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I, Kurt A. Miller, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture in Architecture (Master of).

It is entitled:
Place[ing] a Rural Built Identity:
Establishing a Built Identity for St. Henry, Ohio Through a Hermeneutic & Phenomenological Enrichment of Critical Regionalist Theory & Practice

Student's name: Kurt A. Miller

This work and its defense approved by:

Committee chair: John Eliot Hancock, M.Arch.

Committee member: Michael McInturf, M.Arch.
Place[ing] a Rural Built Identity

Establishing a Built Identity for St. Henry, Ohio
Through a Hermeneutic & Phenomenological Enrichment of Critical Regionalist Theory & Practice

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Kurt A. Miller

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First Committee Chair: John Hancock
Second Committee Chair: Michael McInturf
Abstract

Contemporary rural architecture, particularly of rural Midwestern Ohio, produces uninspiring, abject, and cheap architectural solutions that become universally accepted, yet that ignore the depth and complexity of meanings and particularities of place inherent in their geographic, cultural, and historic relationships. Through a hermeneutic and phenomenological enrichment of Critical Regionalist theory and practice, this thesis develops an architectural design process for Saint Henry, Ohio and the surrounding Midwestern Ohio region that reveals the subtle architectural and cultural regional identities. Critical Regionalism, as explored by Kenneth Frampton, works within the mediation of technological universality and traditional regionality to produce architecture that poetically engages specifics of its time and place. These well-known ideas are deepened through a phenomenological understanding of experience as ongoing interpretation of already-existing traditions, meanings, and relationships. Specifically understood through five relationships of geography and place; history and time; culture and identity; material and presencing; and tectonics and engagement, this thesis will develop a Town Hall and Square for St. Henry, Ohio through a process of reading regional particularities. As a result, the town hall typology will enhance a sense of place through architectural intervention, specifically, a “presencing,” (or foregrounding) of meanings and relationships already latent in the cultural and built environment.
Thank you to all of my loved ones who have encouraged, supported, and put up with having to listen to me talk about architecture for hours on end. It will only get worse as time goes on.

&

Thank you to the professors and mentors that have inspired, guided, and influenced me and shaped how I understand and experience the world - upon the earth, under the sky, and among the mortals and divinities.
Table of Contents

Abstract........................................................................................................... ii

Illustration/Image List...................................................................................... viii

01_Introduction................................................................................................. 1

Background Influences
Theoretical Influences

02_Problem....................................................................................................... 4

The Perception of Truth

03_Background................................................................................................. 6

The Perception of the Built Environment
The Perception of Meaning

04_Theoretical Positioning............................................................................... 9

Frampton’s Six Points
Interpretations of Frampton
Defining a Sense of Place
Built Interpretation: Ghost Lab
Built Interpretation: Marlon Blackwell
05_Research Narratives__________________________17

06_Thesis Proposition_________________________18

07_Defining a Region__________________________21

Geography / Place
History / Time
Culture / Identity
Material / Presencing
Tectonic / Engagement

08_Theoretical Precedents_______________________30

Ghost Studio Projects
Mason Lane Farm
Riverview Park Service Building
Parrish Art Museum
Shearer’s Quarters

09_Client / Culture____________________________36

St. Henry Town Hall
Town Hall Typology
The Role of the Town Hall
St. Henry Institutions and Organizations
The Town Square
10_Typology Precedents

Town Hall in Saynatsalo
Brainbridge Island City Hall
Newbern Town Hall
Giant’s Causeway Visitors’ Center
SCAD Art Museum

11_Site / Context

The Site
Inherent Site Design Issues
St. Henry Town Square Activities and Festivals

12_Space / Experience

The Program
Knowledge/Past - Library
Engagement/Present - Meeting Hall
Projection/Future - Offices
Process of Tradition - Town Square

13_Design Process

14_Bibliography
Images/Illustrations List

00.i. Miller, Kurt. Personal Photograph. 11 August 2013.
03.01. Miller, Kurt. Personal Photograph. 11 August 2013.
03.02. Miller, Kurt. Personal Photograph. 11 August 2013.
03.03. Miller, Kurt. Personal Photograph. 2 September 2013.
03.04. Miller, Kurt. Personal Photograph. 2 September 2013.
03.05. Miller, Kurt. Personal Photograph. 18 March 2014.
03.06. Miller, Kurt. Personal Photograph. 2 September 2013.


