time, especially regarding the treatment of the most marginalized populations (Yanni, 2007). Many asylums were designed during a time when the majority of doctors and psychiatrists believed that “an improved environment could cure insanity” (p.1) . The styles varied significantly, with “these much-maligned institutions occupied buildings ranging in style from Greek temples to medieval castles to Arts and Crafts cottages, and, in their day, they attempted to communicate a message of generosity” (p.1). Regardless of what style they were, these places were primarily designed to be healing, and a lot of the details and arrangements demonstrate this attempt. The intentions of these asylums were originally to be places of refuge for those that didn’t seem to have a place in society. Where did it all start? According to Yanni (2007), “Americans began building lunatic asylums in the eighteenth century, in the wake of reform movements and compelled by a sense of civic and religious duty” (p.17). Essentially, this meant that the more money people started making, the more they felt responsible to care for those less fortunate.

KIRKBRIDE DEFINED COMPONENTS

architecture
landscape
efficiencies
demeanor

COMMON PATTERNS + KEY THEMES

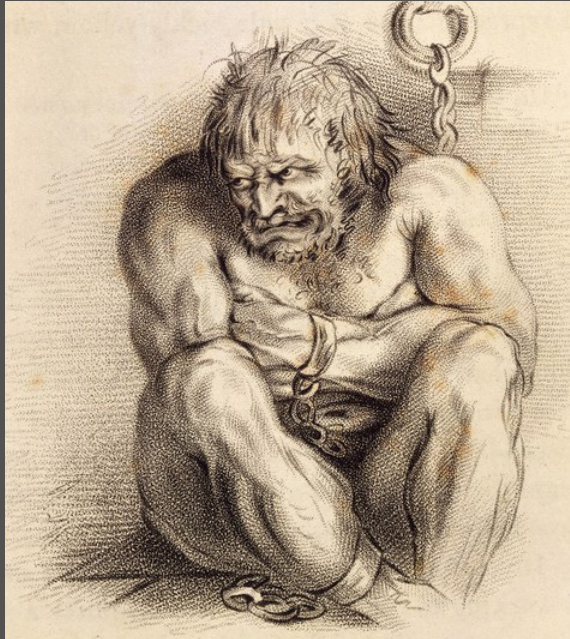


FIG. 2.8 Confinement and isolation for those deemed 'insane' - Bell, 1844, p.180. Courtesy of Wellcome Collection

Some of the themes and patterns that emerge from research on mental health institutions include:

Symmetry
Memory
Routine
Binary
Fear
Isolation
Integration
Moral Therapy
Moral Treatment
Institutionalization
Deinstitutionalization

INSTITUTIONALIZATION

The growth of asylums can be traced back to the institutionalization and moral treatment movements in the 18th century United States (Allen, 2019). There is evidence of early European treatment of the developmentally disabled influencing common practices in North America. Michel Foucault (1988) speaks to the great confinement of the 'insane' during the classical era and states that "measured by their functional value alone, the creation of the houses of confinement can be regarded as a failure" (p.54). After years of mass institutionalization, people started to quickly abandon it as a viable option to house the mentally ill (Yanni, 2007).

DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION

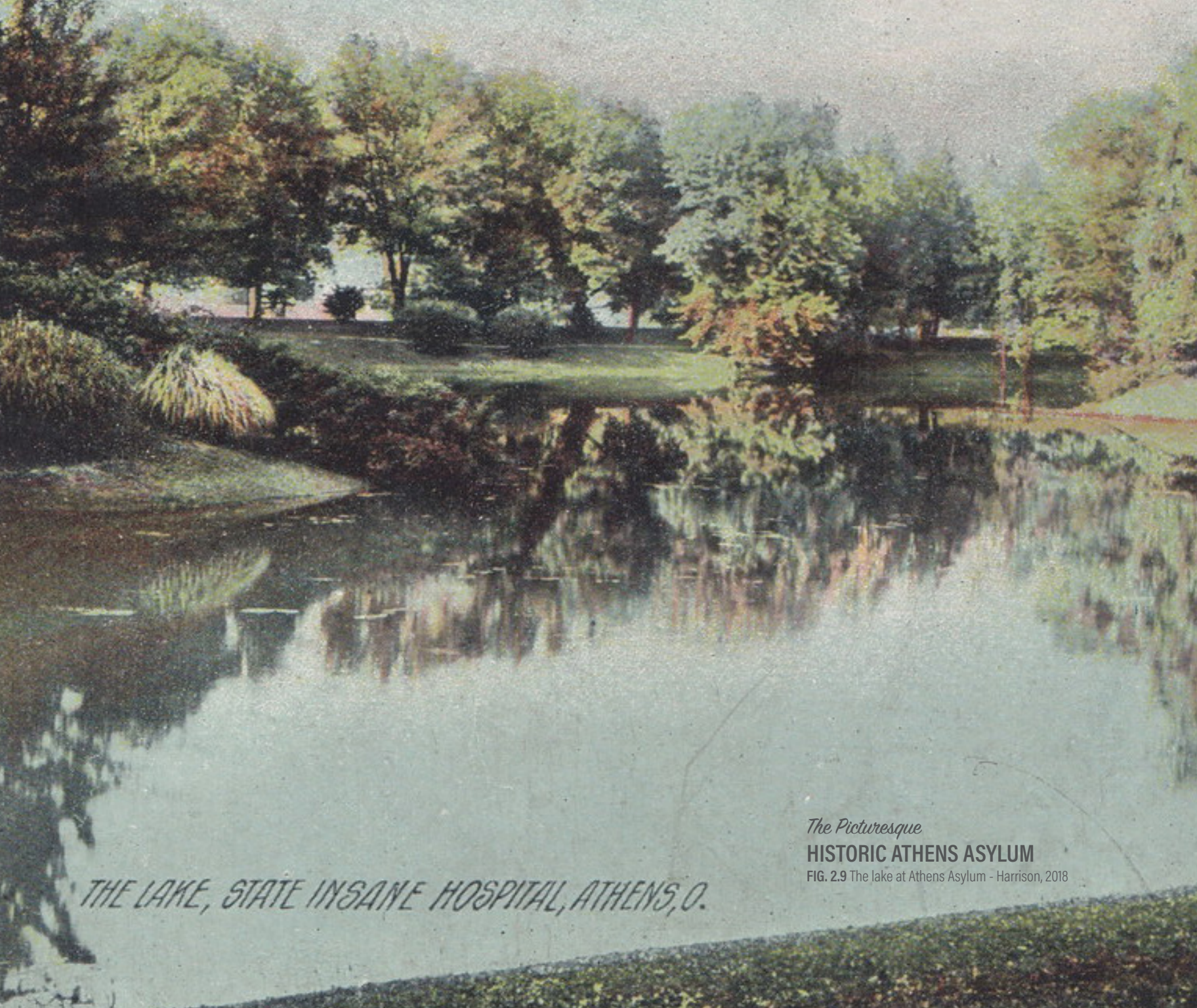
As evidence of the earliest known asylums suggests, “the classical age used confinement in an equivocal manner, making it play a double role: to reason unemployment, or at least eliminate its most visible social effects, and to control costs when they seemed likely to become too high” (Foucault, 1988, p.54). Ironically, confinement in Europe had origins in an economic crisis. However, Malacrida (2015) states that “while the institutionalization of individuals identified as mentally deficient was tied to economic trends and attitudes about the necessity for productivity among such people, economics was not the sole factor in the development of institutionalization” (p.9). Malacrida claims that changes in education systems and standards, such as the development of standardized IQ tests were a major contributor to a shift in categorizing and segregating those that were different, and sorting people based on their perceived intellectual capabilities.

In researching the transition and debate between institutionalization and deinstitutionalization (a move towards community integration), many decisions ultimately were made based on cost. According to Ziff (2012), “deinstitutionalization, the relocating of asylum patients to their communities, was a result of several factors, including the rise of new models of care from treatment lessons learned in World War II” (p.181). However, the transition took many years. The deinstitutionalization movement was well underway in the 1970s in the United States (Allen, 2019), only to follow in Canada much later. In conclusion, there were many more influences on institutionalization and deinstitutionalization than can be discussed here, but they are important to understand to recognize their mass impact on society, and just how quickly such movements can change development trends.

LANDSCAPE AS A CENTRAL COMPONENT

The landscape has played an important role in the development, organization, and function of insane asylums throughout history. The infamous landscape architects Frederick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux were involved in the design of the grounds of various asylums across the United States. The asylum landscapes they helped design featured winding pathways and different variations of gardens and meadows with clusters of trees to create a diversity of experiences for patients and visitors. According to Ziff (2012), “Olmstead planned the grounds for several asylums, including Buffalo State Hospital (completed in 1895), Hudson River State Hospital (1871), and McLean Hospital, the private state mental hospital in Boston in which he died in 1903” (p.126). The Hartford Retreat for the Insane in Hartford, Connecticut, Olmstead in collaboration with “influential asylum doctor John S. Butler,” [...] “conspired to temper the institutional character of mental hospitals by introducing smaller buildings and pastoral plantings” (Yanni, 2007, p.79). For

the renovation of the Hartford Retreat grounds, “Olmstead’s goal was to accentuate the generous meadow in front of the main building” (p.107). Even those asylum grounds that weren’t designed by Olmstead or Vaux were often still inspired and “rooted in Frederick Law Olmsted’s vision of the recuperative power of authentic natural landscape and preservation of original wilderness” (Ziff, 2012, p.126). The Athens Asylum landscape was described as “second to none” including “groves of trees, attractive scenery, and handsomely cultivated land [that] functioned as attractive vistas on which patients could gaze, sites for patient work and exercise, a place for farming operations, and an inviting reassurance to families and patients” (Ziff, 2012, p.126). For many years “the asylum landscape was a permeable boundary between the institution and the community of Athens, creating a visual connection” (p.140). The Athens Asylum had its own greenhouse where flowers and seedlings were grown “for the gardens as well as cut flowers for the institution and the community” (p.140).



THE LAKE, STATE INSANE HOSPITAL, ATHENS, O.

The Picturesque

HISTORIC ATHENS ASYLUM

FIG. 2.9 The lake at Athens Asylum - Harrison, 2018



ASYLUMS TODAY: STIGMA + MISCONCEPTIONS

There is no question that asylums today commonly have a negative reputation and are thought of as “grim reminders of an often inhumane system” (Yanni, 2012, p.1). According to Yanni, “Historian and sociologist Andrew Scull has searched for grand economic and societal causes for the rise of the asylum, and maintains that an overall uptick in affluence, the shift to a service economy, and nascent consumerism” were behind the steady rise (p.1). Yet, there are so many great things about these places that make them worth understanding and saving, or at least those that remain. Perhaps there is something to be said about the role that the father of landscape architecture (Frederick Law Olmstead) had in creating influential landscapes around these asylums, and what could be learned from him and the design principles used to inform these types of spaces.

IN TRANSITION: ASYLUM POTENTIAL

To conclude, asylums were on the rise in nineteenth-century America. Following a move towards deinstitutionalization, they fell into a gradual decline, and many “deteriorated from neglect” (Moersen, 2015). There is a recent movement towards the adaptive reuse of many of these remaining asylums across the U.S. and beyond, as local groups rally to save them, “revamping community pride and local economies” (Moersen, 2015). While it remains a challenge to convince people of their potential due to the stigma often associated with them, they have generally been described as flexible places that can be and have been used for a wide variety of programs. Recent asylum restoration projects (to be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5) show evidence that “despite their negative associations, asylums exhibit excellent design and craftsmanship, and are adaptable to an endless variety of uses” (Moersen, 2015). The Kirkbride Plan spread like wildfire. Could a similar movement or catalyst for adaptive reuse spur a shift in the way people think about these types of places in the urban fabric?

Visible Similarities

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS FOR MICHENER TODAY

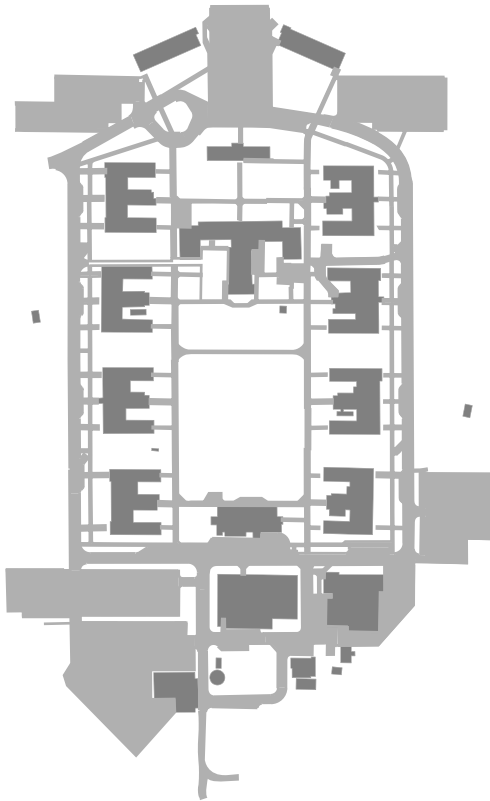


FIG. 2.11 Michener North site in Red Deer - Adapted from the City of Red Deer Engineering Department data, 2019



FIG. 2.12 Ridges building identification at the Athens Asylum, Ohio University comprehensive land use study, 1989, p.19 - Ohio University, 1989

A deeper analysis of the history of architecture and the landscape of both the Michener site and asylums in history allows for a better understanding of the Michener North site today. As the E-shaped architecture is reflective of early European ideals, it would seem that many of the institutions across North America, including Michener, were designed following the instructions laid out in The Kirkbride Plan to maximize airflow and views to the outside, in addition to lots of other positive attributes that were replicated in different ways. There are striking visual similarities between some of the historic asylum plans and the Michener site layout. It can therefore

be assumed, to some degree, that those involved in the design of Michener had some influence from these significant structures and historic plans discussed here, and that the designer for the Michener Centre had similar intentions for it. However, similarly at Michener, economic pressures contributed to a shift in operations, away from initial intentions. The closure of the Michener Centre was ultimately due to economic consequences during a decline, directly tied to Alberta's economy. What does the upswing bring?

3 Michener North Today - Remnants of Abandonment

Site Analysis + Evaluation

Michener North is not highly visible to the average passerby, aside from the water tower that sits high above the treetops. Purposefully isolated, this is both a positive and a negative element contributing to its demise. However, glimpses of the Michener site can be seen from the edges along 30th Avenue, and Crossley Street in the Clearview Ridge neighbourhood. A series of fences and blockades currently separate the area from neighbourhoods to the north and south. Access to the Michener North site is very limited. The site is visually separated with vegetation from the rest of the city, hidden from views along major thoroughfares. This enclosure is evidence of intentional separation and protection of the site in its past. With a deeper understanding of the surrounding context, Michener North's assets become more evident. The diversity of vegetation is one of the most valued assets in and around the Michener North site but is perhaps not fully understood.



Views of the natural wetland, grasslands, and water tower from 30th Ave



Gate with barricades with constructed wetland in behind - 55th Street entrance



FIG. 3.1 Views of Michener North from the edges - Noselski, 2019-2020



There are various forests, wetlands, and grasslands within close proximity to the surrounding urban development. There is a mix of both evergreen and deciduous trees throughout the area, both within the forests and intentionally planted pockets dispersed throughout the site. There are single specimen trees like willows and ash, mature balsam poplar that dominate the boulevards, and massive spruce trees in many of the forests and open spaces surrounding the abandoned infrastructure.





EXISTING CONDITIONS

Special Places Worth Protecting

This place is already an oasis - for birds, bugs, a retreat. When seen from above, the incredible array and diversity of trees become evident, along with their integrated nature with the existing buildings. The Michener buildings and the surrounding landscape reinforce each other, each important in their own ways. Better together - they are intertwined, just like the relationship between the Michener Centre and the surrounding community. While currently off-limits to the public, the center still acts as a place to escape - a peaceful and beautiful escape.

FIG. 3.2 Drone footage of the Michener North site, looking northwest - Panameno Productions, 2020. Used with permission



GAETZ LAKES SANCTUARY

55TH ST

30TH AVE

CROSSLIE ST



SITE CONTEXT

Edges and Enclosure

A view of the site from an aerial photograph demonstrates how different it is from its surroundings. Michener North is bordered and enclosed by dense forests along the College Park neighbourhood to the east and the Gaetz Lakes Sanctuary escarpment to the west. Residential neighbourhoods surround the site to the north and south. The intentionally planted privacy screens and patches of trees along the north and south edges and through the centre of the site create an additional sense of enclosure. The escarpment to the west marks a significant change in topography as you move from the Michener Centre on the hill (the area known as Michener Hill) down into the Gaetz Lake Sanctuary oxbow lakes and surrounding area. Michener North is also surrounded by a series of preserved ecological features thanks to passionate citizens, including the College Park area spruce forest, the Gaetz Lakes Bird Sanctuary, mature tree stands to the north, and a protected heritage home to the south - the J.J. Gaetz homestead. The Gaetz family saw the importance of this landscape and were instrumental in protecting the area surrounding their home for community and wildlife (Government of Canada, 2019).

FIG. 3.4 Protected community assets - Noselski, 2020



LANDSCAPE TRANSFORMATIONS

The area surrounding the Michener north and south sites has changed a lot since its earlier years, but many of the forms and major landmarks are still recognizable today. Fig. 3.5 shows the state of the area as of 2019. A comparison of the surrounding area from 2001 (as seen in Fig. 1.3) and 2019 shows a lot has changed in a very short period. The forested areas have filled in and residential neighbourhoods have replaced agricultural fields to the north and east. Much of the site is today maintained lawn. While certain buildings have since been demolished, others have been constructed that cannot be seen in Fig. 1.3.

The south site is still in operation today and includes Lotsa Tots Childcare Services, the Roland Michener Aquatic Centre, Michener Hill Curling Association, PDD Red Deer (social services organization), Alberta Health Services, Extendicare Michener Hill (senior centre), and Michener Gardens (community plots).

