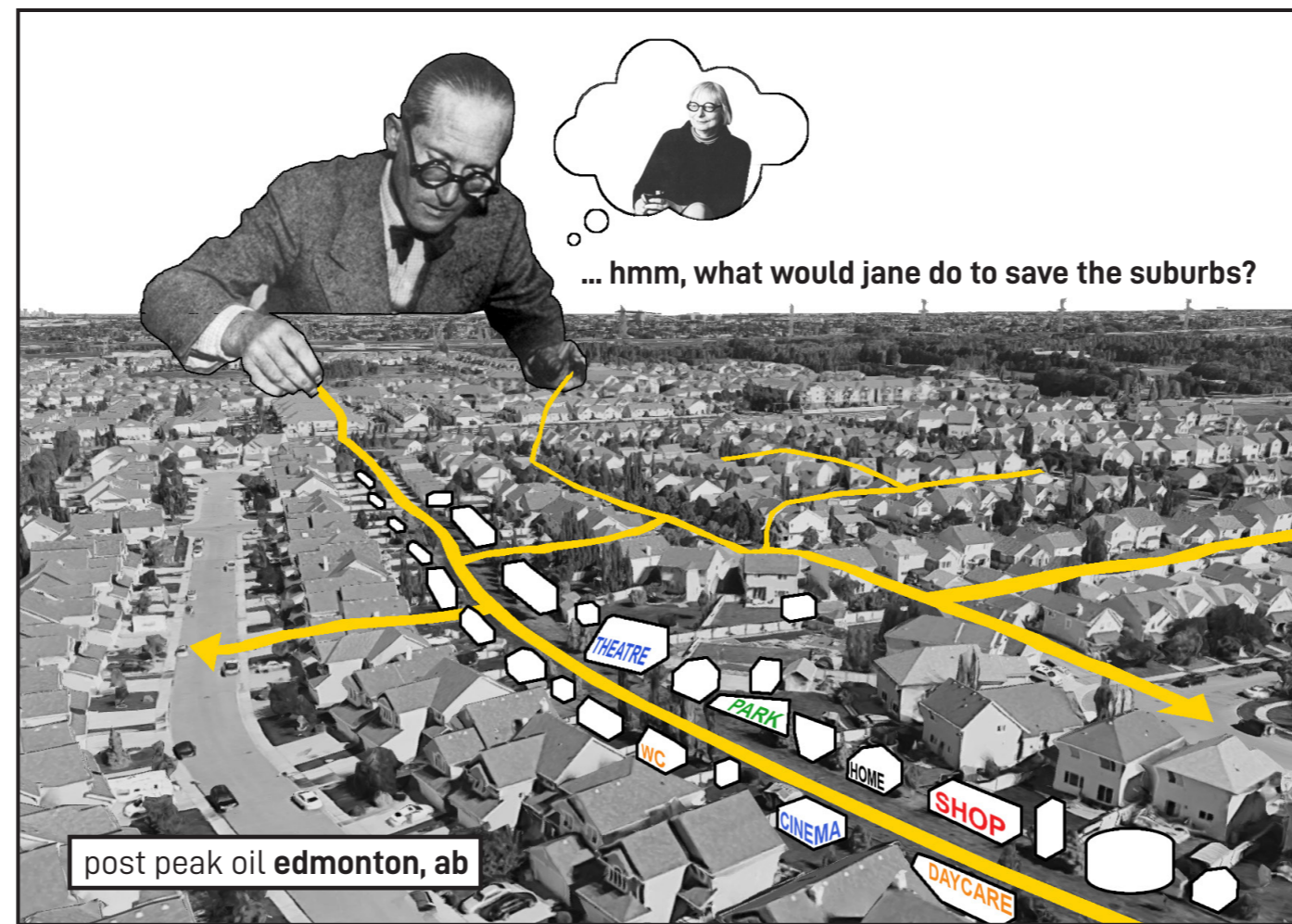


laneway (sub)urbanism

a mixed-use retrofit

team 2019-19



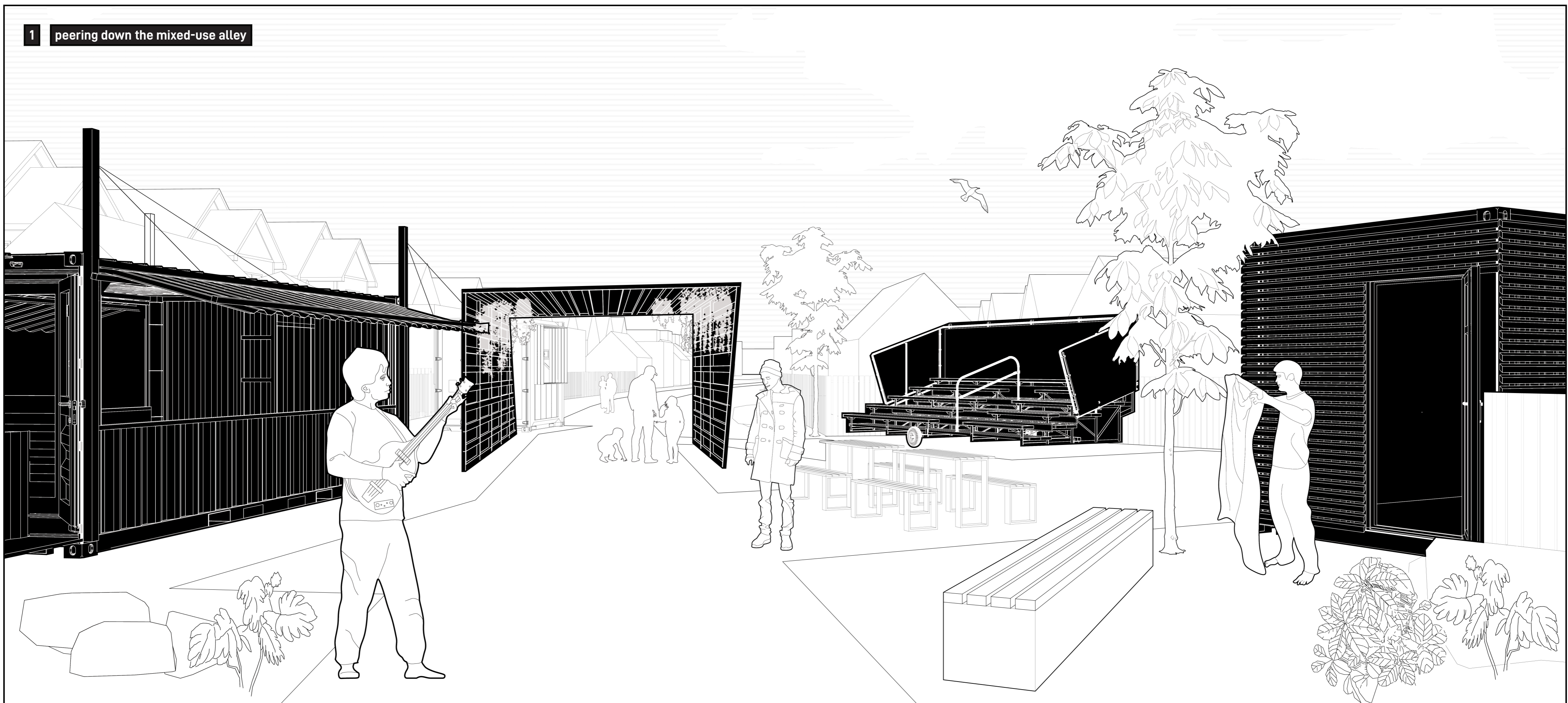
Despite the promising laneway initiatives in urban cores and a growing acknowledgment of the importance of density, Canada remains a suburban nation - with about 66% of its population living in suburbia. We already know the effects of urban sprawl - namely an epidemic of urban loneliness, a parasitic dependence on the car, accelerated environmental degradation, and social segregation amongst others.

However, the prospect of a peak oil scenario makes our current situation seem rather idyllic since then our automobile-dependent and mono-functional suburbs would be rendered unliveable. Taking Edmonton, AB (the official "Oil Capital of Canada") as a test case, this proposal re-imagines

existing suburban laneways as mixed-use arteries along which theatres, community gardens, grocery stores, workshops, pocket parks, granny suites, gyms, and parkettes are distributed.

Due to the laneway's adjacency to all homes, it becomes a connective tissue that links neighborhoods and provides not only housing density but also programmatic diversity (unlike most laneway proposals). This subtle tactic transforms the laneway from an unappetizing but necessary medicine pill to an active and vibrant pedestrian corridor with a variety of attractions, both utilitarian and fantastical. By breathing a new life to the back lanes, a possibility of community-oriented retrofitted suburbia emerges.

1 peering down the mixed-use alley



2 pop up theatres made from standard kit of parts



Modernity sought to isolate work, leisure, and housing through mono-functional land use and zoning - a condition that still dominates Edmonton, where the automobile remains the indispensable ingredient. Our analysis [4] revealed the latent potential in the existing network of laneway garages, which could be retrofitted from utilitarian boxes to containers of eclectic programs. For example, garages could easily become offices, shops, bakeries or warming huts.