09.03. Miller, Kurt. Personal Photograph. 19 March 2013.


O1_Introduction

Background Influences

The Midwestern Ohio Region, the region surrounding St. Henry, exists uniquely today due to complex social, economic, cultural, and built developments that took place in the first territories settled outside of the original 13 colonies of the United States of America. Prior to settlement, this region existed as a virgin deciduous forest inhabited by large wildlife populations and numerous Native American tribes, including the Ottawas, Shawnees, Wyandots, Senecas, and Miamis (as named in the 1818 Treaties at St. Marys). The Northwest Ordinances of 1785 and 1787 opened up settlement within the Northwest Territory and that of the Ohio Valley Region, land north of the Ohio River. The 1790s were marked by conflict between Native Americans and American early settlers, leading to the construction of Fort Recovery (1793), Fort Adams (1794), and Fort Loramie (1794), early military outposts located in the Midwestern Ohio Region. After significant victories switching hands from various Native Americans alliances to General Anthony Wayne and the U.S. Army, The Treaty of Greenville, signed in 1795, opened the region for expanded northern settlement as Native Americans gradually abandoned settlements in the area. Ohio entered the Union as the 17th state in 1803. The 1830s and 1840s in the Midwestern Ohio Region were marked by a large influx of German immigrants, many of whom traveled to the area from Cincinnati on the newly completed Miami-Erie Canal through the German settlements of Minster and New Bremen. Located between the historic outpost of Fort Recovery and the canal settlements of Fort Loramie, Minster, and

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1 Pg. 10-11, Mercer County Historical Society, Mercer County, Ohio History of the Land Between the Saint Marys and Wabash River Valleys Illustrated by Early Maps 1755-2000.
New Bremen, St. Henry, Ohio, was founded in 1837 by Henry Roemer - a settler who emigrated from Ehlerup, Germany, a small town near Damme, in the northern German providence of Oldenburg. The early settlement of St. Henry and the surrounding region by individuals of the northern German agricultural class and how these settlers responded to the geographic particularities of the region greatly affected the development of the social, economic, cultural, and built environments of the Midwestern Ohio region. Ideas such as a strong work ethic, a dedicated sense of community, and a healthy competitive fervor emerge from individuals living in the area. Also a love of God, of family and friends, and of cold beer structures the psyches of Mercer Countians, creating the value system of the Midwestern Ohio Region. This thesis will work to presence these rich and complex relationships within St. Henry and the surrounding region and build upon them to provide an appropriate work of architecture that strengthens these values and traditions, as well as provide a platform in which the community can work towards futuring these traditions, ultimately mediating the future with the past through the present.

**Theoretical Influences**

Along with consideration of the complex development of St. Henry, Ohio, and the Midwestern Ohio region, personal exposure to the theories presented by Brian Mackay-Lyons in his *Ghost: Building an Architectural Vision* started to illustrate how current architectural works can utilize “Critical Regionalist” processes, a concept coined by Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre and expanded upon by Kenneth Frampton. The methods, materials, and architectural motivations utilized by MacKay-Lyons aligned with personal architectural goals and started to shape a personal architectural theory in which meaningful architecture could be produced, influenced by direct experience of the Midwestern Ohio region. Through further examination of this architectural theory, research delved into a conference, the “Ideas in Things,” hosted by Brian Mackay-Lyons that presented the principles developed by Ghost Lab, a design-build studio which he led. Participating architects included Marlon Blackwell, John and Patricia Patkau, Ted Flato, and Tom Kundig, architects whose practices focus on...
the idea of reinforcing place through modern architectural design. This research developed an interest in how architecture contributes to a sense of place, how architecture reinforces the culture and history of place, and how architectural principles interpret the particulars of a region to enhance the identity of place—essential elements of the Critical Regionalist theory. Kenneth Frampton, in his article “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance,” utilizes six points, discussed later in further detail, to define a design thought process in which contemporary architecture can resist the homogenization of the globalized built environment without abandoning the poetics of modern architecture or returning to nostalgic reproductions of vernacular works. While Frampton’s six points create a framework in which contemporary architecture can mediate the global and regional, how do Critical Regionalist works of architecture possess meaning? In what ways do communities understand and project meanings onto the relationships of social, economic, cultural, and built environments? Hermeneutic Phenomenology, as explored by Martin Heidegger, James Corner, Karsten Harries, and Christian Norberg-Schulz, provides an ontology in which a Critical Regionalist process can reveal, presence, and ‘re-present’ deep meanings and relationships that provide St. Henry and the Midwestern Ohio region its character and particular identity through the manipulation of telluric, tectonic, and tactile components within architecture.