FIG. 3.5 Aerial photograph of the Michener North and South sites - Noselski, 2019. Adapted from City of Red Deer Engineering Department data, 2019





*Gaetz Lakes
Sanctuary*

MICHENER NORTH

55TH STREET

MICHENER SOUTH

CENTRAL LOCATION

Red Deer is said to be “blessed in its location” (Dawe, n.d., p.3). The City has long been an important transition point, geographically, ecologically, and subsequently, acts as a major connection point between northern and southern Alberta. It was chosen as the location of the main mental health treatment facility in the province because of its central location and access to the two major cities in Alberta, directly in the middle of Calgary and Edmonton (Malacrida, 2015). The City of Red Deer is situated in the heart of central Alberta and is also deeply entrenched in many of Alberta’s economic, environmental, and political views, shaped by a series of processes over time.

FIG. 3.6 Red Deer context map - Noselski, 2019



Ecological Foundations

CLIMATE: NATURAL FORCES AT PLAY

The Red Deer area falls within zone 3a, with some of the city 3b (The City of Red Deer, n.d.a). Red Deer is one of the sunniest places in Alberta, just behind Calgary (Michelin, 2019) with sufficient rains in the summer months. Generally, Red Deer has warm, mild summers with low humidity and cold dry winters.

GROWING SEASON

120 Days

AVERAGE SUNNY DAYS

324 Days / Year

(Michelin, 2019)

PLANT HARDINESS ZONE

Zone 3a / 3b

(City of Red Deer, n.d.a)

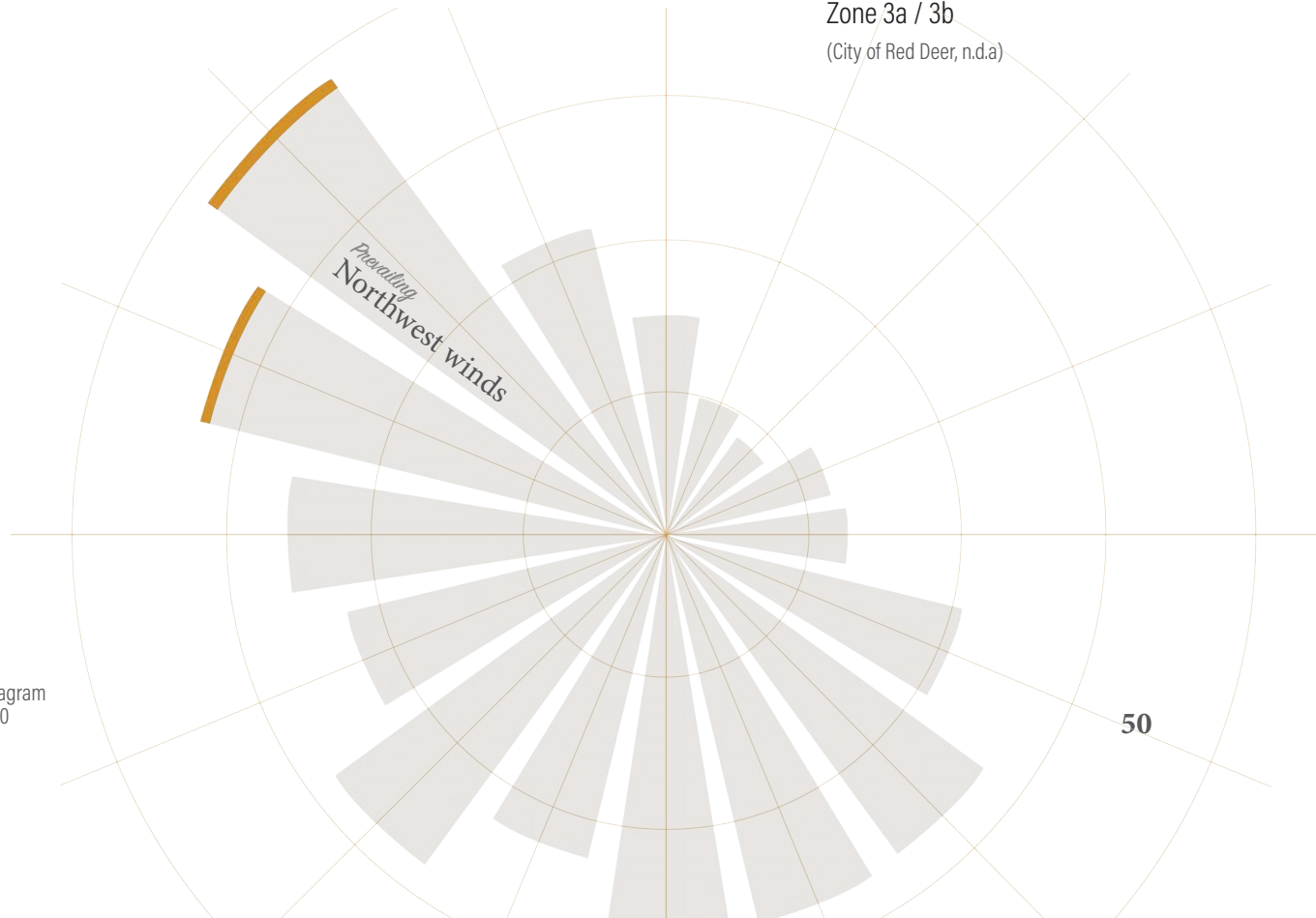


FIG. 3.7 Red Deer wind rose diagram
- Adapted from Meteoblue, 2020

EXISTING TOPOGRAPHY MICHENER NORTH + VICINITY

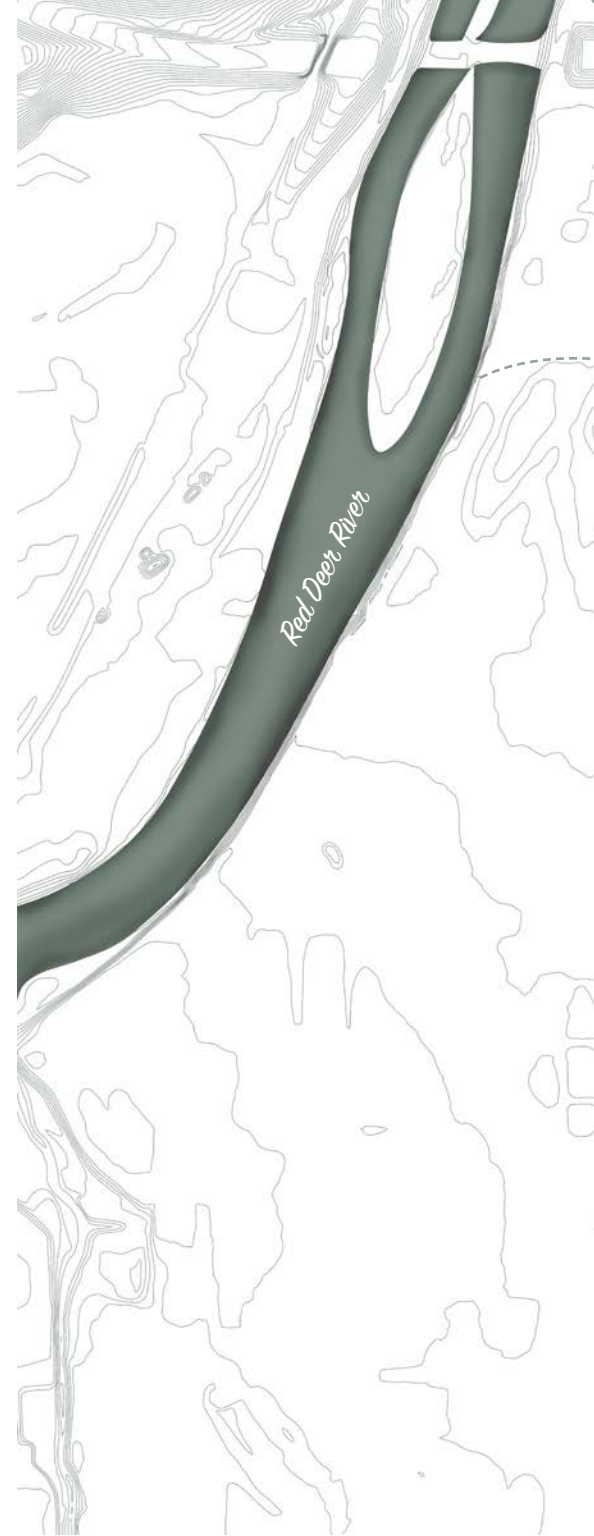
Lines in the Landscape

- 1m Contours
- Rivers, lakes & wetlands / detention ponds
- - - Historic River Path

The area surrounding present-day Red Deer was significantly impacted by the formation of the Red Deer River valley, which occurred thousands of years ago. When glacial lake Red Deer retreated, it left rich deposits and formed an undulating landscape (Dawe, 1996). The Michener North site sits along the upper escarpment, overlooking two oxbow lakes that used to be a part of the river. Water from the top of the hill eventually moves its way into the valley to meet up with the Red Deer River. According to the City of Red Deer, the water table is very high in this area, which is why you see so much surface water today in the form of detention ponds and constructed wetlands in developed areas along with natural wetlands (Parkland Community Planning Services, 1998).



FIG. 3.8 Topography map - Noselski, 2020. Adapted from The City of Red Deer Engineering Department data, 2019





Oxbow Lakes

EXISTING TOPOGRAPHY

Changes in the landscape are best understood through a series of sections to get a feel for the transition from the top of the hill down into the Red Deer River valley.



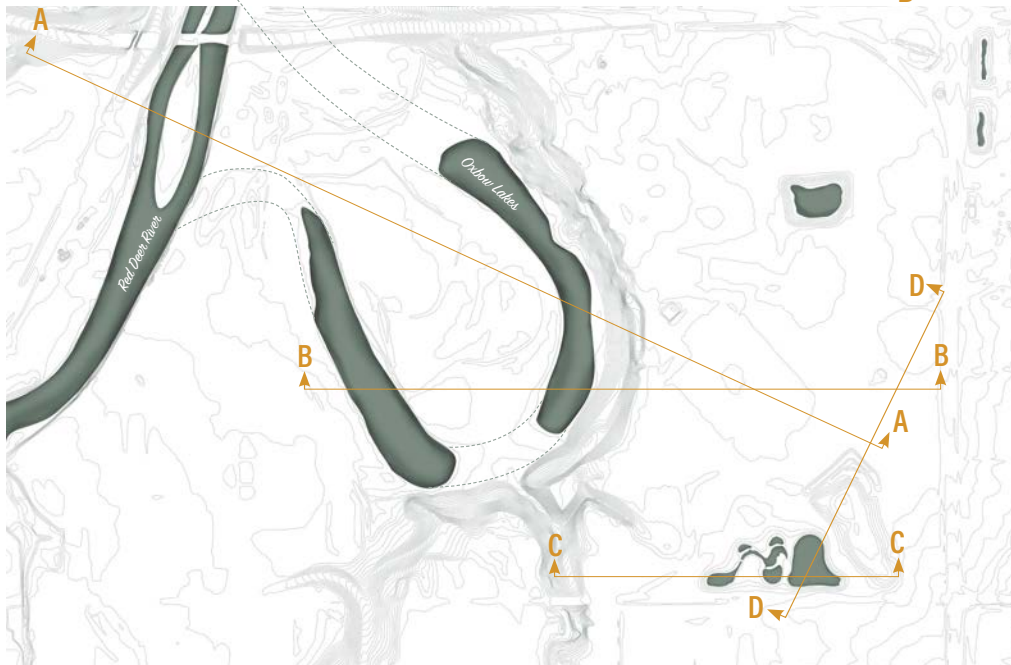
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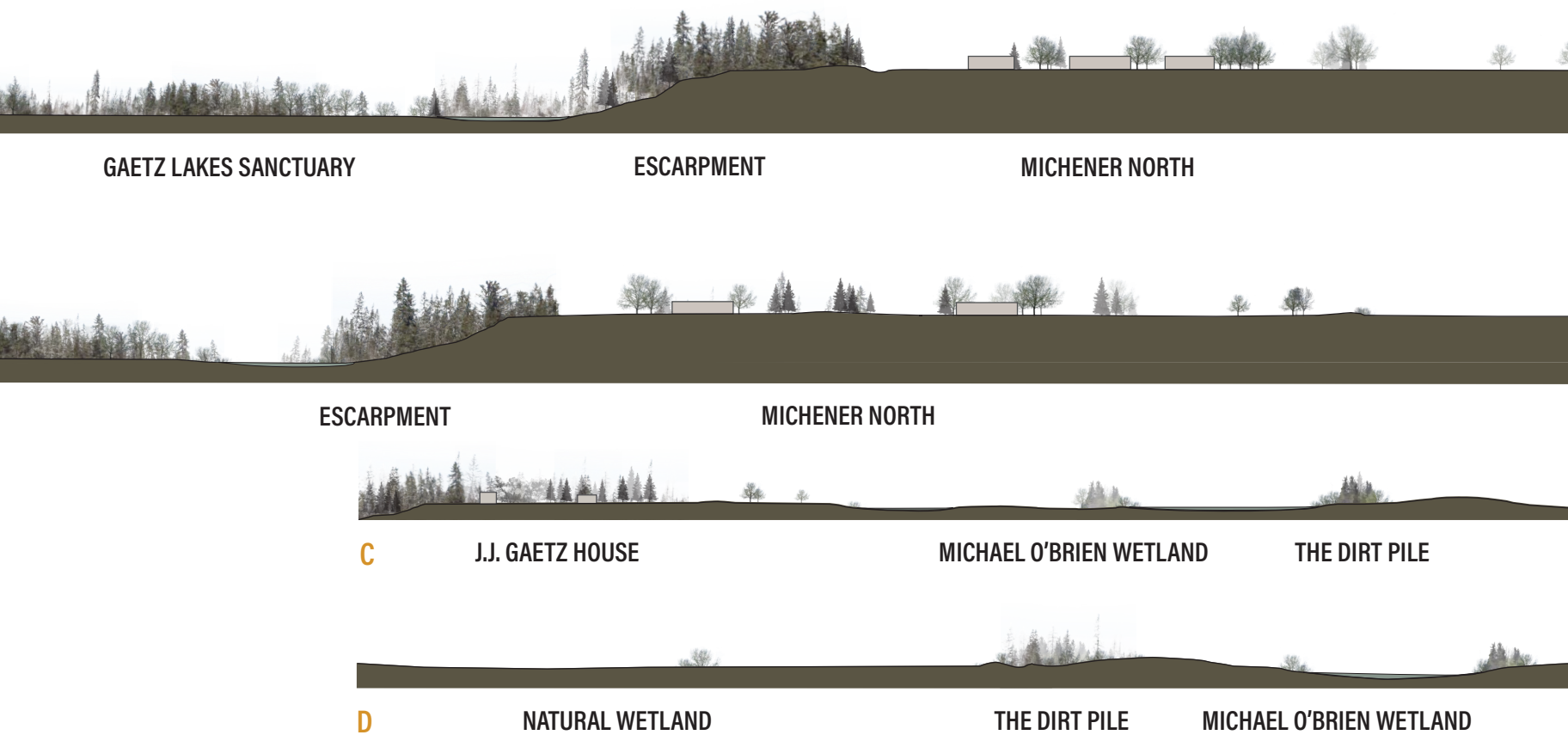
THE RED DEER RIVER



B

GAETZ LAKES SANCTUARY





SCALE 1:5000

0 75 150m

FIG. 3.9 Existing conditions - landscape character sections - Noselski, 2020

GEOLOGY + SOILS + ECOLOGICAL ZONES

Historian Michael Dawe (2013) describes the Red Deer landscape as “rich and wondrous” in reference to not only the diverse plant and animal life, but also the shape of the land (p.4). The geology that underlies much of Alberta has contributed to many interesting features, and the province’s wealth and primary industries. According to Dawe (2013), “geologically, Red Deer sits atop a bedrock of shale and sandstone laid down millions of years ago” (p.4). Subsequently, “the rich animal and plant life of prehistoric times also left rich petroleum and gas deposits, as well as coal fields” in the region (p.5). Dawe states that “the mixture of vegetation spread over a well-watered, black-soiled gently undulating countryside is very parklike” (1996, p.9) and that “the primeval paradise of many eons ago literally laid the foundations for the economic paradise of modern central Alberta” (2013, p.5). The rich black Chernozems are commonly associated with grasslands (more dominant in the south and east), and the dark grey Chernozems and Luvisolics are commonly associated with the forested areas (more dominant in the north) (Natural Regions Committee, 2006). Thanks to the underlying geology, “the dominant landform is undulating glacial till plains, with about 30 percent as hummocky, rolling and undulating uplands” (Natural Regions Committee, 2006). This has contributed to the beautiful, diverse landscape that can be seen today.

FIG. 3.10 Landscape types - Adapted from Natural Regions Committee, 2006, p.117 & 248



FORESTS

SOIL: Orthic Dark Gray Chernozems & Dark Gray Luvisolic (Imperfectly Drained)

DOMINANT SPECIES:
Varies depending on type of forest (see Fig. 3.12)

Tree Species

White spruce, balsam poplar, aspen



GRASSLANDS

SOIL: Dark Brown & Orthic Black Chernozems (Loamy, Well Drained)

DOMINANT SPECIES:

Shrub Communities

Buckbrush, silverberry, prickly rose, saskatoon

Grass Communities

Plains rough fescue grass, western porcupine grass, slender wheat grass, Hooker's oatgrass, June grass, needle-and-thread, blue grama, dryland sedges, pastured sagewort, perennial herbs



WETLANDS

SOIL: Humic or Orthic Gleysolics (Poorly Drained)

DOMINANT SPECIES:

Willow shrubs, sedge, common cattail (shorelines), bulrush, pondweed, and duckweed (aquatic vegetation)

(Government of Canada, 2019).

VEGETATION

MICHENER NORTH + VICINITY

Aspen-Grassland Mosaic



The Gaetz Lakes are surrounded by a diversity of habitats, from the dense forests along the upper escarpment to the wetlands in the lower bowl.