We see the possibility of using a standard kit of parts from industrial products like dimensional lumber, salvaged construction materials, and inventive re-use to re-invigorate these laneways [2,3]. An emphasis on

using *indigenous fauna*, *walkability*, *xeriscaping*, a *sharing economy*, and *permeable surfaces* become integral components of this suburban retrofit.

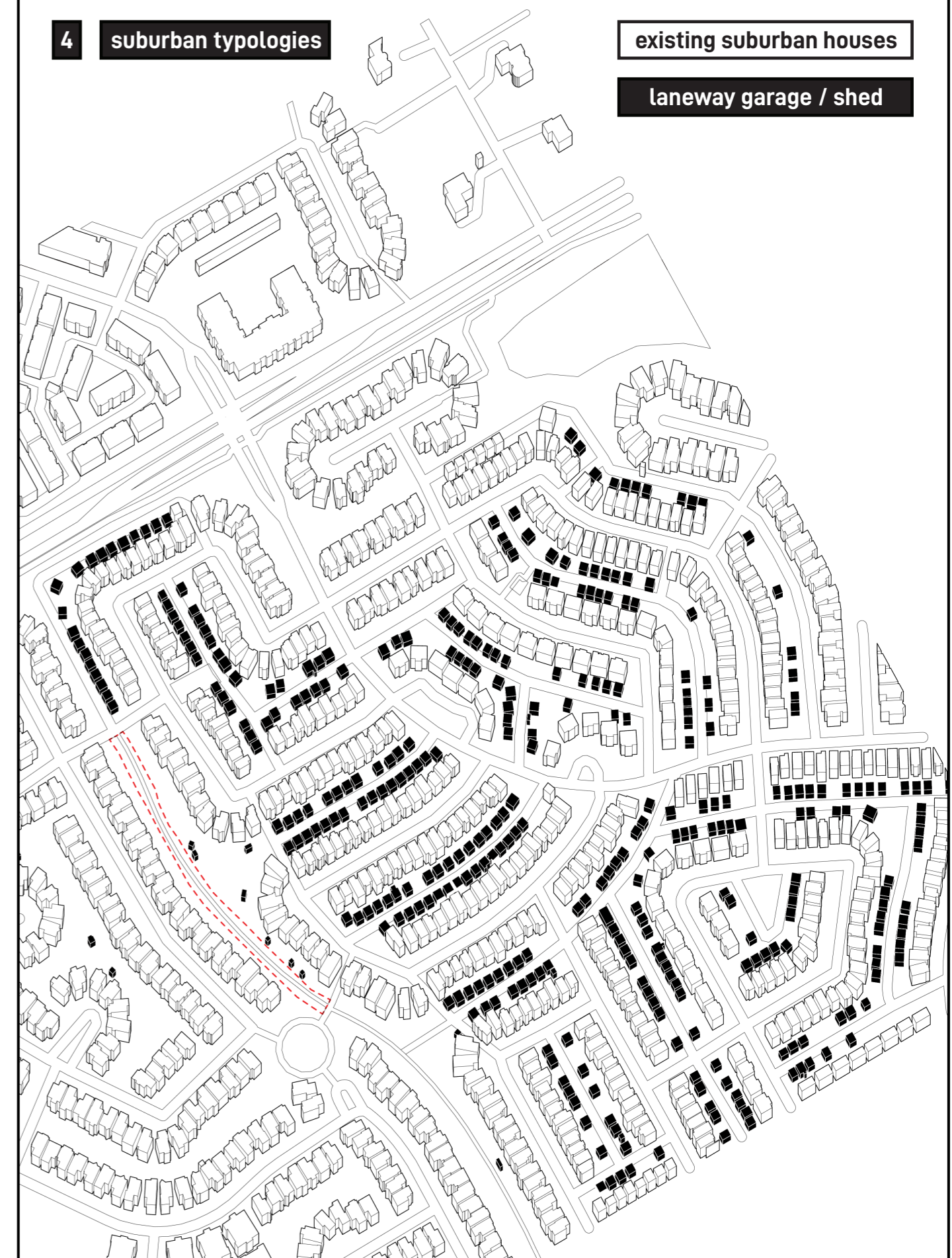
The low scale of the laneway additions and an alley animated with a mix of programs allows us to recreate the intimacy of the European streetscape [1]. This provocation provides an organized counterpoint to the homogeneity of the suburban condition and its lifeless cul-de-sacs.

Thus, this proposal addresses the suburban elephant in the room by tackling its core issues of density + diversity and speculating on the future of suburbia as the locus of liveable cities.

4 suburban typologies

existing suburban houses

laneway garage / shed



3 bottom up re-appropriation of suburban laneways