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The term ‘re-present’ as a verb is used in phenomenological literature to describe the reinterpretation and the presenting of any entity anew, revealing the truth in the world that is generally taken for granted. Re-presentation leads to careful thought and deeper understanding of any entity and its relation to the world in which it already exists. Harries, Karsten. The Ethical Function of Architecture, pg. 118-122.
02_Problem

The Perception of Truth

“It is a fact: every culture cannot sustain and absorb the shock of modern civilization. There is a paradox: how to become modern and to return to sources; how to revive an old, dormant civilization and take part in universal civilization.” 4 - Paul Ricoeur, History and Truth

The development of uninspiring, abject, and cheap architectural solutions, universally accepted that ignore the complexity of meanings and significant qualities of place, particularly those of rural Midwestern Ohio, can be traced back to the interpretation of human knowledge and human existence that developed from the Enlightenment period of the 18th century. Kenneth Frampton writes,

Ever since the beginning of the Enlightenment, civilization has been primarily concerned with instrumental reason, while culture has addressed itself to the specifics of expression … Today civilization tends to be increasingly embroiled in a never-ending chain of “means and ends” wherein, according to Hannah Arendt, “The ’in order to’ has become the content of the ‘for the sake of’ utility established as meaning generates meaninglessness.” 5

Modern global technological and economic practices prioritize issues of functionality, efficiency, and economy, looking to optimize each category with the goal of improving process, production, and profitability. John Hancock explains the complexity of phenomenological thought and its relation to modern concepts of truth, writing:

For the most part, since Descartes, modern science has presupposed our

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5 Pg. 17, Ibid.
human existence and interpretive situation within the “subject-object dichotomy.” This dichotomy is most visible to us as an epistemological condition, characterizing our conscious assumptions about knowledge and its validity. But it also operates as a broad, implicit ontology in which the fundamental nature of what it means to exist within human life, either in a distant society or our own, is to be “subjectively” encountering “objects.”

But the ontology that [modern science] presupposes and implies fails to grasp human existence in a universal sense and the relationships among things, meanings, motives, and environments that are inherent in it.

A century of phenomenological critique has shown why this [failure] is true, exposing behind and beneath either “objective” or “subjective” knowledge something more fundamental, a “lived world” of relationships in which human existence is embedded, prior to any conscious or specific act of examination. These “background” relations are too thick and complex to ever be stated as “objective” truths, and also too concrete and pervasive to be merely “subjective” contingencies.

Here is the ontological point: All things and experiences are “always already among” the tightly woven fabric, the structures and relations, of the lifeworld. This inexhaustible lifeworld, even as it does not come to our attention, is the basis of the intelligibility of all things; it grants prior meaning to all conclusions. 6

The “means and ends” type of architectural design, referred to by Frampton, often works to resolve these concepts without taking deeper meanings and relationships, in which they are a part of and will ultimately influence, into account. Phenomenological discourse defines a process of thinking and understanding that can illustrate where and how meanings exist and evolve, providing a theoretical foothold in which Critical Regionalist design processes can be based. The problem facing contemporary architecture revolves around the mediation of global ideologies and construction methodologies with regional particularities of place. The Midwestern Ohio region possesses distinct architectural typologies (agricultural, commercial, residential, and institutional) primarily driven by objectivist thought resulting in an environment of bleak repetition and uninspiring economy.