THE LOWER BOWL

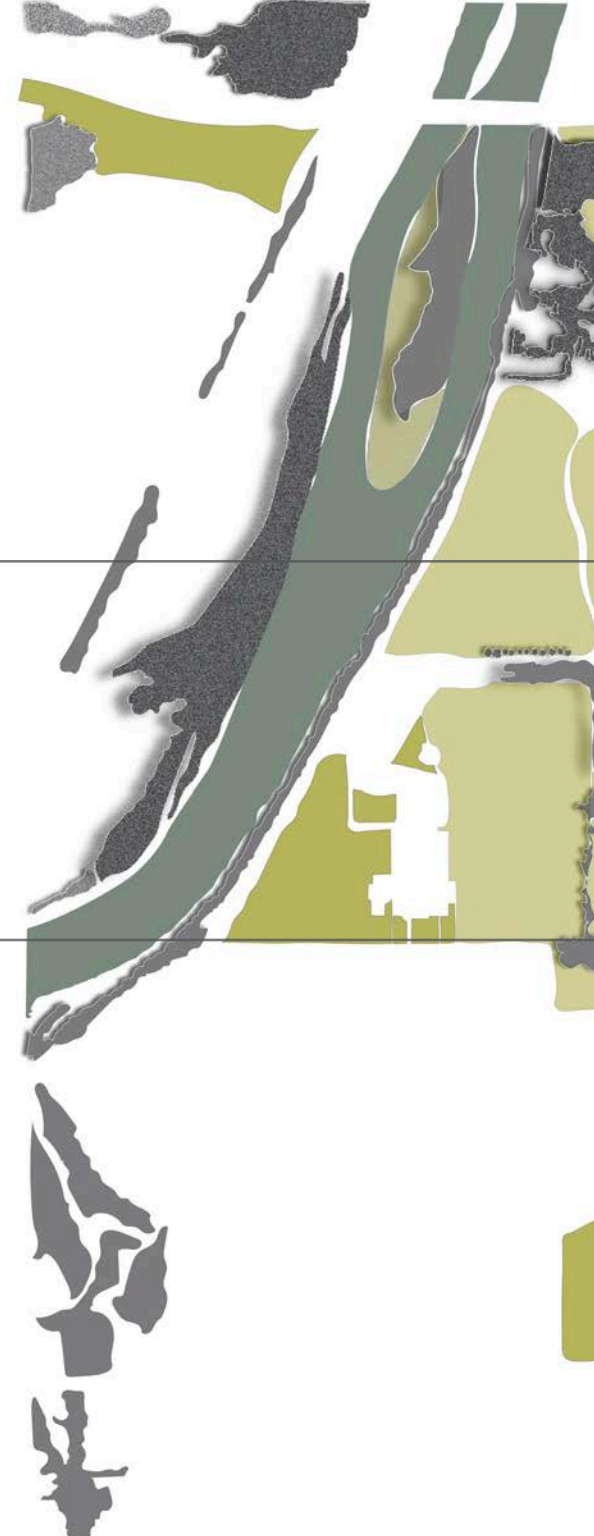
The vegetation found in the area correlates with changes in topography, where “the land between the two oxbow lakes is vegetated mostly by aspen and Balsam Poplar trees with Red Osier Dogwood, Wild Rose and Snowberry growing closer to the ground,” with spruce and willow dispersed throughout the river valley and around the lake’s edges (Government of Canada, 2019).

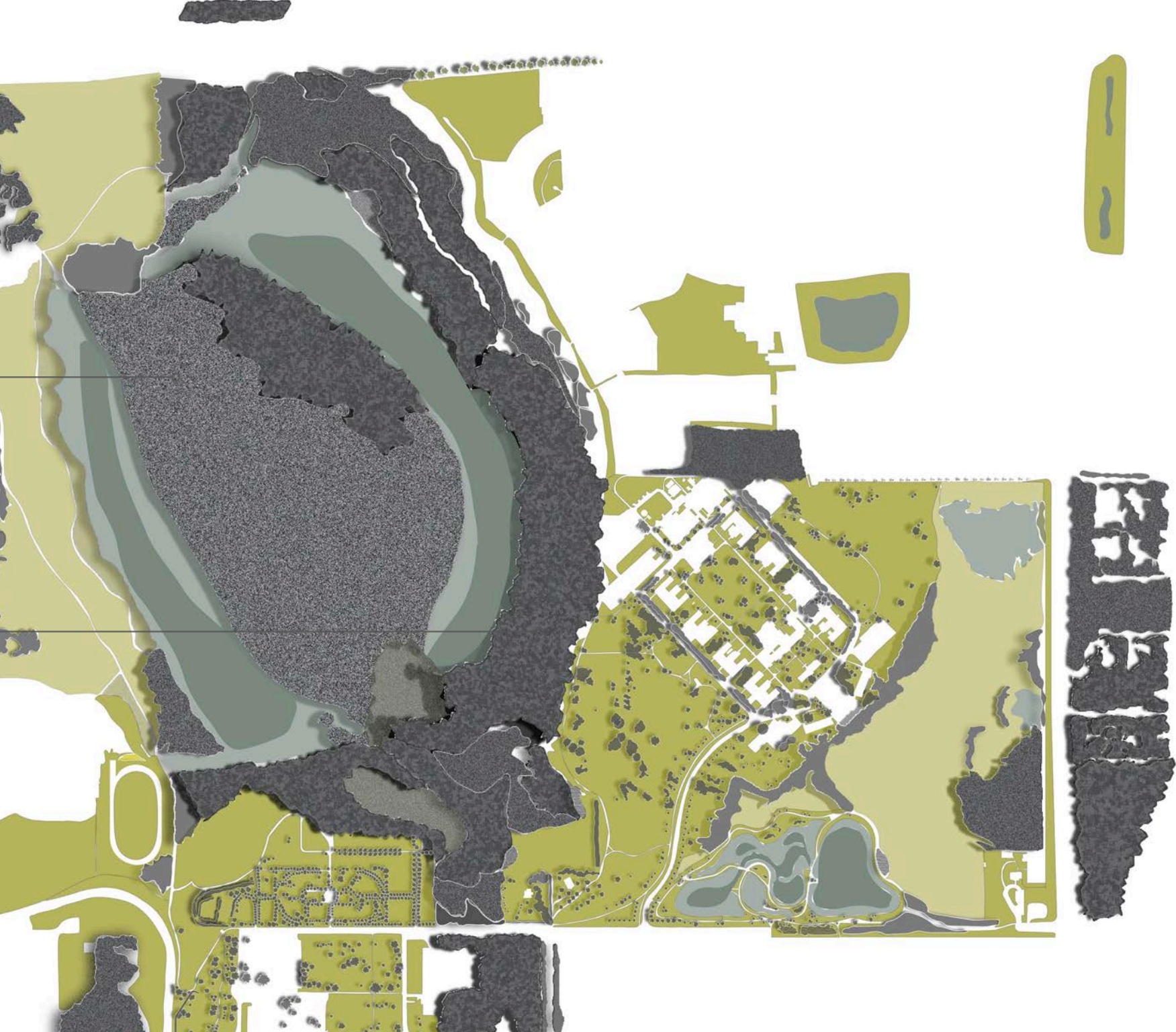
THE ESCARPMENT

From the top of the hill, “the steeper slopes above the lakes are dominated by White Spruce” while as you move to the west, “the less steep slopes are covered in a Balsam Poplar mixed-wood” (Government of Canada, 2019).



FIG. 3.11 Vegetation map - Adapted from the City of Red Deer Engineering Department data, 2019





DIVERSITY OF FORESTS + PLANT COMMUNITIES

Most of the forests seen in and around the Michener site were not here initially but were planted. As a result, today there are lots of trees, and a large number of them appear to be part of native forests or mature stands. Following settlement and cultivation, these conditions were a result of planting suckering tree species in combination with controlling prairie fire management that was once an important part of this ecosystem (Dawe, 1996).



Poplar Stand

Aspen Grove

FIG. 3.12 Forest types
- Adapted from Natural
Regions Committee, 2006,
p.117 & 248

59

Tree Species:
Balsam poplar

The Understory:
Beaked hazelnut, saskatoon, redosier dogwood,
wild rose, twinning honeysuckle, wild black current

Tree Species:
Aspen

The Understory:
Saskatoon, snowberry, prickly rose, beaked
hazelnut, forbs, grasses, Canada anemone, twinning
honeysuckle, northern bedstraw, wild strawberry,
wild lily-of-the-valley, one-sided wintergreen,
Canada goldenrod, blue clematis



Spruce Forest

Tree Species:
White spruce

The Understory:
Tree ferns, common Labrador tea, feather mosses, lichens, Canada reed grass, horsetail, bunchberry, dewberry, tall lungwort

Mixed Woods

Tree Species:
Aspen, white spruce, balsam poplar

Shrubs + Forbs:
Snowberry, redosier dogwood, wild rose, chokecherry

Animal Sightings:
Blue Jays, moose



FIG. 3.13 Photograph of the oxbow lakes - Gaetz Lakes Sanctuary looking east - Noselski, 2020



Picea glauca



Populus tremuloides



Populus balsamea

Urban Lifespan of Trees **EXISTING TREES**

According to CBC News statistics on typical urban lifespans of trees (2005), many of the trees at Michener are nearing the end of their life. If most of the mature trees at Michener North were planted in the 1950s, many are around 70 years old and at high risk of loss in the coming decades. Many trees have also been damaged from storms or disease and need eventual replacing, while others are at risk of being lost if and when some or all of the buildings get demolished.

While in the wild, a white spruce

tree can live upwards of 250 years, in the city it is more realistic to live approximately 75 years (CBC News, 2005).

While in an actual forest setting, trembling aspen live much longer, their average lifespan in an urban setting is approximately 20-40 years (CBC News, 2005).

The balsam poplar has a much longer urban lifespan, between 100-150 years, “long-lived in favourable conditions” (CBC News, 2005).

TREMBLING ASPEN
Populus tremuloides

WHITE SPRUCE
Picea glauca

WILLOW THICKETS
Salix spp

SASKATOON
Amelanchier alnifolia

RED OSIER DOGWOOD
Cornus stolonifera

COMMON CATTAIL
Typha latifolia

PASTURED SAGEWORT
Artemisia frigida

SEDGE GRASSES

PLANTS OF THE ASPEN PARKLAND

The landscape can be described as a “mosaic of forests and grasslands” (Dawe, 1996, p.9).



Environmental Analysis: Existing Conditions

PREDOMINANT VEGETATION

Ecoregion: Aspen Parkland

Subregion: Central Parkland

The most common landscape in and around Red Deer was once a variation of an aspen-grassland mosaic (Natural Regions Committee, 2006). According to the Natural Regions Committee (2006), Red Deer falls within the Central Parkland Natural Subregion, which is the main region in central Alberta stretching to encompass both Calgary and Edmonton. According to Dawe, “aspen parkland is marked by bluffs of aspen poplar interspersed with thick grasslands” (1996, p.9). Seen here are grasslands and wetlands in the front with a mixed wood forest in behind. However, in recent years, disturbances and have allowed the Canada thistle to take over much of these ‘natural’ grassland areas, as can be seen mixed in with the grasses.

FIG. 3.14 Existing conditions - vegetation - Noselski, 2019/2020

HABITAT + WILDLIFE

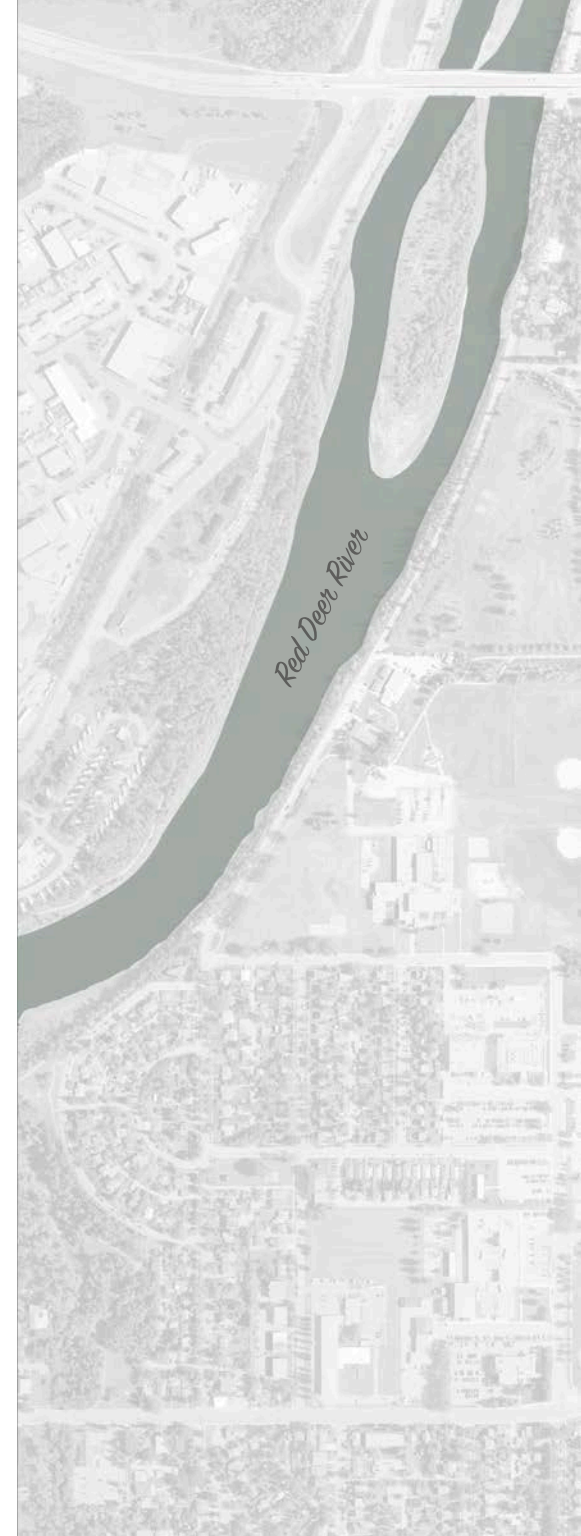
MICHENER + VICINITY

Animal Sightings East of the Red Deer River

 Rivers + Lakes

I was fortunate to spend two months at the beginning of the pandemic really getting to know this place, recognizing that Red Deer is full of beautiful treasures and stories. A sighting of deer, a beaver, and a wide variety of birds is a common occurrence within the city, especially in this area (Government of Canada, 2019). Groups of blue jays, woodpeckers, flocks of cedar waxwings, and families of deer are found throughout the area, along with a diversity of other wildlife. The Gaetz Lakes Sanctuary is very much a haven, but the surrounding areas also have a lot of wildlife, especially birds that nest in the trees and animals passing through, heading to or from the Sanctuary. The beauty and diversity present is so valued to locals and wildlife too.

FIG. 3.15 Wildlife sightings map - Noselski, 2019. Adapted from City of Red Deer Engineering Department data, 2019





Gaetz Lakes Sanctuary

American Robin

Natural Wetland

Golden Crowned Kinglet

The Institution

Downy Woodpecker

Baby Moose

Michener Park

The Dirt Pile

Cedar Waxwing

Mallards & Shovellers

Safety City

Red-Winged Blackbird

Beaver

Deer

Downy Woodpecker

Blue Jay

J.J. Gaetz House

Constructed Wetland

Red Deer Cemetery



0 100m

EXISTING VIEWS + VALUES

All-Season Recreation



1 TRANSCANADA TRAIL CONNECTION

The Gaetz Lakes Sanctuary pathways connect up with the TransCanada Trail that continues north and south along the Red Deer River



2 FOREST + LAKE VIEWS

Openings in the brush and trees as you walk along the west oxbow lake recreation path reveal the water and forest in behind - a true urban oasis



3 WESTERN OXBOW LAKE'S EDGE

The southwest edge of the Gaetz Lakes is particularly spectacular, a point worth stopping for anyone passing through



3 THE CROSSING AT GAETZ LAKES
The pedestrian bridge at the south end of the oxbow lakes is often full of wildlife, and offers a lovely view, protected by dense spruce forests to the east and south



4 MICHENER CITY SUNSET LOOKOUT POINT
There is an existing viewing platform along a paved bike path near the Cemetery that continues on down the hill to the west of the Michener site that is also a very popular tobogganing hill



5 MICHENER HILL OUTLOOK
The dirt pile consists of grasslands overlooking Michener North and the Michael O'Brien Wetlands

FACILITIES + ACCESS

MOVEMENT CORRIDORS

Red Deer Services + Trails

This map illustrates some of the incredible viewing points (locations corresponding to Fig. 3.16), the large number of schools in the vicinity, access points into the site, as well as bus stop locations and neighbourhood amenities. The Michener North site is surrounded by multiple schools and educational facilities - six of which can be found in the immediate vicinity. This presents a great collaboration and connection opportunity. Trails are currently somewhat piecemeal to and around the Michener site itself, but there are lots of beautiful trail networks along the river and around the oxbow lakes that require additional connections.

LEGEND

- # Educational Centres/Schools
 1. Kerry Wood Nature Centre
 2. Parkland School
 3. Gateway Christian School
 4. Lindsay Thurber Comprehensive High School
 5. Ecole Camille J. Lerouge School
 6. Father Henri Voisin School
- # Viewing Points
- b Bus Stops
- ↔ Access Points
- Paved Multi-purpose Trails
- Sidewalks
- Unpaved Trail
- - - Trans-Canada Trail
- - - Fencing

1. Lions Campground
2. Memorial Centre/Festival Hall
3. Gaetz Lakes Bird Sanctuary
4. Red Deer Cemetery
5. Michener South
6. Grocery Stores
7. Gas Stations
8. Box Stores
9. Restaurants / Coffee Shops
10. Villa Marie Covenant Care
11. Clearview Market Square
12. Banks
13. Safety City



0 100 200m

FIG. 3.17 Facilities + access map - Adapted from the City of Red Deer Engineering Department data, 2019





THE INSTITUTION BUILDINGS: FORM & ORDER

Still standing today on the Michener North site, there are a total of “eight multi-storey wards for adults, which carried the names of birds, like Bluebird and Nightingale, for women, and the names of Canadian flora and fauna, such as Juniper and Caribou, for men” (Malacrida, 2015, p.59). Each of the buildings faces onto open green space, with a central connective courtyard out back. The names of the wards speak to what once thrived here and still does. According to Malacrida, “these wards appear from the outside to be low-rise, 1950s-style brick apartment buildings, spaciouly arrayed along walkways or small green spaces punctuated by copses of trees” (Malacrida, 2015, p.59). Many of the other Michener buildings and the roads were named after flora and fauna in the region and other landscape features. The E-shaped residences at Michener North, like the one seen in Fig. 56 face east onto Meadowview Road. In present-day reality, the buildings face a maintained urban lawn dotted with trees rather than a view of a meadow.

