

Vacancy and Potential

‘Vacancy and Potential’ uncovers architecture that’s presence has reduced to nothing, ultimately becoming invisible to society, blending in all too seamlessly with vast landscapes and wallstreets of engineered spectacle. Vacant constructed property – most notably unused parking garages – poses as a detrimental concern for the community of Ottawa, creating barriers against urbanization, subsequently dividing neighbourhoods and widening the gap between social classes. The stagnant nature of Ottawa’s infrastructure, when observed beyond urban developments on bare land, is reminiscent of the last five years encapsulating acute isolation and relieving the need for in-person interactions and driving as frequently.

In panel 1, we traced areas of decay and vacancy within the Billing’s Bridge area, a hub for essential and local services and businesses. Despite its necessary role in the Carleton-Ottawa community, especially for students, immigrants, and elderly, the neglect of its unused land continues to wrestle the community, feeding into increased rates of homelessness and poverty.

In response to this dilemma, our vision of an improved Ottawa starts with seeking out the potential of the parking garage as a foundation for multi-purpose centres, taking inspiration from the Le Corbusier's Dom-ino house to pay homage to the cohesive modernist style of Ottawa. Panel 2 explores an ideal transformation of the generic parking garage into a space that invites human interaction and can also serve as subsidized housing, activity or learning centres, or homeless shelters. Our goal to build on top of what is already existent will save on time, materials, energy, and cost. Modifying rather than removing will demonstrate Canada's ability to move forward rather than backward, ultimately allowing the invisible, both overlooked architecture and people, to become visible.