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6 Pg. 265-266, Hancock, John. “The Earthworks Hermeneutically Considered.”
03_Beckground

The Perception of the Built Environment

Through a hermeneutic and phenomenological enrichment of Critical Regionalist theory and practice, this thesis will develop an architectural system that expresses the character of space and place inherent to the particularities of the region, representing the values of the surrounding communities past, present, and future. The built environment of St. Henry, Ohio, and the surrounding Midwestern Ohio region can be illustrated through four built developments: of agriculture typologies and utilitarian function; of commercial typologies and efficient production; of residential typologies and programmatic livability; and of institutional typologies and community gathering.

The first three relationships account for the majority of the built environment of St. Henry and this region. Within the first two relationships, farm structures and commercial shops, architectural considerations, if any are present, are based primarily on functionality, efficiency, and economy, resulting in building rather than Architecture, compositions that do not acknowledge the deep meanings and relationships in which they exist. These typologies are often taken for granted and considered as equipment. While they both exist as merely building, each typology possesses particularities unique to the specific function of the building. Half-timber barns vary from pole barns, and vary from livestock barns, and vary from grain silos. Similarly, machine shops vary from grocery stores, and vary from clothing shops, and vary from general offices. Yet they exist as variations on a theme of functional economy.

Within the relationship of residential structures, architectural considerations start to become more apparent in the ways in which spaces are
conceived and related. Spaces that provide a stage for social gathering shape residential design and construction, yet these buildings retain an element of economic efficiency, resulting in similar applications of a select number of possibilities. Brick facades tend to not wrap the sides or the back of buildings. Vinyl siding, particularly in a shade of beige, tends to fill in the gaps so that the over expansive interior spaces can be exteriorly clad without expending too much.

The fourth built development, institutional typologies and community gathering, illustrates how building becomes Architecture; Architecture begins to presence the lifeworld in which it exists through the relationship between institutional typologies and community gathering. County courthouses, civic meeting halls, and religious buildings start to reveal the deep meanings, relationships, and priorities within St. Henry and the Midwestern Ohio region. The design of the St. Henry Town Hall will build upon the development of institutional typologies and community gathering to presence the complex meanings, relationships, and priorities within the region, which emerge from the interaction of all four typologies of the built environment. Again, an understanding of hermeneutic phenomenology will provide a thought process to carefully consider and understand the Midwestern Ohio Region, ultimately informing a Critical Regionalist process.

The Perception of Meaning

While Critical Regionalist theory and practice work to define a design process in which the particularities of a region can be utilized to inform works of architecture that remain in tune with the environments in which they exist, phenomenological theory provides a process in which individuals can think about how a design process and the particularities of place relate to one another through complex understandings, meanings, and aspirations. More specifically hermeneutic phenomenology provides a way in which to think about how individuals relate to the lived world around them, through constant and evolving interpretation. The writings of James

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7 The term ‘presence’ as a verb is used in phenomenological literature to describe the ‘coming into conspicuous attention’ of any entity, as itself, the essential meaning from the Greek, of ‘phenomenon.’
Heidegger, Martin. Being and Time, pg. 51-55.
Harries, Karsten. The Ethical Function of Architecture, pg. 118-122.
Corner provide a structure in which meaning can be understood hermeneutically and positioned in a way in which a work of architecture can work to presence deep meanings inherent in the environment in which they exist. Corner writes:

The answer [to meaningful architecture] can be found in the articulation of a critical (that is, nondogmatic) and interpretive attitude toward history, culture, tradition, nature, and art, the basis of which lies in three working assumptions.

1. First, the world is not all-knowable, as modern technology might have us believe. Luminous and opaque, the life-world does not fit neatly into any one viewpoint. The very idea of a situation means that we do not stand outside it, but rather that we inhabit it. We "dwell" in situations (Veseley 1988). Gadamer (1981) has written that interpretation is "only an attempt, plausible and fruitful, but never completely definitive. Interpretation is always on the way."