An analysis of the remnant architecture reveals the importance that the Michener buildings be understood not just as individual pieces of architecture but rather in terms of their placement and relationship to each other and their surroundings. The intentionally e-shaped buildings arranged symmetrically along a central green space with the administration building at the centre across from the kitchen create not only one large internal courtyard, but a series of smaller, more intimate courtyards behind each of the buildings. The connection between architecture and landscape is an important piece of this story, not to be overlooked.

FIG. 3.18 Ward facades in the winter - Noselski, 2020



MICHENER NORTH

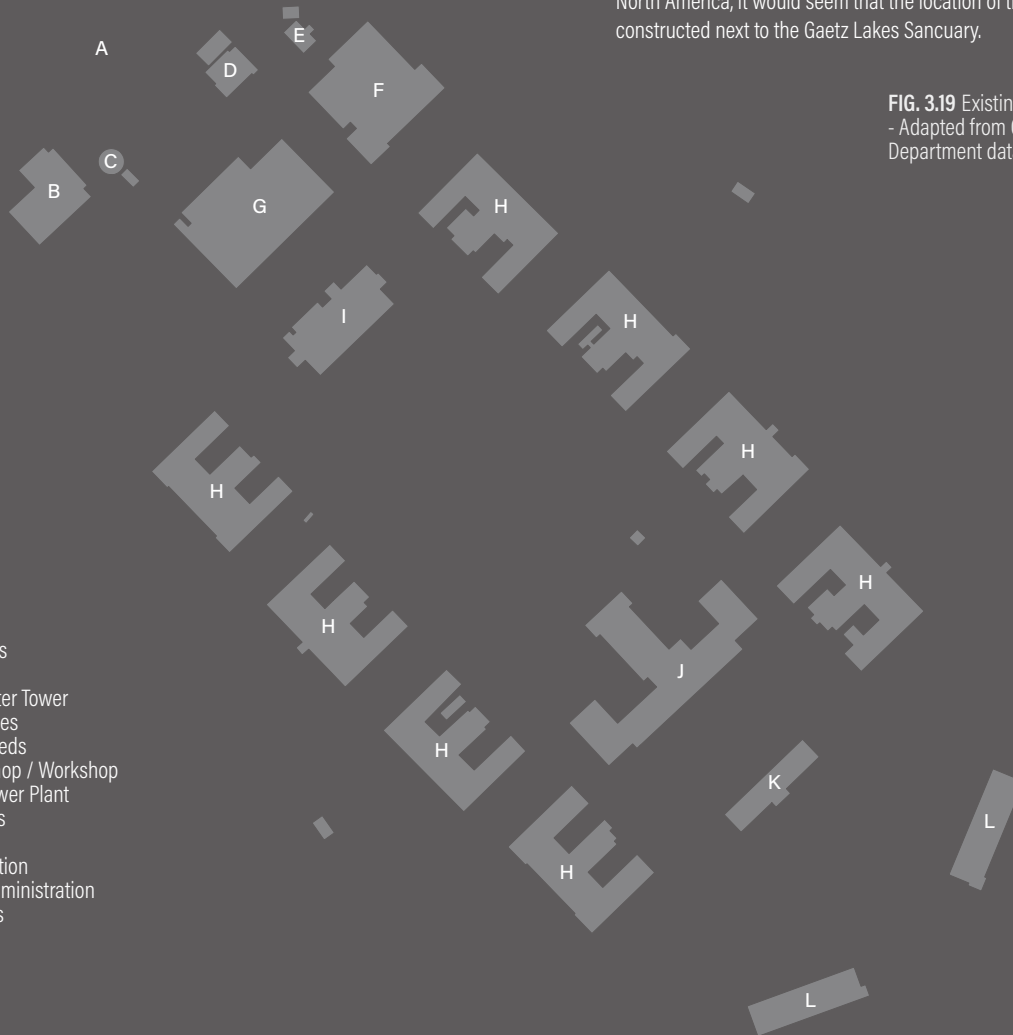
Remnant Structures

Was the location in fact decided upon because of its proximity to such a beautiful, natural area with diverse and interesting features and a change in topography? When you compare the Michener North site to the standards set out on building asylums in North America, it would seem that the location of the institution was entirely intentional, constructed next to the Gaetz Lakes Sanctuary.

FIG. 3.19 Existing conditions - remnant architecture
- Adapted from City of Red Deer Engineering
Department data, 2019

LEGEND

- A | Root Cellars
- B | Garage
- C | Tank & Water Tower
- D | Greenhouses
- E | Storage Sheds
- F | Welding Shop / Workshop
- G | Central Power Plant
- H | Residences
- I | Kitchen
- J | Administration
- K | Chapel/ Administration
- L | Apartments





INTERTWINED BY NATURE

FIG. 3.20 Michener North buildings in spring - Noselski, 2020

MICHENER NORTH PHOTOGRAPHS

Just like Christopher Payne captured the images of American asylum remnants, local photographers like Russell Clark have been capturing the transformations occurring at Michener North for years. Similarly, the abandoned Michener buildings have attracted visitors and intrigued locals because of both the beauty and decay present here. Some of the commonly photographed features shown in Fig. 3.21 include the water tower, underground tunnels, and views from both inside and outside the different brick buildings.

FIG. 3.21 Michener photography - Russell Clark, 2015-2020. Used with permission







Red Deer River

*Kerry Wood
Nature Centre*

Michener South Admin

*Red Deer
Cemetery*

*Gaetz Lakes
Sanctuary*

*J.J. Gaetz
House*

*Michener North
Institution
Buildings*

*Michael
O'Brien
Wetland*

*The Dirt
Pile*

*Natural
Wetland*

*College
Park*

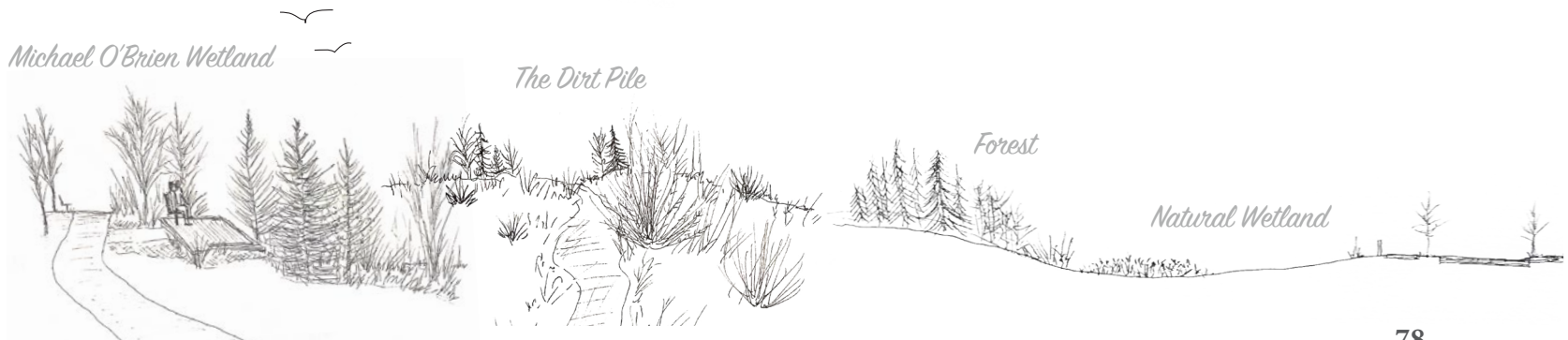
LANDSCAPE JOURNEYS - MAPPING VALUES + HISTORIC POINTS

Michener North + Vicinity Sketch Site Analysis

The site vicinity presents a journey of discovery. Michener North makes one forget they are in the middle of the city.



FIG. 3.22 Site sketches + connection opportunity analysis - Noselski, 2019. Adapted from City of Red Deer Engineering Department data, 2019



4 A Regional Community Analysis

Needs and Desires for Michener North + Surrounding Neighbourhoods



FIG. 4.1 View of the Red Deer River in fall - Wanercook, 2008

To those who simply pass through or by the City of Red Deer, it may look like a typical sprawling Albertan city. Yet there is something special about Red Deer - its beauty and unique landscape features are some of the most memorable and appreciated elements to those that know it well. According to Dawe (1996), what makes Red Deer a great place to live is a combination of the history, its people, the setting, and the culture. A report done by Gehl Architects & 8-80 Cities in 2013 stated that the three things that Red Deerians love most about their city are the overall quality of life, active living and recreation opportunities, and the employment opportunities/affordability (p.6). Red Deer has long been a transitional city, due to its primary extraction and production industries (such as oil and gas, transportation, and agriculture), and its location in the middle of the province (Dawe, 2013). Perhaps not surprising, “Alberta’s economic history involves sudden booms and busts” (Dawe, 2013, p.291). This has led to

certain social consequences, such as an association with high crime rates (Ferrerras, 2018), which closely correlate with the dramatic fluxes in the state of the economy. Red Deer is a very car-dominant city, arranged in a way that favours the automobile. According to a 2013 survey, 90.4% of all trips are made by car (Gehl Architects). In response, Gehl Architects suggested connecting existing trails and creating a culture of change (2013, p.28). The first of those suggestions is “to provide local neighbourhood streets and destinations that have a mix of uses and invite people to walk” (Gehl Architects, 2013, p.31). At the same time, Red Deer is and has long been a very bike-friendly city because of its extensive trails that stretch throughout much of the central city. Green spaces along the river and creeks are lined with dense urban forests and multi-use pathways, and have long been important connectors in the City of Red Deer.





CULTURE + QUALITY OF LIFE

In 2008, a Community Asset Needs Assessment was done for the City of Red Deer, which laid out the strategic direction for parks and recreation in the City over the course of the next 25 years. This document hints at what the community identified as needs and desires going forward that still apply today. The report found that citizens highly value the outdoor recreation amenities and public open spaces the city has and that “per capita green space is high” (p.20), much higher than other Canadian cities (Converge Consulting Group & Community Development Consultants, 2008). However, “analysis of GIS data indicates that much of the green space in these per capita calculations is fragmented and of insufficient size to support significant passive or active amenities” (p.20). This study indicates the need to connect and integrate parks not only to each other but to surrounding residential neighbourhoods. The data also identifies that many of the green spaces are smaller in size, often referring to the “leftover pieces in development plans” that are quite frankly “too small for The City of Red Deer to maintain efficiently” (p.23). The fragmented nature of park spaces suggests a need for a more holistic approach to both growth management and maintenance planning for the City in the years ahead.

2019 Population of Red Deer: 101, 002

City of Red Deer, 2019a

FIG. 4.2 Forested areas and the oxbow lakes in Red Deer's core - Panameno Productions, 2020

ACCESS TO NATURE + EDUCATION

A GIS analysis reveals that there are nine schools located within a 2km radius of the Michener North site, which is about a 50-minute walk or a 15-minute bike ride (City of Red Deer, n.d.b). The City of Red Deer also currently has lots of different initiatives in place for the development and management of green spaces and the urban forest. The City has various tree-planting programs, including a memorial tree program, reforestation programs, and an annual arbour day tree planting where all grade one students plant a white spruce seedling (City of Red Deer, 2020a). Additionally, there are a wide variety of neighbourhood associations that do habitat enhancement plantings every year.

Red Deer is also home to Red Deer College, a technical trade school dedicated to training the next generation of workers. The school continues to grow and open up new innovative programs, providing opportunities for education, expansion and collaboration (City of Red Deer, 2019b).

FIG. 4.3 Green spaces in Red Deer - Adapted from the City of Red Deer Summer Trails and Facilities Map, n.d. & City of Red Deer Engineering Department data, 2019



2KM RADIUS

THE GREEN SPINE OF THE CITY

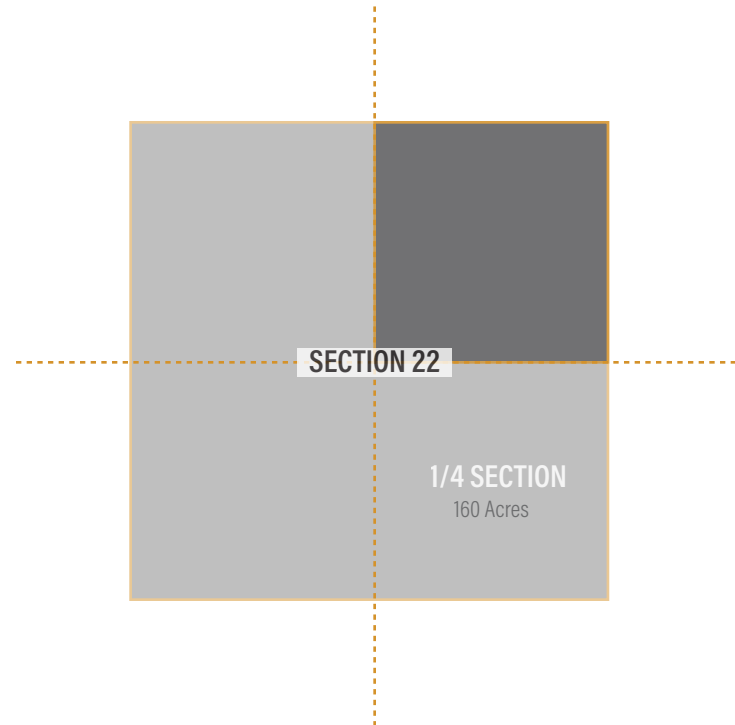


LIKE COUNTING RINGS ON A
TREE - EACH CIRCLE = 1KM

Evolution + Location

URBAN DEVELOPMENT + GROWTH

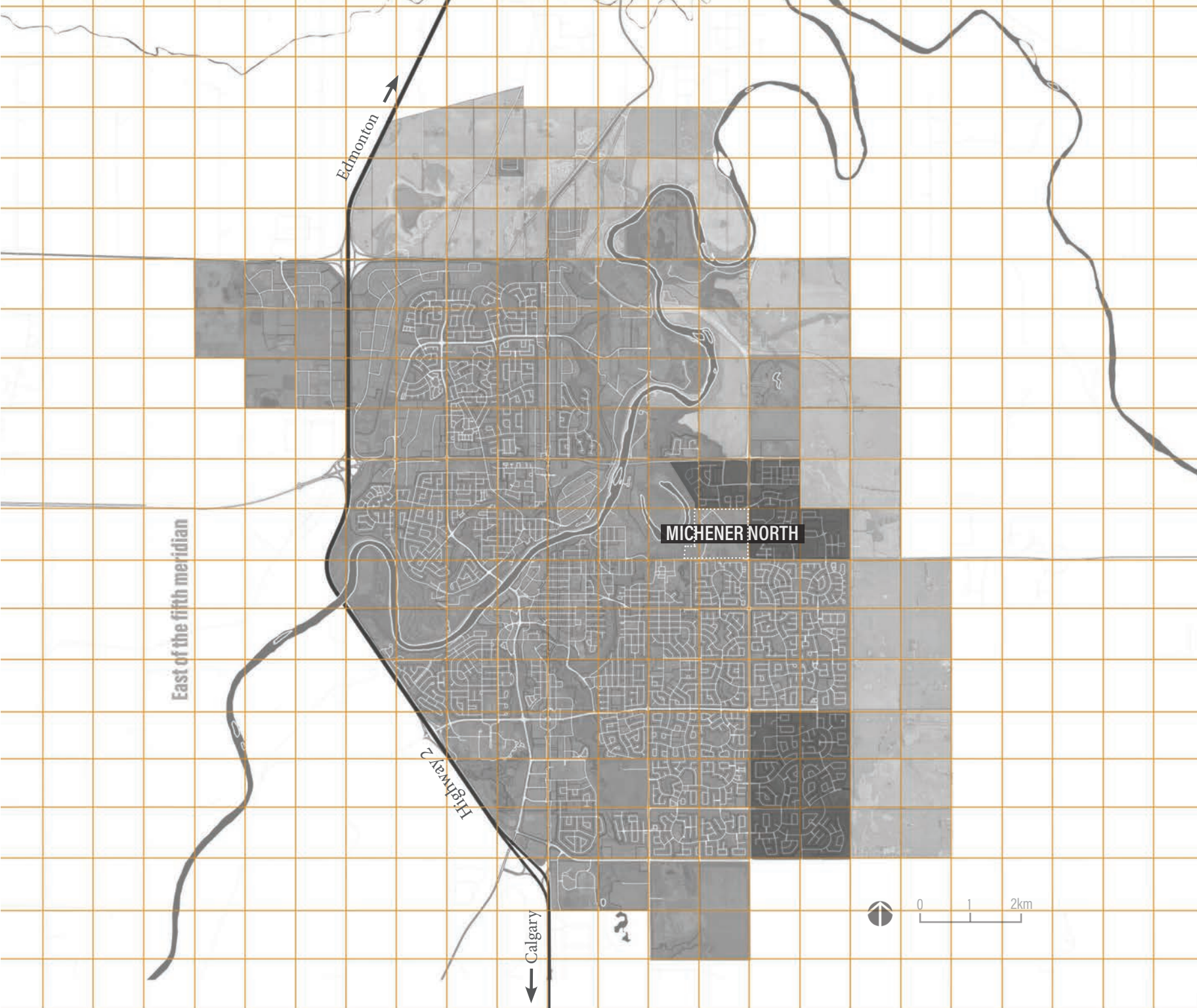
Based on statistics from 2019 (City of Red Deer, 2019b) related to areas with the most development (the dark squares seen in Fig. 4.4) and analyzing the growth trajectory of the areas allocated for future development (the light grey square patches of agricultural land to the east and north), Michener North is situated to eventually become the heart of the City. While once on the outskirts of town, this location is quickly being engulfed by urban development. The City is restricted by Highway 2 that borders the western edge. This central location creates all the more reason to do something unique and powerful with this valuable property before development erases it entirely. Its proximity to the Gaetz Lake Sanctuary and the Red Deer River also emphasizes the need to be respectful of existing wildlife habitat and connective corridors, careful not to disturb sensitive nearby areas.



LEGEND

- Mile to Mile Grid Lines
- Primary Provincial Highway
- Neighbourhoods with Most Development in 2019
- Built-up Urban Areas
- Red Deer City Limits / Future Growth

FIG. 4.4 Red Deer city development map - Noselski, 2019. Adapted from City of Red Deer Engineering Department data, 2019 & City of Red Deer 2019a



Edmonton

East of the fifth meridian

Highway 2

Calgary

MICHENER NORTH



0 1 2km

5 Precedent Studies: Transitional Spaces

Adaptive Reuse Inspiration from North America and Europe



FIG. 5.1 Historic Oregon structure adapted into a memorial - Travel Salem, 2010



FIG. 5.2 Photo from the film by Owen Carey: "Troublemaker Randle McMurphy and the patients of the Oregon State Hospital in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" - Portland Centre Stage, 2011

The Oregon State Hospital Memorial is an example where one historic building was retained and altered to be viewed from both inside and out, with landscape and architectural components, created as a memorial for unclaimed remains of people that died at the Oregon State Hospital. Copper urns found within the buildings were used to construct this beautiful memorial (Oregon Arts Commission, n.d.). This example provides a compelling argument to keep elements of certain structures such as building shells and reuse materials from the original site to remember what happened here and retain the site's history. The campus grounds were also once used as a film set for the famous 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest' feature, and they continue to offer tours of the grounds and the historic buildings to people today (Oregon Arts Commission, n.d.).

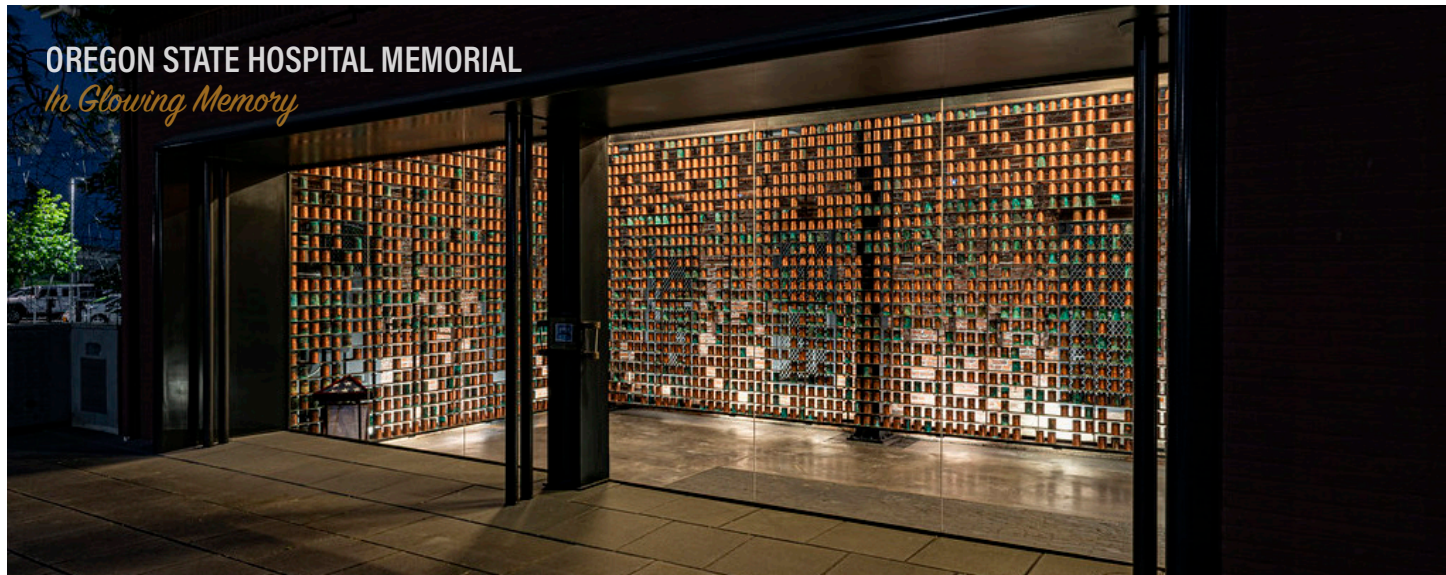


FIG. 5.3 Memorial, Oregon State Hospital - Rae, 2020



FIG. 5.4 Oregon State Hospital Memorial Canister Wall - "Memorial, Oregon State Hospital" - Rae, 2020

TRAVERSE CITY STATE HOSPITAL, MICHIGAN

A Vibrant Community Village



FIG. 5.5 "Traverse City MI RPPC Asylum State Hospital Buildings Fountain and Grounds Postmarked 1928" - Harrison, 2009

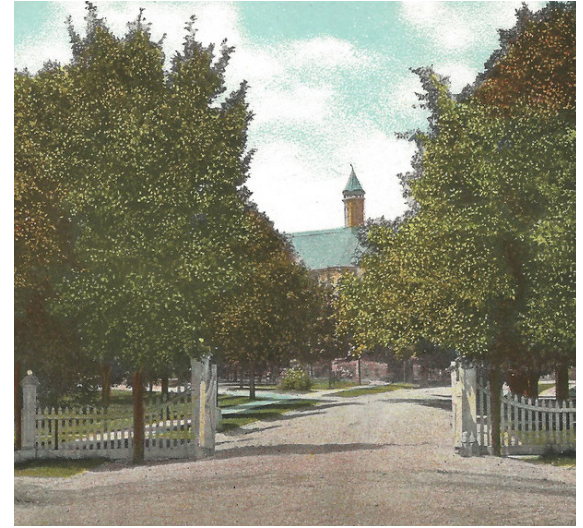


FIG. 5.6 "NW Traverse MI Old Insane Asylum Main Entrance and Grounds now the wonderful Grand Traverse Commons SH Knox Card 12553 Northern Michigan Asylum" postcard - Harrison, 2014

The Village at Grand Traverse Commons was a former asylum transformed into a vibrant and diverse live-work community (Minervini Group, 2020b). It was designed at a master campus community level and retains many of its historic features and includes local shops, restaurants, an arboretum with a wide variety of tree species (some rare!), botanic gardens, a firehouse turned bakery, winery, a coffee shop, a piazza for live music, and an indoor farmers market just to name a few (Minervini Group, 2020a). Today, they offer historic tours of the site complete with a history of mental health care in America (including a look at the tunnels beneath the campus). They offer a variety of spaces to visit, to rent (Kirkbride Hall) and to live, in addition to the grand grounds to explore beyond the structures, like the great lawn (Minervini Group, 2020a). Not all of the buildings were renovated, however - some left as they were to tell the story of this place. The facility itself was designed according to the principles set out in the Kirkbride Plan and the philosophy that 'beauty is therapy,' and certainly has a lot of stories to tell (Minervini Group, 2020b).



FIG. 5.7 "Traverse City Mobile Workshop - Grand Traverse Commons Preservation and Reuse Led by Joe Kilpatrick and Raymond Minervini" - Michigan Municipal League, 2015



FIG. 5.8 "Traverse City Mobile Workshop - Grand Traverse Commons Preservation and Reuse Led by Joe Kilpatrick and Raymond Minervini" - Michigan Municipal League, 2015

This example looks to how an entire asylum facility and its landscape can be strategically restored, and began with the vision of one individual. Traverse City State Hospital is a success story of how to bring life back into a historic space that was once headed for complete demolition (The Minervini Group, 2020b). The process involved in-depth visioning exercises, collaboration between the city, state, county, and different federal bodies, and was preceded by “a broad range of feasibility studies, including engineering, architecture, marketing and environmental analysis” (The Minervini Group, 2020b). The state ordered the main facility to be demolished in 1963, and the debate to preserve or demolish the ‘Old Centre’ went on for 30 years (The Minervini Group, 2020c). While the process of acquiring the property took almost two years, the project gained public support and is an inspiring story of efforts that paid off and created a unique local historic experience. The site is described today as “a landmark destination” in Traverse City, Michigan (The Minervini Group, 2020b).

LESSONS FROM PRECEDENT STUDIES

Precedent studies explore other examples of restoration of abandoned or under-utilized institution landscape projects with adaptive reuse and other indoor-outdoor elements. These studies provide interesting elements and principles that can be extracted, and range from the smallest and most subtle in scale, to big and bold - all retained, protected, and transformed in some respect.

Through this analysis, it became evident that there are organizations that have formed for the sole purpose of saving these Kirkbride

institutions, dedicated to preserving their history across the United States and Canada alike. If there are so few Kirkbrides left in the U.S. and the remaining ones are becoming protected heritage sites (like the Buffalo State Hospital), gaining attention as their numbers dwindle and more disappear, it raises more questions about how these types of facilities should be approached. There are lots of other stories like these unfolding. With their adaptable architecture, beautifully landscaped grounds, and thoughtfully crafted details and arrangements attracting curious and creative minds, there are various reasons not to quickly dismiss their potential for reuse.

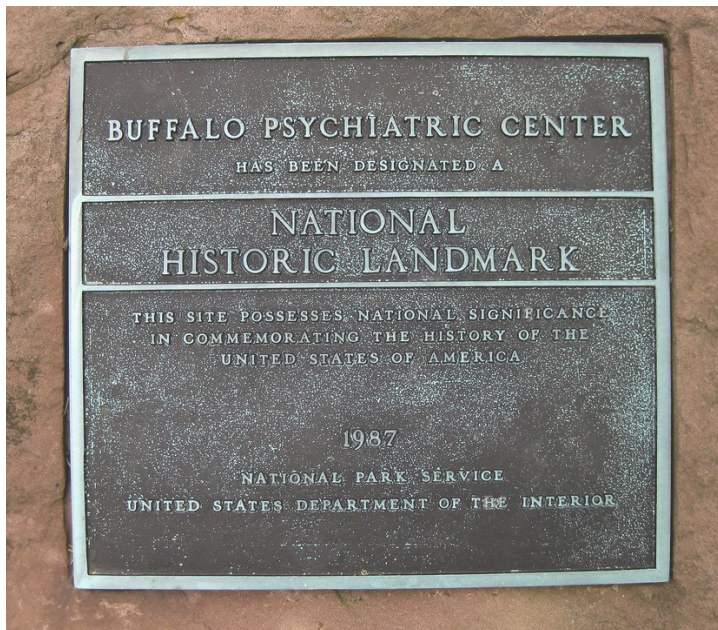


FIG. 5.9 "H. H. Richardson / Buffalo State Hospital (now Buffalo Psychiatric Center) / Buffalo, New York / 1870-96" is a federally protected landmark with beautifully landscaped grounds by Olmstead and Vaux - Hofer, 2009



FIG. 5.10 "Steam tunnels (Grand Traverse Commons)" - Hathway, 2016

6 Proposed Landscape Design

A Series of Interventions for Restoring Hope in the Afterlife of Michener

The following chapter explores design ideas around what could happen for Michener North. The designs also demonstrate what the City would be losing, should it decide to demolish all the remnant infrastructure entirely. As discussed in earlier chapters, the plans set out for asylums were understood as an interconnection between the architecture and the landscape. This phase was approached with the idea that these elements should be understood and addressed together, in combination. The functions and use of the Michener North site when it was created was just as much about the inside or interiors as it was about the outside - the space that surrounded the buildings, and how they operated together to aid in the improvement of well-being of its patients. How could Michener North be transformed to aid in the well-being of citizens and visitors alike?

This is a story about finding common ground - a middle ground. How might one pull from lessons of the past in order to propose a series of interventions for the Michener Centre? First and foremost, this project is about protection. As the biggest threat to the site when this project began was demolition and encroachment of new residential and commercial development, the main goal was to emphasize the importance of what already exists (both environmental and architectural) and to protect what's left through a series of subtle yet bold design moves, re-introducing some elements from the past. The landscape sits in the foreground, revealing changes as the proposed interventions carve out a new journey through time, connecting past to present and unveiling the site's potential. The chapter unfolds with a big picture overview, and then a more detailed design exploration through three key areas - all intentionally improving their connection to the site's surroundings.

trees
wildlife
enclosure
green spaces
views of the city
heritage buildings



FIG. 6.1 Design vision collage - Noselski, 2021

SYMBOLIZING A NEW BEGINNING

One of the most important decisions to make regarding the site design here is what to keep and what to remove. Rather than an all-or-nothing approach, this design explores how a few key decisions around strategic deconstruction and retention of as many buildings as possible over demolition can symbolize a new beginning for this place.

A couple of the buildings are strategically removed, including the former central administrative building to open up the courtyard and break up the symmetry in the centre of the site, as well as the southeast apartment building. Once the rigid form in the middle starts to be deconstructed, it opens up the central courtyard area for new uses and new life. This aims to show that 'life after hell' is possible without removing all the buildings, but rather removing the key element that symbolized power and control - a form that historically represented the darker side of this asylum story. Without it, hope can become a part of the conversation, and its removal brings along an important lesson and reminder not to repeat mistakes of the past. The decision to keep most of the remnant architecture comes from a desire to retain history, to engage creativity and critical thinking, and to demonstrate the possibilities of working with the existing.





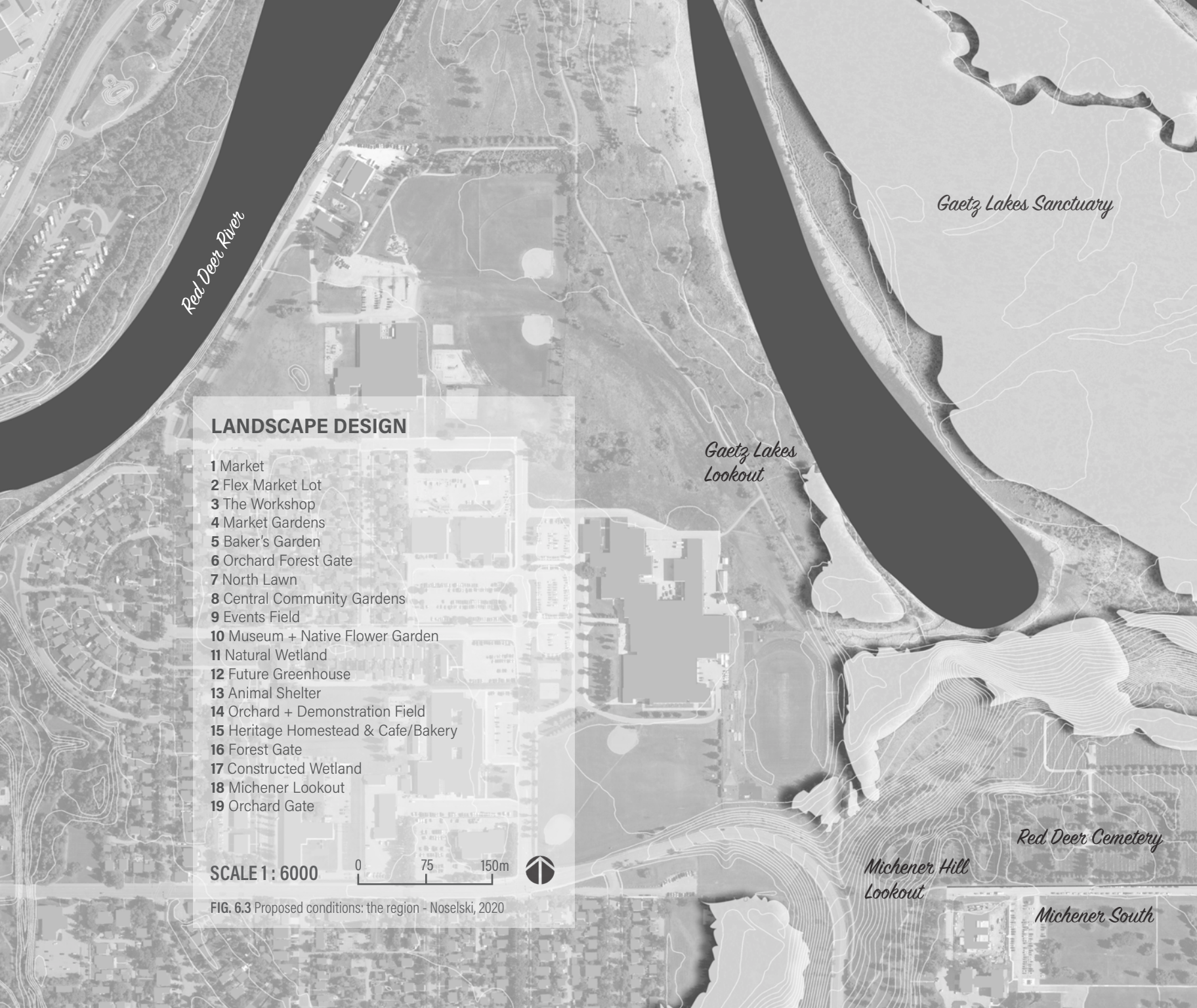
LEGEND

- Buildings to Retain + Restore
- Buildings to Remove

BUILDING REMOVALS



FIG. 6.2 Proposed demolition plan - Adapted from the City of Red Deer Engineering Department data, 2019



Red Deer River

Gaetz Lakes Sanctuary

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

- 1 Market
- 2 Flex Market Lot
- 3 The Workshop
- 4 Market Gardens
- 5 Baker's Garden
- 6 Orchard Forest Gate
- 7 North Lawn
- 8 Central Community Gardens
- 9 Events Field
- 10 Museum + Native Flower Garden
- 11 Natural Wetland
- 12 Future Greenhouse
- 13 Animal Shelter
- 14 Orchard + Demonstration Field
- 15 Heritage Homestead & Cafe/Bakery
- 16 Forest Gate
- 17 Constructed Wetland
- 18 Michener Lookout
- 19 Orchard Gate

SCALE 1 : 6000



Gaetz Lakes Lookout

Michener Hill Lookout

Red Deer Cemetery

Michener South

FIG. 6.3 Proposed conditions: the region - Noselski, 2020



Michener North

1

2

3

4

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11

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12

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19

MICHENER NORTH: A CATALYST FOR COMMUNITY

The design presented here is shaped, structured, and inspired by the existing. The primary goals were to expose the truth about this place by strategically erasing some symbols of hardships in the past while leaving traces of what happened here and stirring a sense of hope for the future. This space is defined by strengthening the edges, emphasizing the entry points, and further isolating the centre. The final site design takes inspiration from a lot of the recurring themes that were identified early on, like the principles identified in the Kirkbride Plan, with meandering pathways in a parklike setting. The proposal includes a series of gardens and orchards arranged to encourage a beautiful walk through the landscape - an organized journey to see and experience the beauty and diversity present. The different elements are inspired by existing conditions and embracing what is left here, and included protecting as many trees as possible and embracing the spaces they have structured. It looks at how the buildings and the landscape can work together, and began with a high-level overview and understanding of this place. The overall concept focuses in on a few very defined and identifiable intervention points (explored in three key detail areas as shown in Fig. 6.4), including the Central Courtyard Gardens, the J.J. Gaetz Homestead Orchard, and the Michener Hilltop Lookout. These three main entrances act as primary access points or gateways into the site, strongly marked with volumes of trees in various spatial patterns.