2. The second working assumption is that primary knowledge is that which comes from direct experience. By extension, things and places can be properly understood only through nearness and intimacy, through bodily participation.

3. The third working assumption is that "tradition" does not refer to some vague recollection of the past, frozen and inaccessible, but refers instead to the creative and processual power of which we are an integral part. Gadamer (1975) describes tradition as a "happening," a continual unfolding of human endeavor, which might best be understood as humankind’s equivalent to nature. Both are eventful phenomena, equally resistant to objectification and rational dissection and too fluid for the confines of formalization or repetition. Tradition is therefore a dynamic artifact, a result of human work and the accumulation of ideas.

By working with these assumptions – the world is understood through a constantly evolving process of situational interpretation, primary knowledge comes from direct bodily experience, and tradition refers to a dynamic happening of human endeavor – a Critical Regionalist process of design can be developed. The ultimate result of this process is a work of architecture of constantly evolving and dynamic human experience that unfolds and reveals the deep and complex meanings, relationships, and priorities always already present in St. Henry and the Midwestern Ohio region.

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04_Theoretical Positioning

Frampton’s Six Points

The essay “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance,” written in 1983 by Kenneth Frampton, stands as one of the fundamental writings defining the development of Critical Regionalism as an architectural discourse. Through discussing modern architecture in terms of six points, Frampton defines a process of design that addresses the issues of the globalized modern world while incorporating the rich geographical, historical, and cultural particularities of individual regions. Kenneth Frampton situates his work in the critique of the high Modern Movement and the subsequent Postmodern Movement. He intends to position Critical Regionalism between the “liberative and poetic legacy of the prewar Modern Movement” and the “artistic potential of the region.”

Frampton’s first three points focus on (1) the relationship between culture and the development of civilization, (2) the role of the rise and fall of the avant-garde, and (3) Critical Regionalism’s relationship to the concept of world culture. He continues discussing his six points with (4) the resistance of what Frampton defines as the place-form, (5) the interaction between culture and nature through the treatment of topography, context, climate, light, and tectonic form, and (6) the interaction of the visual environment versus the tactile environment of architectural space. Frampton, in his essay, defines points where contemporary architecture missteps and contributes the destruction of the world’s regional particularities as well as provides insight into design elements that hold the capacity to mediate between the global universal and regional particular. It is this mediation in which contemporary architecture needs to

9 Pg. 469, Frampton, Kenneth, from an introduction by Kate Nesbitt. “Prospects for a Critical Regionalism.”
be situated to ensure that works of architecture work properly in an ever-changing world, situated in a futuring of tradition and familiarizing of the technological.

The writings of Kenneth Frampton define the foundation in which contemporary regionalist architecture exists, as well as describing key principles within regionalist theory and practice. The first stimulating principle from Frampton’s essay is his concern with the loss of value of human culture within modern development. He criticizes modernization, particularly that of the standardization of building products and construction techniques, and how modernization attempts to express architectural ideals through pure utility and functionality. A lack of cultural richness needs to be addressed in contemporary architectural design, an issue addressed by the next key concept. Secondly, Frampton’s definition of Critical Regionalism in connection to the concept of “arriere-garde,” or rear guard, works to produce critically aware architecture through “removing itself from both the optimization of advanced technology and the ever-present tendency to regress into nostalgic historicism.”  

Frampton cites the authors Alex Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, authors of the historical overview of regionalist discourse and the source of the term Critical Regionalism, to ground his concept of the arriere-garde in critical strategy. Frampton continues this positioning writing,

“The fundamental strategy of Critical Regionalism is to mediate the impact of universal civilization with elements derived indirectly from the peculiarities of a particular place…[it] depends upon maintaining a high level of critical self-consciousness…[it is as] much a bearer of world culture as it is a vehicle of universal civilization.”