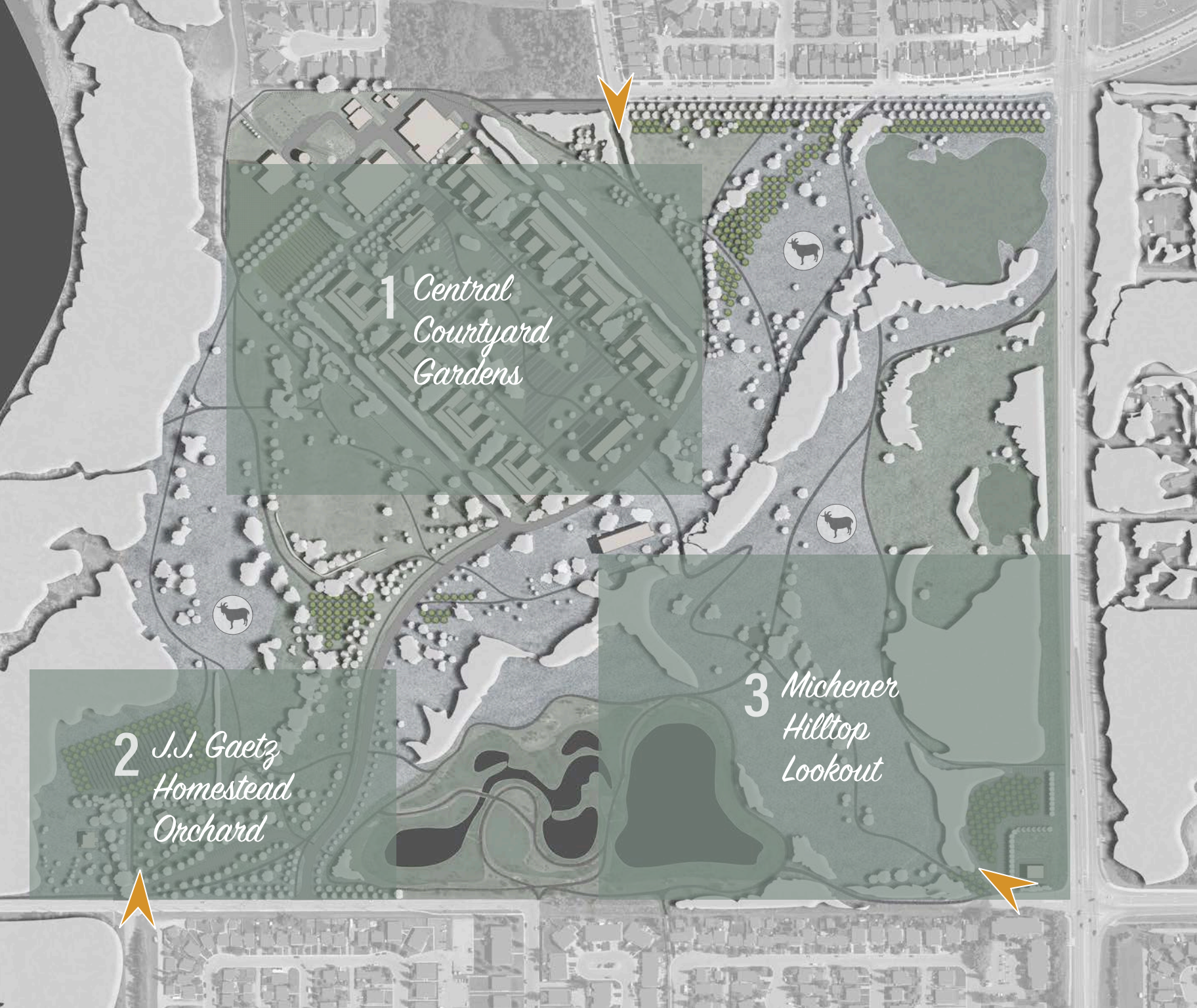
SCALE 1 : 5000

FIG. 6.4 Proposed conditions: site detail areas - Noselski, 2020



LEGEND

-  Goat Roaming Corridor
-  Detail Design Areas
-  Meadow
-  Lawn
-  Proposed and Existing Trees
-  Fruit and Nut Trees
-  Primary Entrances



1 *Central
Courtyard
Gardens*

2 *J.J. Gaetz
Homestead
Orchard*

3 *Michener
Hilltop
Lookout*

THE CENTRAL COURTYARD GARDENS

The core acts as the central piece of this story as it includes space for allotment gardens, community gardens, lawn, and plazas, nestled into the existing buildings and alongside the existing mature vegetation. The design of the gardens takes shape around the existing trees, leaving space for protection of the roots and canopies, while leaving grassy islands to sit beneath the trees. There are a series of pathways, with options and different journeys through the space - a winding path through the community gardens, juxtaposed with the existing straight, direct and rigid paths for contrast. The whole concept builds off of the idea that there is already so much here for people, the new elements carefully integrated into the existing without destroying the beauty there currently. The rich colours and textures represent the diversity and flexibility of this central space, with plots of varying sizes designed for different size groups and families - a type of choreography that changes with the seasons. The old bakery and admin buildings at either end tie the space together, offering new programs with educational amenities like culinary arts courses and an interpretive museum in the southeast corner. The E-shaped buildings are transformed into live-work units that open up into the gardens. The existing chain-link fence stays to act as protection for the gardens, wrapping around the edges while the additional trees create an oasis within, framing the core and providing shelter and protection.

101

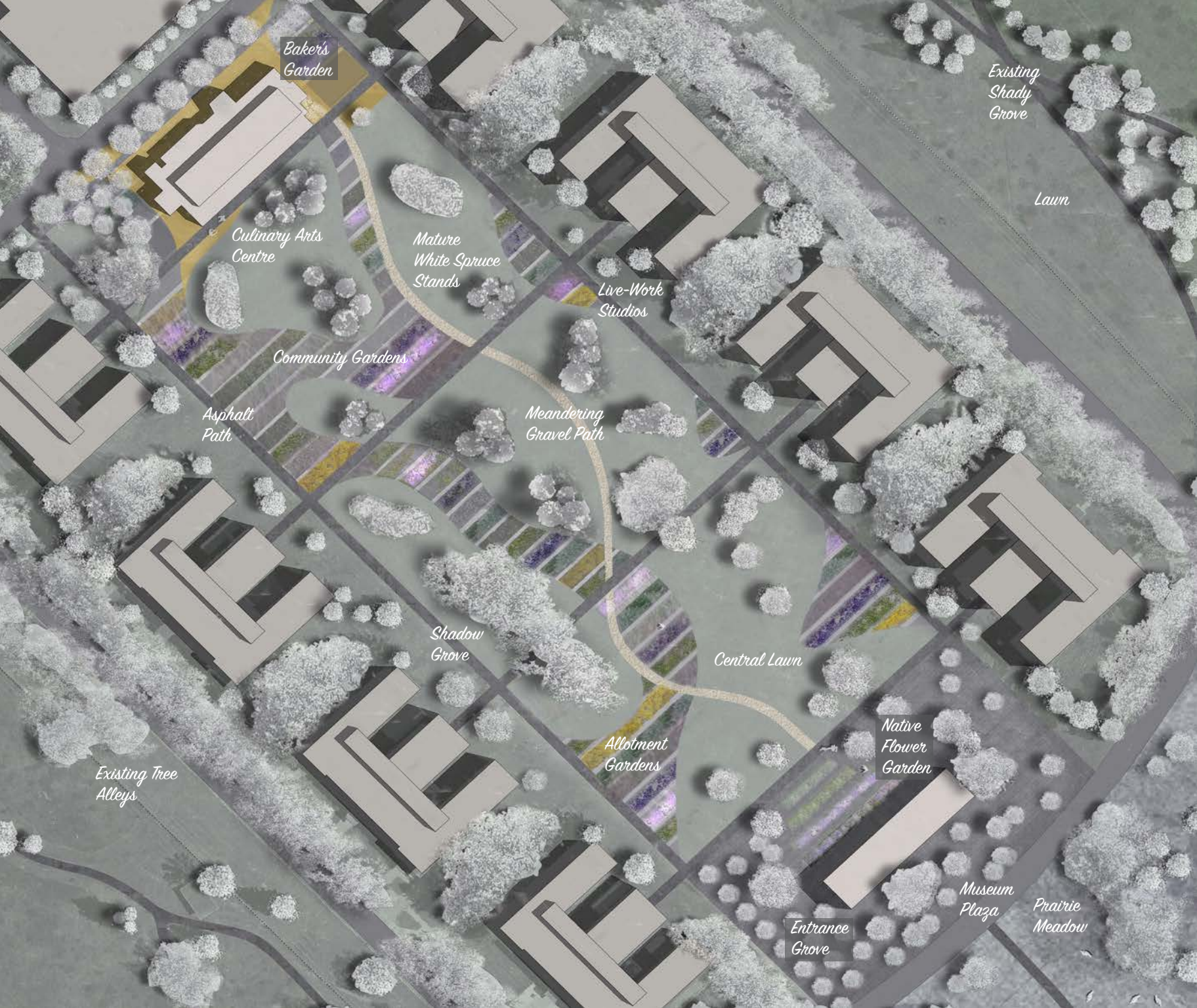


SCALE 1 : 1500

0 20 40m

FIG. 6.5 Proposed conditions - courtyard gardens - Noselski, 2020





Bakers Garden

Existing Shady Grove

Lawn

Culinary Arts Centre

Mature White Spruce Stands

Live-Work Studios

Community Gardens

Asphalt Path

Meandering Gravel Path

Shadow Grove

Central Lawn

Allotment Gardens

Native Flower Garden

Existing Tree Alleys

Entrance Grove

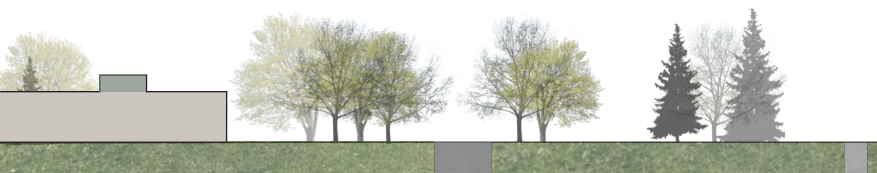
Museum Plaza

Prairie Meadow

THE CENTRAL COURTYARD GARDENS - SECTIONS

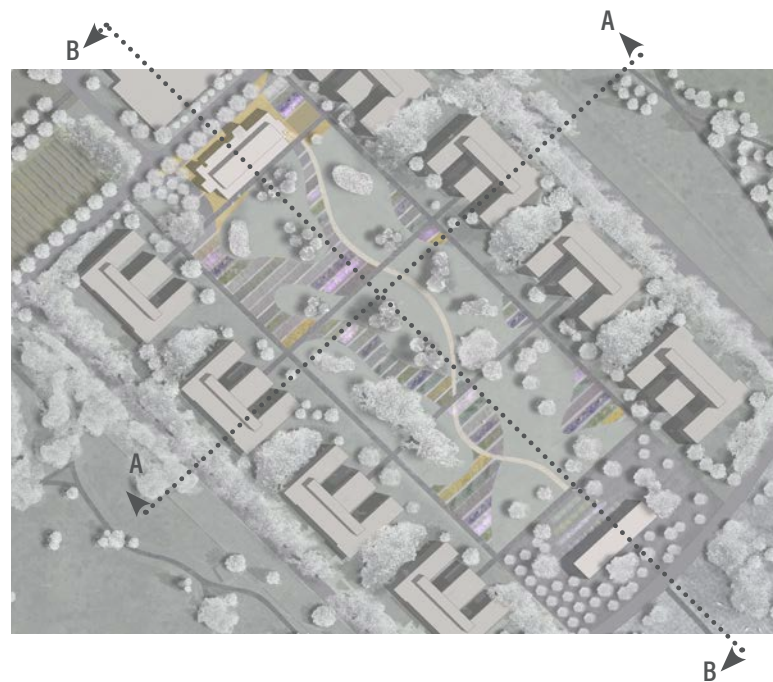
The central courtyard offers a variety of different experiences for people to engage with this place and one another. The culinary arts centre is allocated as a space to teach people how to cook and bake, connected to the community gardens and the baker's garden.





**LIVE-WORK
STUDIOS**

Lawn



Community Gardens

CULINARY ARTS CENTRE

The Baker's Garden

Thyme
Lavender

POWERHOUSE

SCALE 1 : 1000

0 15 30m

FIG. 6.6 Proposed conditions: central courtyard
sections landscape character - Noselski, 2020



Existing Spruce Forest

Orchard

Demonstration Field

Test Plots

Prairie Meadow

JJ Gaetz

Pollinator Garden

*Heritage Home +
Garden Cafe*

*Michener
Entrance Grove*

*Harvest
Centre*

*Spruce
Grove*

Parking

*Existing Asphalt
Path*

*Weeping
Willows*

↑ Pathway to the Escarpment

← 55th Street (to Michener South)

South Entrance



What brings people together more than food?

THE J.J. GAETZ HOMESTEAD ORCHARD + GARDEN CAFE

The J.J. Gaetz heritage home is transformed into a bakery and cafe, serving coffee and homemade meals using locally harvested ingredients from the surrounding fields and gardens - a place to observe rhythms of the seasons, to connect to local production, and to remember a piece of history. The is one of the main areas dedicated to showing what can be grown in the region (like Red Deer's infamous garlic). A treed gateway marks the southwest entrance into the site and the beginning of an urban agriculture demonstration zone, with a harvest centre for processing. The site is designed to provide a series of different walking and cycling trails that connect the surroundings including a paved asphalt path from the senior centre to the southwest, to the neighbourhoods to the north.

SCALE 1 : 1500

0 20 40m



FIG. 6.7 Proposed conditions: J.J. Gaetz Homestead site detail - Noselski, 2020

THE J.J. GAETZ HOMESTEAD ORCHARD + GARDEN CAFE SECTION ELEVATIONS

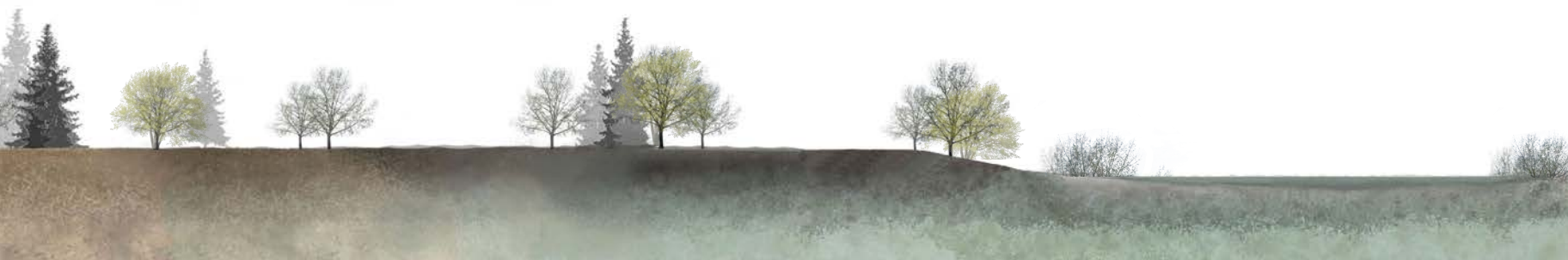
Upon approaching the site from the southeast edge, a journey awaits through different landscape character zones as one moves through forests, meadows, grasses, and wetlands.



C *The Escarpment* *Orchard & Demonstration Field* **J.J. GAETZ HERITAGE CAFE** *Pollinator Garden & 55th Street Entrance*



D *The Escarpment & Spruce Forest* **J.J. GAETZ HERITAGE CAFE** *Meadow* **HARVEST CENTRE**



Forest + Lawn

Michael O'Brien Wetland

SCALE 1 : 1000



108

FIG. 6.8 Proposed conditions: J.J. Gaetz landscape character sections - Noselski, 2020

THE MICHENER HILLTOP LOOKOUT

From the southeast corner of the site, a new access point is added to draw people in from the east. Visitors can park the car and walk through the orchard or the wetland, up the hill to the lookout platform surrounded by columnar trees, continue through the forest, and on to the Michener North institution buildings.

A new pathway is also added, connecting the Micheal O'Brien Wetland to the institution buildings and the residential areas to the north, providing a better connection to the top of the hill. The pathway moves through a grassy area transformed into a prairie meadow for grazing with both wild and domesticated elements.

The old apartment building northwest of the hilltop is transformed into a transitional animal shelter as goats, sheep, and potentially others move through the site seasonally to help maintain and cultivate the richness that exists.

SCALE 1 : 1500 0 20 40m 

FIG. 6.9 Proposed Conditions - Michener Hilltop Lookout site
detail plan - Noselski, 2020





Animal
Shelter

Prairie
Meadow

Eastern
Lawn

Natural
Wetland

Existing
Spruce
Forest

Swedish
Aspen
Circle

Hilltop
Lookout

Existing
Poplar
Forest

Existing
Mixed
Forest

30TH AVE

Weeping
Willows

Parking

Michael O'Brien
Wetland

Orchard
Forest Gate

HIGHWAY 11

THE MICHENER HILLTOP LOOKOUT - SECTION ELEVATIONS

New rows of trees mark the southeast entrance, and signal along the road that something lies beyond the edges. The space is intended to encourage people to park beneath the canopy and go beyond the pathways, to explore the diverse ecologies present here. The orchards are planted in the shelter of the forest and provide a buffer between the busy road and the hill.

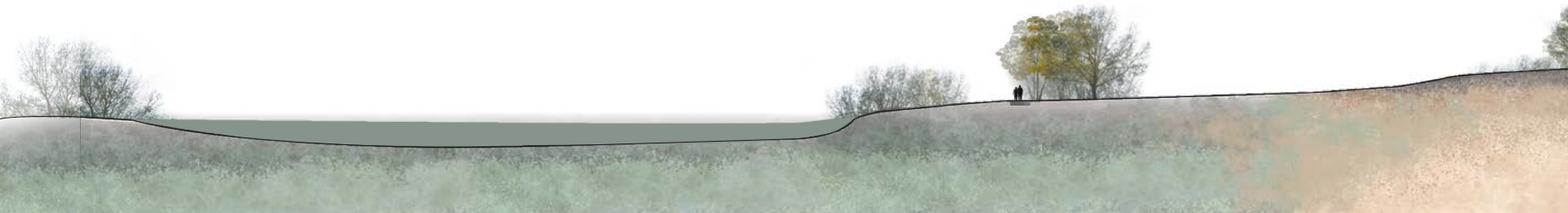


E

MICHAEL O'BRIEN

Constructed Wetland

Plaza + Hilltop Lookout



F

MICHAEL O'BRIEN

Constructed Wetland



Meadow

Berm



Hilltop Lookout

Meadow

The Orchard Forest Gate

30TH AVENUE

SCALE 1 : 1000



FIG. 6.10 Proposed conditions: Michener Hilltop Lookout
landscape character - Noselski, 2020



THINK LIKE A FARMER

Multi-generational learning spaces



THE J.J. GAETZ HOMESTEAD ORCHARD

What once existed as the Gaetz Homestead is transformed into a demonstration area. The primary design moves build off existing conditions with minimal intervention. Fruit trees are planted to the north of the heritage home to provide shelter for the fields, while also creating alleys for exploring, tucked into the existing spruce forests.

The transformation works to bring life back to the space through landscape interventions that complement and interact with the buildings and surroundings, adding new programs that highlight what is here. The orchard is planted with fruit trees, including a variety of apples, pears, plums and cherry trees (for more detail, refer to plant palette - Fig. 6.17). The plantings provide opportunities for generations to share knowledge, to conserve different types of fruits and nuts, save seeds, and share recipes.

FIG. 6.11 The J.J. Gaetz Homestead Orchard
rendering - Noselski, 2020

A NEW KIND OF PRODUCTION

Prairie Meadow Orchard

A POETIC AND BEAUTIFUL STORY OF
HOPE AND HEALING





THE PATHWAY SYSTEMS

People can be found using this area, enjoying its beauty already. Minimal interventions allow this to remain something special - a place to see and hear the incredible array of birds that pass through the area.

Grassy pathways lined with fruit trees guide people towards the centre institution buildings and create protected pockets in the shelter of the trees - new and old. This creates groves for picnics, for children to run and play - an oasis. Put simply, different spaces for contemplation, self-reflection, and observation are carefully integrated by enhancing the sense of enclosure through new plantings and improving biodiversity.

FIG. 6.12 The grassy pathway - Noselski, 2020

THE WORKSHOP

Commercial Kitchens



Public Taproom



Cidery & Juice Co.



Menu Board

Apple Rhubarb
Lavender Honey
Strawberry Basil
Honeyberry Thyme





RETENTION OF EXISTING ARCHITECTURE + ADAPTIVE REUSE

Pulling through the themes of preservation and production, the northeast workshop building is transformed into a year-round walk-up shop for value-added goods like cider, juice, and craft beer. Ideally located adjacent to a newer neighbourhood, this area is out the back door of many homes that back onto the Michener North site. The Workshop marks one of the main entrances into the site from the northeast edge. The areas adjacent to and along the fence near these structures will be used to demonstrate the growth of plants dedicated to the creation of these products, like hops and grapes, apples, and berries. The building is big enough to provide commercial kitchen space as well as production areas and even a public taproom inside, as well as space for seating outdoors amongst the trees.

The water tower acts as a landmark and focal point - a reminder of this site's history and a backdrop for creative endeavours. The area is dedicated to connecting producers to consumers, creating a place for everyone to participate in local food systems and to celebrate what is great about this community. This building also connects to the existing root cellars and proposed market space, acting as a focal point to draw people in past the fence, with year-round sales of local goods, and dedicated space for over-winter storage from the gardens and producers on-site.

FIG. 6.13 The North End Workshop - Noselski, 2020

ESTABLISHING A STRONG FOUNDATION

Amendment and manipulation of the soil is the first step to establishing the orchard meadows. The trees are placed along the pathways on small mounds created for sufficient drainage and to the southeast of existing trees for protection from the north winds, creating a series of micro-climates. Amending the soils creates an important foundation for the orchard belt. The meadows are planted with a mix of perennial grasses and wildflower seeds, and dotted with lines of trees. Desire lines are accommodated, connecting existing pathways and continuing the path throughout the entire site to create different N-S, and E-W connections. A gravel pathway extends from the central courtyard gardens to the neighbourhoods along the north edge. The layout is visually representative of a ribbon tying the surrounding areas together, to celebrate the beauty of this landscape.

FIG. 6.14 The gravel path - Noselski, 2020



A composite image of a park path. In the upper left, a flock of white birds flies against a grey sky. In the center, two women walk away on a paved path; one is pushing a stroller. To the left of the path, a small dog in a green jacket sits in the grass. The path is flanked by trees and greenery, leading towards a residential area in the distance.

A Place to
CONNECT
+ Observe Seasonal Changes

PRESERVING VIEWS AND A CHANCE TO ENGAGE THE PRAIRIE LANDSCAPE

For some of the areas, the design decisions are as simple as a pathway, a few strategically planted trees, and a maintenance plan. Much of the grassland areas surrounding wetlands and forests in the east part of the site require nothing more than proper access and a better way to deal with invasive species like Canada thistle and yellow toadflax. Luckily, there are goats in the area for hire that are trained to eat just that (BAAH'D Plant Management & Reclamation, 2020). The City of Red Deer already employs goats for ecological weed management in different areas throughout the city. This is strategically planned so the goats interrupt the weed growth cycles and is done so because of the challenging terrain and prominence of weeds that easily get out of hand (City of Red Deer, 2018). This also provides an opportunity for people to engage with the goats.

A hilltop lookout and destination point draws people up, leading them to beautiful clusters of trees on top. The Michener lookout becomes an activity node, a place to stop and think, to take in the views - a hilltop highlight.

FIG. 6.15 The Michener Hilltop Lookout Point - Noselski, 2020





MAINTAIN

With Organic Weed Control



EXPLORE

What Can be Grown Locally



The Demonstration Field

AT THE J.J. GAETZ HOMESTEAD

Rows of English and hybrid lavender are planted along the edges of the demonstration field, with vegetable and herb rows designed for variety trials in the middle. A few different varieties of lavender are selected for hardiness in zone 3, planted to attract visitors while deterring critters and deer from entering the fields.

Inspired by the lavender fields in France, this area is designed to create a powerful impact to passerby with tones of lavender blue and purples - an escape. The rows are framed by mature evergreen forests, edged with fruit and nut trees creating different pockets of senses.

The demonstration fields also include space for test plots to grow a variety of vegetables like garlic, onions, and potatoes, grains like Red Fife Wheat and a wide array of herbs and nuts. Lavender, along with whatever else might be grown here, is cultivated and used at the J.J. Gaetz Garden Cafe.

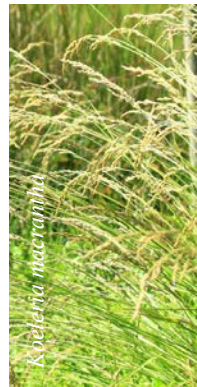
FIG. 6.16 The J.J. Gaetz Demonstration Field & Orchard - Noselski, 2020

PLANT PALETTE

Plants chosen for proposed interventions are those that have been proven to grow well in Red Deer's climate, primarily hardy native species or plants adapted to existing local conditions. Plant selection also incorporates deer-resistant plants and phased seasonal blooms throughout the growing season. In particular, any perennials located outside the fence were selected because of their resistance to common wildlife found in the area (rabbits and deer), such as Russian sage, lavender, pink onion, and northern bedstraw (Prairie Originals, 2020). Aside from the prairie meadow, most of the plants were selected for their potential to be consumed, preserved, or used in the kitchen in some capacity.

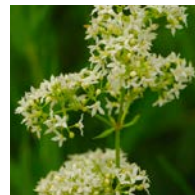
PRAIRIE MEADOW

GRASSES



Elijah Blue Fescue Grass
June Grass
Blue Grama Grass
Prairie Dropseed

PERENNIAL
HERBS + FLOWERS
+ FRUIT



Prairie Crocus
Prairie Smoke
Pink Onion
Northern Bedstraw
Saskatoon
Valiant Grapes

ORCHARD

FRUIT TREES



Goodland Apple
Gemini Apple
Norkent Apple
Red Sparkle Apple
Winter Cheeks Apple
September Ruby Apple
Kerr Applecrab
Evans Cherry
Nanking Cherry
Pembina Hybrid Plum
Brookgold Plum
Baker's Gold Apricot
Debbie's Gold Apricot
Casino Apricot
Early Gold Pear
Ure Pear

J.J. GAETZ HOUSE CAFE GARDEN & DEMONSTRATION FIELD

PERENNIAL
HERBS + MORE



*Allium
schoenoprasum*



*Perovskia
atriplicifolia
'Filigran'*



*Thymus
fragrantissimus*



*Lavandula
angustifolia
'Munstead'*

Garden Chives
Russian Sage
Orange Thyme
Lavender

COMMUNITY GARDENS

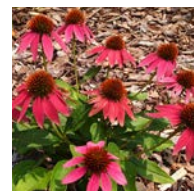
PERENNIAL
FLOWERS + FRUIT



*Rheum
rhabarbarum*



*Lonicera caerulea
'Aurora' + 'Honey
Bee'*



*Echinacea purpurea
'PowWow Wild
Berry'*



*Sheperdia
Canadensis*

Strawberry Rhubarb
Aurora Honeyberry
Honey Bee Honeyberry
PowWow Wildberry Coneflower
Canada Buffaloberry

FIG. 6.17 Plant palette - Various sources, see List of Figures

TREES

The design can be broken down into five overarching elements, the first being trees. Trees play such an essential role in this entire space. The existing placement and diversity of trees inspired the addition and wide array of new trees. Patterns of really beautiful existing areas are replicated elsewhere, focused, and clustered with intention. Different varieties of trees are added to further define the beauty and importance of what is already here, while also increasing biodiversity and resiliency.

Trees are inter-planted throughout the site to prepare for the transition as old trees die out and new trees take over to emphasize the sense of enclosure. The new trees are sheltered and protected by the mature trees as the space evolves, together working to connect a series of special places that aid in telling the story of this land.

The main entrances are defined primarily by trees, unique and visible in their own way - united by dense tree canopies. The parking lots are also lined with trees, strategically placed at the edges. This edge condition encourages people to park beneath the canopy, to leave their car at the entrance, and to just walk and explore.

At the core, the trees further enclose the central gardens. The gardens weave around the existing trees, leaving just enough space for root growth.

10-20 years from now, what might this place look like?



LEGEND

- Existing Trees
- Proposed Trees
- Proposed Fruit/Nut Trees

FIG. 6.18 Tree Diagram - Noselski, 2021

SPECIAL PLACES

While there are a series of special places throughout the site, there are five in particular highlighted here that present the backbone and heart of this design composition - pieces that this place simply would not be the same without.

1. JJ Gaetz Homestead Orchard + Cafe
2. Michael O'Brien Wetland
3. The Orchard Forest Gate + Hilltop Lookout
4. The Marketplace + Central Courtyard Gardens
5. Natural Wetlands + Fruit Tree-Lined Paths

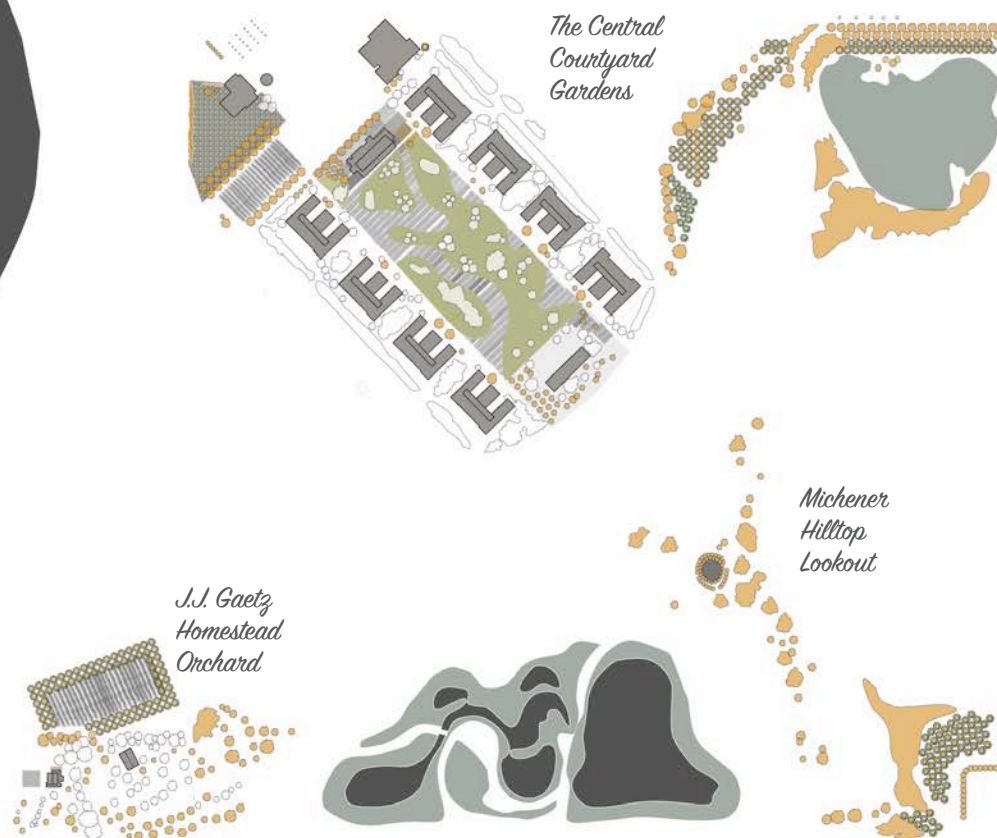
FIG. 6.19 Special places diagram - Noselski, 2021





LEGEND

- Water Bodies
- Wetlands
- Existing Buildings
- Lawn & Gardens
- Existing Trees
- Proposed Trees
- Proposed Fruit/Nut Trees



TOPOGRAPHY

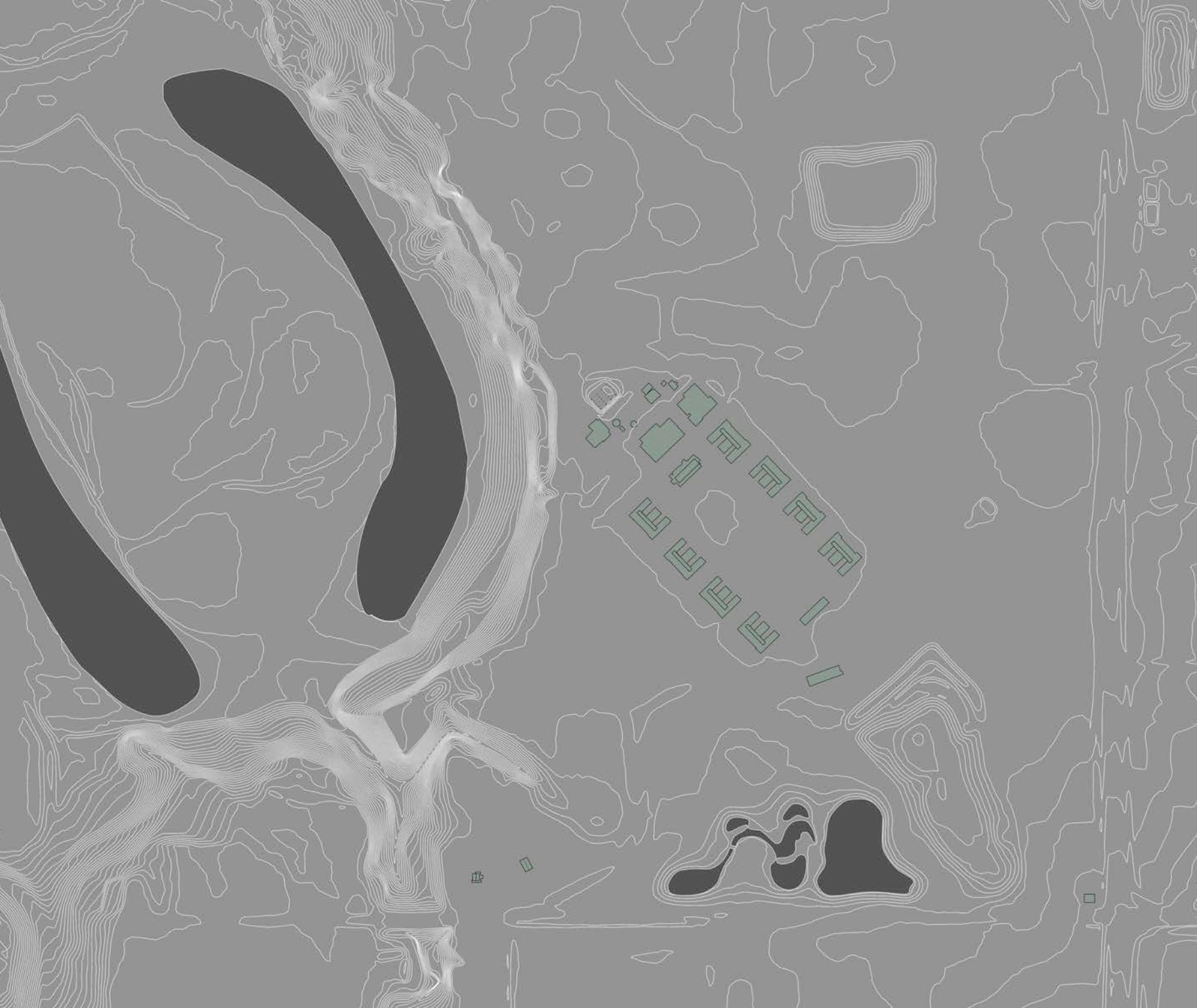
The design proposal leaves the topography almost unchanged. However, the building roofs present an important opportunity for rainwater collection, which can be used in the gardens and orchards.