This concept enables the production of successful contemporary architecture due to the fact that it takes into consideration a modern way of life in tune with its time and its relation to the traditions and histories of a particular place. And finally, Kenneth Frampton explores design processes that will work to mediate between the global and regional, and the contemporary and the traditional, through the discussion of what Frederic Jameson defines as “tripartite values of the tactile, the tectonic, and the telluric which frame the notion of space in such a way that it

11 Pg. 21, Ibid.
turns back slowly into a conception of place once again." 12 Utilizing Frampton’s strategies of the tactile, the tectonic, and the telluric along with Corner’s concepts of evolving interpretation, direct experience, and the process of tradition, this thesis will define a built identity through the design of the St. Henry Town Hall, connecting the past with the future through the engagement of the present.

Interpretations of Frampton

Supplementing Critical Regionalism’s foundation as presented by Frampton, “Regionalisms for the Third Millennium” from Architectural Regionalism: Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity, and Tradition, a collection of essays edited by Vincent B. Canizaro, delves into interpretations of Kenneth Frampton’s fundamental treatise. Compiled and published in 2007, this collection addresses various notions of contemporary regionalist thought. One essay, written by Timothy Cassidy, discusses the concept of what Cassidy defines as “reflexive regionalism” or an architecture that emphasizes living with a particular time and place rather than replicating regional forms and material manipulation. Barbara Allen, the author of the second essay, presents her perspective on “performative regionalism.” Allen defines this type of regionalism by emphasizing the factors that produce the people, place, or region rather than idealized forms based on identity and place, focusing on the interaction between people rather than historic and geographic characteristics. The third essay, written by Jeremy Till and Sarah Wigglesworth, considers the architecture process investigated by Samuel Mockbee and the development of Rural Studio, a design-build studio that works to produce quality architecture in impoverished rural Alabama. Till and Wigglesworth write, “In its dialogue with the local, the architecture – as a product and process – will also be seen as a pioneering counterpoint to the homogenizing tendencies of globalization, a critical regionalism in the true sense of the word critical.” 13 The fourth essay addresses Critical Regionalism’s role in the new millennium, written by Steven Moore, explaining a “regenerative architecture, [or an architecture that] will seek to engage human institutions in the democratic reproduction of life-enhancing

13 Pg. 430, Canizaro, Vincent. Architectural Regionalism: Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity, & Tradition.
Moore reconfigures the strategies of sustainability in relation to the role in enhancing a sense of place. These four essays present contemporary adaptations and critiques of Frampton’s seminal text, expanding the overall discourse on what defines regionalism whether it is critical or reflexive, performative or regenerative.

A clear theme in the analysis provided in “Regionalisms for the Third Millennium” is the concept that modern architecture must strengthen place and identity of the region by responding to the specific qualities of the lived world in these regions. The concepts presented by Timothy Cassidy and Barbara Allen connect the realization of a critically regional architecture with the specificities of time in which a particular community exists and how it goes about its way of life. These ideas can be considered to be the community’s lived world and place within the lifeworld, a phenomenological understanding of how social and cultural interactions exist and are grounded in meaning within particular communities. The work of Rural Studio and Samuel Mockbee underscores the importance of understanding the social role architecture plays within a region, how people interact with architecture, and why people interact with architecture; once architects understand these concepts, they can then suggest an intervention. Finally, Moore’s concept of “engaging human institutions in the democratic reproduction of life-enhancing places” brings ecological and sustainability aspects into the forefront of any Critical Regionalist architecture, tying architecture directly to specific climatic qualities. The ideas of a critical or reflexive, performative or regenerative regionalism, presented here, expand the possibilities in which architecture can mediate between the global and the traditional, through the understanding of how a community functions at a particular time within a particular network of places. Building upon both founding principles and modern interpretations of Critical Regionalism already discussed further, thesis research considers how place-making contributes to particular built identities, utilizing a hermeneutic phenomenological approach.