LEGEND

-  Proposed Rainwater Capture
-  Existing 1m Contour Intervals

FIG. 6.20 Proposed topography diagram - Noselski, 2020.
Adapted from the City of Red Deer Engineering Department
data, 2019





ACCESS: CIRCULATION + ENTRANCES

The grounds around Michener North are transformed into a pedestrian-friendly space. The existing roads are kept but made into multi-purpose pathways, connected to the current and new pathway network, and better connected to surrounding neighbourhoods, including a new pathway to Michener South.

The existing fences surrounding the grounds are kept, pathways and access points are adjusted accordingly, and new gates are added at connection points.

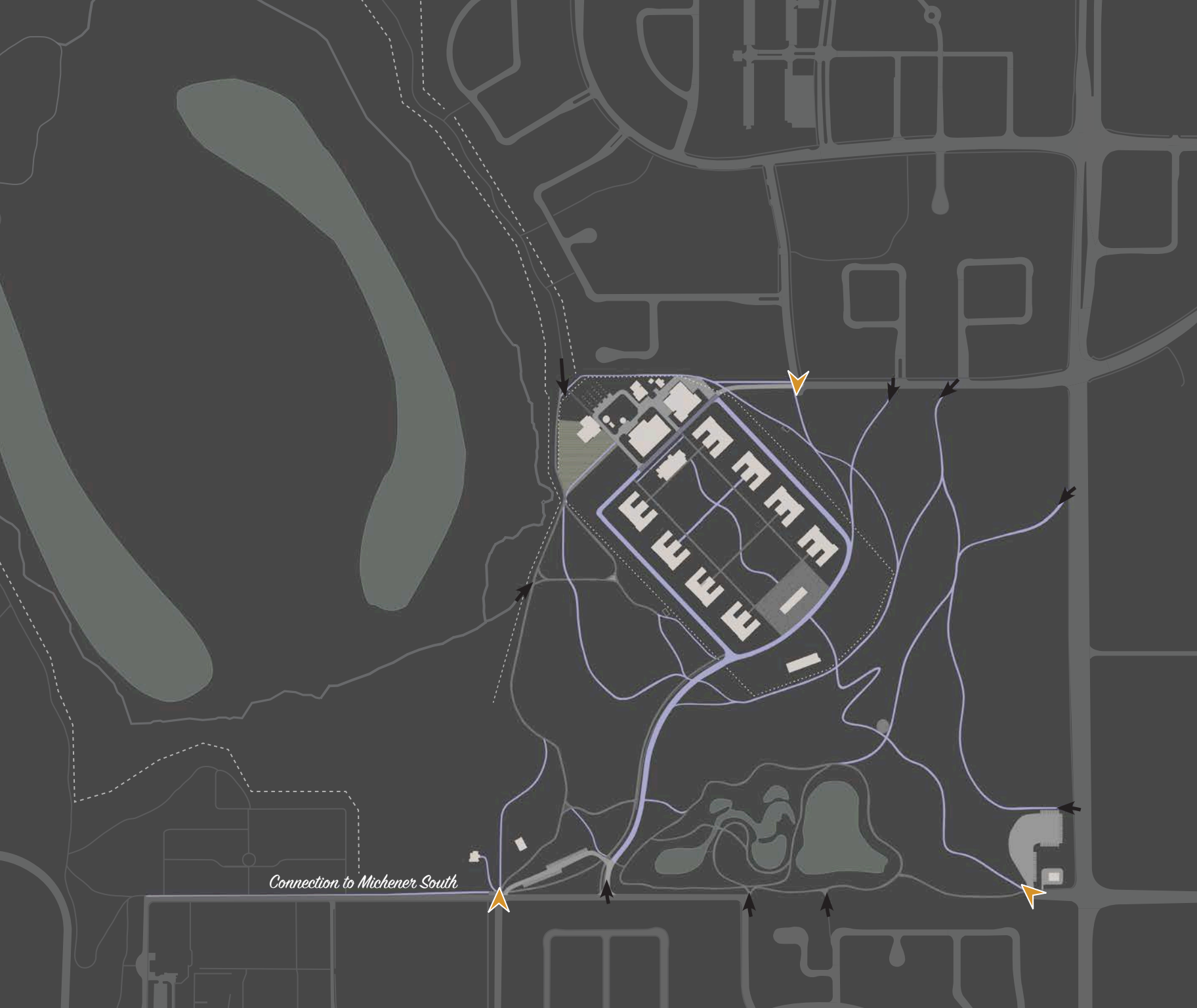
The parking lots are strategically placed at the edges, restricting vehicular access, except at the north entrance. However, this would be limited to market vendors and emergency vehicles.

LEGEND

- Fence
- Existing Pathways
- Proposed Pathways
- ▲ Primary Entrances

FIG. 6.21 Circulation diagram - Noselski, 2021. Adapted from the City of Red Deer Engineering Department data, 2019





Connection to Michener South

MAINTENANCE

One of the most critical elements of this design is the need for sustainable maintenance for the long-term. How will this place be maintained? One of the things often left out of design budgets is the thought about who cares for it after being built and implemented, and that enough resources are dedicated to its maintenance going forward. Involving those who will eventually be in charge of it in the design process is imperative, like local organizations, citizens, and the City.

Because the City of Red Deer has been growing steadily over the years but recently experienced lingering financial challenges from an economic downturn followed by a global pandemic, such interventions for the Michener vicinity must make some sort of economic sense. Rather than just adding another green space for the City to maintain, this project proposes the collaborative care and maintenance of these places with local organizations in the area, in addition to planned minimized maintenance through strategic localized design interventions such as native plantings and integrated environmentally responsible management techniques, like seasonal grazing. A primary design move involved transforming a portion of the maintained lawn and weedy grasslands into prairie meadows, interspersed with different urban agriculture initiatives.

As the City is attempting to manage growth and is hopeful of an upswing, it is now time for an alternative approach. As Alberta comes out of challenging economic times, financial priorities will likely not be focused on green space management. Funds are growing thinner to manage existing maintenance and infrastructure needs, yet maintenance must remain a key aspect in the discussion of future growth. New development should consider requirements to integrate new park space for each planned neighbourhood into the existing parks and pathways network.

LEGEND

- Water Bodies
- Wetlands
- Maintained Lawn
- Proposed Gardens
- Proposed Meadows
- Hard Surfaces



FIG. 6.22 Maintenance diagram - Noselski, 2021

CO-EXISTENCE OF PROTECTION + PRODUCTION

This project has raised a lot of questions. Are we not fortunate to still have these classic brick buildings that tell a story about our past? Regardless of what went on inside the buildings, is the surrounding landscape not beautiful and worthy of protection? Should the site not be preserved for many more years to come, to both educate our community on what has happened, and celebrate the small wins that have occurred over time in mental health care treatment? Should the hard lessons be more evident to our society so not to repeat mistakes of the past? The design exploration phase attempted to answer many of these questions by exploring the most appropriate design response for Michener. If these types of places were designed with so many still sought-after features, can they not be more easily adapted to provide them again today? What is holding them back? The Michener North site is uniquely positioned to be a place for these conversations to happen in an extension of the city's green spine.

CONNECTION TO PLACE

FIG. 6.23 Green heart of the city - Noselski, 2020

RETURNING INTENTIONS OF THE KIRKBRIDGE

Self-sustaining systems

Integration of architecture and landscape

Productive grounds (an alternative kind)

A series of different walks and journeys

A history walking tour



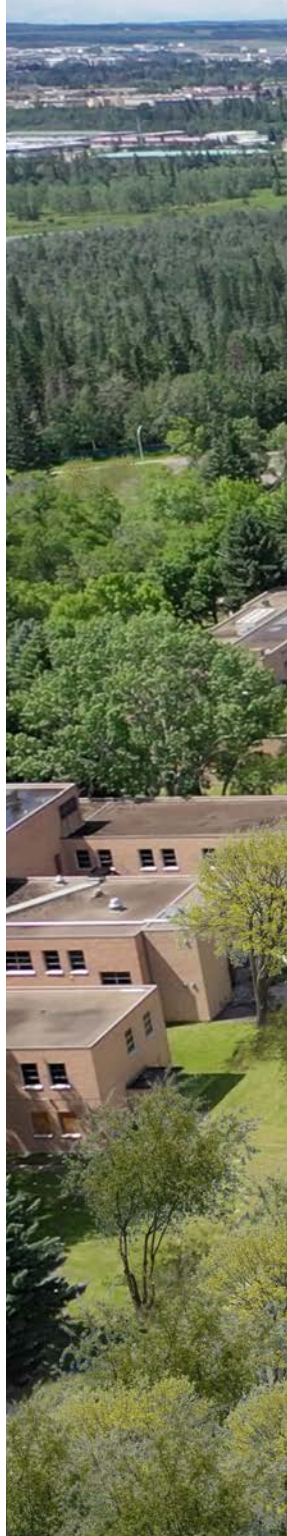
THE LATEST IN THE NEWS

This story has evolved significantly since I embarked on this project. Over the last year (2020), announcements from the government have left me and others in the community feeling frustrated and disheartened, with waves of positivity around what the future of this place might hold.

An announcement made in November 2020 stated that "after reviewing options and extensive studies on the land, the profound history of the area, the current state of the buildings on site, and the sensitive ecology of the escarpment and wetlands, the provincial government has decided to proceed with the demolition of the remaining Michener North buildings later this year" (Spackman, 2020). The land is in the process of being transferred to the City of Red Deer, and the City has announced their plans that the area is to be "developed into protected public lands" with future community engagement to follow (Spackman, 2020). It was just recently confirmed that demolition of all buildings would start this spring, maybe even as early as March 2021 (Spackman, 2021).

Shortly after the public found out about demolition plans, there was an outburst of discussions happening on social media platforms, with people posting their photos, memories, and ideas of what could and should happen here. Many photographs, including some shown throughout this document, have formed an essential piece of this story. Public responses to this issue have emphasized how timely this project is and just how important this site is for the Red Deer community, and the need for a collective response to the site.

FIG. 6.24 Central courtyard gardens rendering - Noselski, 2020





7 Conclusion + Recommendations

Lessons Learned: Opportunities for Red Deer and Beyond

What does the future of Michener North hold? In reflecting on the lessons learned from this process, it becomes clear that the relationship between inside and out, between architecture and landscape architecture is complex. The many layers presented here must be better understood and intertwined going forward. As much as a designer has good intentions for the future use and maintenance of spaces they create a vision for, what happens after the project wraps up is not left entirely up to them. We must leave traces of memory and embedded responsibility so that those in power to care for these kinds of places have the resources needed to do what is right - socially, ecologically, and culturally, not just economically. Integration and collaboration in the coming years is everything - between

disciplines, neighbourhoods, and diverse groups of people. It all starts with a collective understanding.

The question of whether or not to demolish the remaining institution buildings at Michener North is much more complicated than just an architectural decision as it involves changes to the surrounding landscapes and important interconnected ecologies. Only once this place is understood as one piece of a much bigger picture can the complexity and need for a holistic approach become more apparent. The features that make this place so special are at risk of disappearing forever. This project reveals that there are many other asylum stories just like this one, and that the lessons learned from other similar institutions can provide important insight into how their stories together provide strong reason for their remembrance.

The location and position of Red Deer within Central Alberta holds great opportunity, and the Michener North site is a history lesson in itself, worthy of preserving to tell its story. While it is important not to dwell in the past, any design or development interventions for this site must respect and acknowledge what happened here.

While time constraints meant this project could not look at the North and South Michener sites together, it is recommended that these sites be understood as a greater whole and in relation to their surroundings in the coming years. The designs proposed for Michener North could be extended into Michener South to tie them together even further - visually and metaphorically to create a destination and identity.

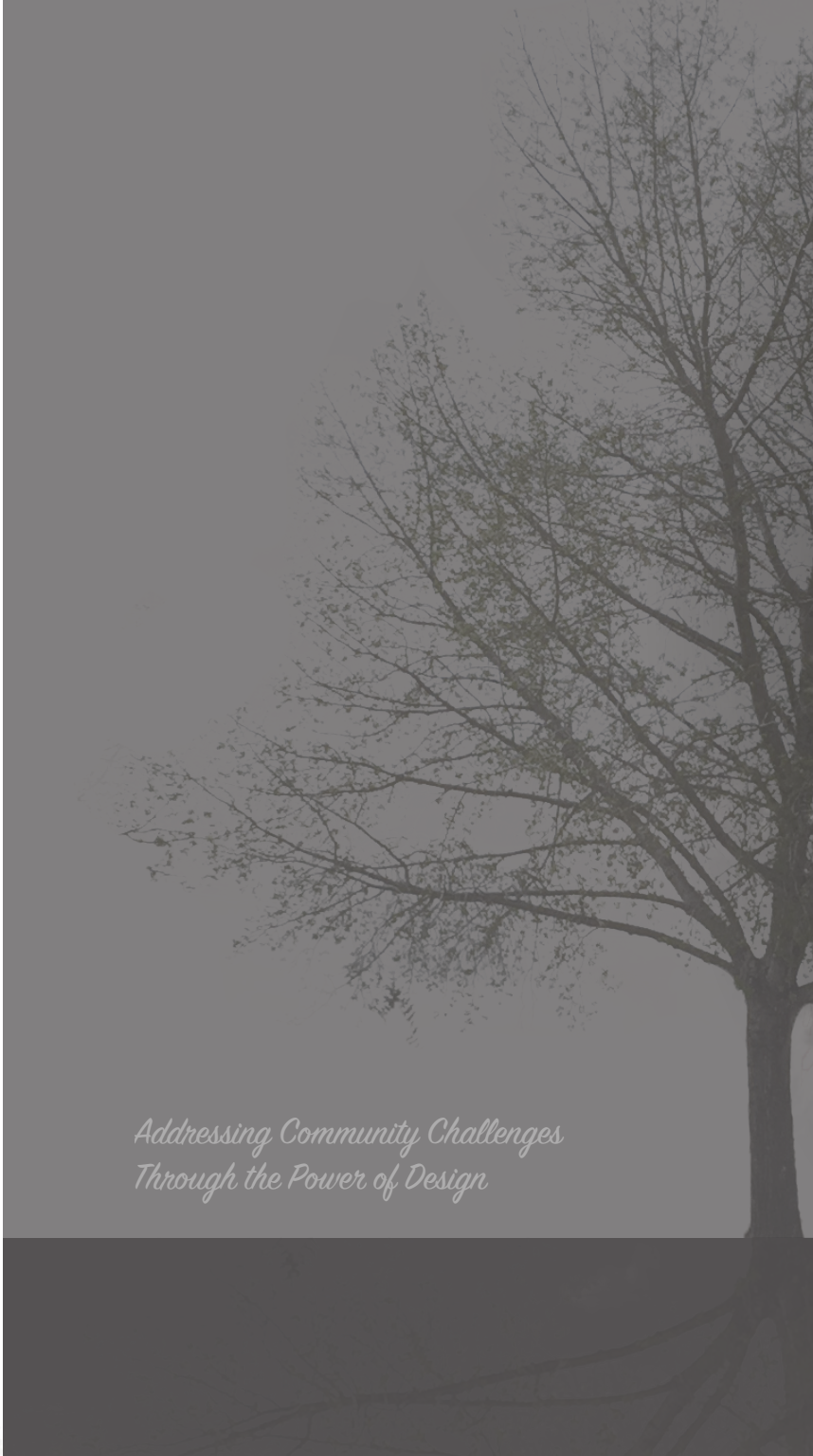
To reiterate the intentions, this project has revealed the importance and co-existence of protection and production locally in a way that speaks to the previous uses and honours the richness of this landscape. Through this project, I hope that people will better understand the Michener Center's history and are inspired to uncover other landscape stories in their hometown or city. I hope others are encouraged to see the potential and value in protecting remaining historic infrastructure and important ecological assets for future generations. This project provides an example of a community-based approach to landscape architecture that could be implemented elsewhere: a catalyst for hope and sustainable growth, the start of something exciting for the region, and well beyond.

FINAL REMARKS

If the Michener North buildings do end up getting fully torn down, then in the very least there is a detailed account here and within the community of the fight that was made to keep it. However, in the chance that the community impact can still sway decisions to tear it down entirely, this project aims to provide a framework and foundation - lessons for how it should be approached in the years to come.

While there are many things this place could become, it is such a special space with qualities that make it worthy of protection and preservation. It does not have to be complicated, just needs a handful of passionate people to keep fighting for it, backed with evidence of what makes Michener North worth protecting. Sometimes all it takes is one person, taking a risk and challenging development norms they might not believe in. What happens next is yet to be determined.

FIG. 7.1 A view overlooking Michener North - Russell Clark, 2015. Used with permission



*Addressing Community Challenges
Through the Power of Design*



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Fig. 6.5 - Noselski, K., 2020. *Proposed conditions - landscape character: site detail 1 plan: central courtyard gardens*. Created using Vectorworks, 2020 and Photoshop, 2020.

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Figure 6.17 - Noselski, K., 2020. *Plant palette.*

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Figure 7.1 - Clark, R., 2015. *A view overlooking the Michener North*. [photograph]. (Russell Clark's own private collection).

A wide-angle photograph of a winter landscape. A snow-covered path with tire tracks leads from the foreground into the distance. On the left, a large, dark evergreen tree stands prominently. The background features a line of trees and a small building under a pale, hazy sky.

A Story of the
Asylum on Michener Hill