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14 Pg. 440, Canizaro, Vincent. *Architectural Regionalism: Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity, & Tradition.*
15 Pg. 440, Ibid.
Defining a Sense of Place

*Genius Loci, Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, written by Christian Norberg-Schulz, explores the meanings and relationships within the concept of place, revealing how places are at the center of human experience which in turn can start to inform a Critical Regionalist design process. Norberg-Schulz starts with the notion that “life takes place,” that human activities are directly connected to and affected by the environments in which they occur. He writes:

> Place is evidently an integral part of existence. A place is therefore a qualitative, “total” phenomenon…a concrete presence, experienced as a set of particular qualities, or in general as a stimmung or “character” which forms a background to acts and occurrences. ¹⁶

Character of a place determines how this place is interpreted and defines the structure in which meaning emerges from the rich and complex lifeworld. This character or atmosphere cannot be dissected and analyzed scientifically but exists as complex totalities drawing from and affecting endless relationships and meanings of the lived world. Particularities of place start to emerge when these qualities differentiate individual places from one another, for example through the built environment or climatic cycles. Norberg-Schulz continues:

> …all places have character, and that character is the basic mode in which the world is “given.” To some extent the character of a place is a function of time; it changes with the seasons, the course of day, and the weather, factors which above all determine different conditions of light. Character depends upon how things are made. ¹⁷

Human existence is understood through interactions within places. Places present the world to individuals through specific qualities that contribute to its character. Character emerges from how spaces and buildings are made, or through the poetics of construction. Through this place-making, a fundamental concept emerges that illustrates how places are dynamic, ever-changing environments related to the seasons, time of day, and quality of weather. Mediation and manipulation of these factors can

¹⁶ Pg. 6-8, Norberg-Schulz, Christian. *Genius Loci, Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture.*
¹⁷ Pg. 14-15, Ibid.
enhance a sense of place and work to presence, or foreground, a built identity grounded in that region and particular place. The concept of Critical Regionalist place-making through a hermeneutic phenomenological ontology, as discussed by Frampton, Corner, and Norberg-Schulz, can be illustrated through the design and construction processes of Ghost Lab lead by Brian Mackay-Lyons and the works of Marlon Blackwell.

**Built Interpretation: Ghost Lab**

Exemplifying modern regionalist interpretation, the book *Ghost: Building an Architectural Vision*, by Brian MacKay-Lyons, illustrates a built interpretation of Critical Regionalist theory. *Ghost* chronicles the concepts and projects developed by MacKay-Lyons through the design-build studio, Ghost Lab, practicing on the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia, Canada. MacKay-Lyons emphasizes the ideal of the master builder and the interaction between the architect and the community within the built environment. The essays, on the development of MacKay-Lyons’ thought, and descriptions explaining individual Ghost projects, work to apply design principles to modern architectural practice within a distinct regional context. MacKay-Lyons focuses on the geographic evolution of site, the climatic extremes of the North Atlantic coast, and the traditional utilization of land. He also emphasizes the application of traditional materials, integration of traditional building methods, and a phenomenological experience of architectural space. MacKay-Lyons sees an economic sensibility in the way traditional architecture existed and how particular sites were utilized, a concept that he finds absent from contemporary architectural practice. The author writes, “I wanted to make buildings that are more invisible, yet more didactic; buildings that are more silent, yet speak more clearly… it [Ghost Lab] is both a conversation about specificity of place and ideas that are universal, about a particular time and timelessness.”

The principles applied by Brian MacKay-Lyons in the development of Ghost Lab provide a distinct modern application in response to the specificity of unique site conditions and the relation of these conditions to the people who interact with the works.

particularities. MacKay-Lyons prides himself in being an expert in the history and development of the community in which he designs, expertise that the author finds absolutely necessary to properly design in that community. Another strength of MacKay-Lyons' explorations is the tectonic and material application utilized, a strategy that is distinctly modern yet grounded in concepts inherent in the historic development of the region. The author also utilizes the various outcomes of Ghost Lab to test these theories and build upon the principles explored in the previous years of the design-build studio. MacKay-Lyons applies his theoretical principles within physical environments, with physical constraints to not only test and exemplify his architectural theory but to further develop and revise these concepts, to produce an architecture that can actually exist as theorized. Through this investigation, research for this thesis moved to another architect that works with an interpretation of Critical Regionalist thought, this time within a region that lacks the unique characteristics of the Atlantic coast in Nova Scotia, a region with less definable characteristics and less pronounced development structure.

Built Interpretation: Marlon Blackwell

The work and design principles of Marlon Blackwell presented in his book *An Architecture of the Ozarks: The Works of Marlon Blackwell*, complement the work of Brian MacKay-Lyons and Ghost Lab and stand as a process precedent for contemporary Critical Regionalist interpretation. This book presents architectural works completed by Marlon Blackwell and defines architecture’s relationship with the rural environment of the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas. Blackwell writes,

"I live, practice, teach, and build in northwest Arkansas, in the foothills of the Ozark Mountains. It's a place considered to be in the middle of nowhere, yet ironically, close to everywhere. It is an environment of real natural beauty and, simultaneously, of real constructed ugliness. This land of disparate conditions is not just a setting for my work – it is part of the work. In these conditions I do not see a negative, but instead, a source of deep possibilities." 19

Blackwell combines contemporary tectonic principles and standardized materials with the unique qualities of locally available products and building techniques. Along with

possessing a particular materiality relating to functionality, the projects by Blackwell emphasize the experience of architectural space and how the form of the building can express and enhance the functions that “take place” within architectural space. In this book, Juhani Pallasmaa discusses the processes in which Blackwell thinks, writing, “Instead of seeking extraordinary tasks or experiences, Blackwell focuses his effort realistically and responsibly on the standard tasks of everyday life, humble in their architectural potential, yet capable of providing a sense of identity and dignity.” Blackwell, rather than rejecting the apparent disconnect between the individual pieces of the built environment, weaves together disparate parts of the everyday experience through his work, working to reveal the deep meanings, traditions, and connections that exist in the lifeworld. According to Blackwell, architecture can and should work to embrace all characteristics of place, tying and connecting them to one another, enhancing the experience of each object as well as the region and community as a whole. The philosophy and the architectural manifestations of Marlon Blackwell represent a contemporary understanding and physical example of Frampton’s theories, deepened through a phenomenological understanding of experience as ongoing interpretation of already-existing traditions, meanings, and relationships.

An analysis of Marlon Blackwell’s work and design methods will situate the design principles and architectural interventions utilized by this thesis in relation to contemporary regionalist theory and its interaction with a hermeneutic phenomenological design processes. An influential concept presented is Blackwell’s concept of working with constructed ugliness and built objects of the environment—such as sheds and barns which are typically not considered as architecture—to inform and influence the architectural design process. Blackwell does not shy away from small budgets, ordinary materials, and support buildings such as grain elevators and paddock fencing; but rather, Blackwell pulls inspiration from them and looks to draw from them, connecting them to each other and to the region through architectural intervention. Finally, the author accepts the reality that “ugly architecture” exists due to the economic and social developments of the region, and it will continue to be produced. He recognizes the reality of the region and attempts to work with it, to poetically reveal it.
in a new light, rather than denouncing its existence and calling for architectural theory to be the solution to the whole of the built environment. Blackwell also incorporates a playfulness in material, tectonic, and formal applications within his theory and practice.

Built explorations of Critical Regionalism and how these precedents can be understood through hermeneutic phenomenology, or interpretations of deep traditions, meanings, and relationships already present in the lived world, will be presented in further precedent and typology analysis, as discussed in the design process of Brian MacKay-Lyons and Marlon Blackwell.
Through literature and precedent analysis of Critical Regionalist theory and practice, this thesis can define six major concepts that will inform an architectural design process for the design of the St. Henry Town Hall.

1. Phenomenological discourse provides a process in which meaning can be considered and understood, revealing complex relationships within the community or region in which works of architecture exist.

2. The concept of a process of tradition, discussed by James Corner, defines tradition as a constantly evolving gathering of human endeavor. Considering the traditions of the St. Henry community hermeneutically, the past is here with us as tradition, as dynamic processes connecting past experiences with future aspirations through the presencing of present engagement. This thesis will develop the St. Henry Town Hall that identifies a built identity for rural Ohio, within this understanding.

3. Critical Regionalism, as defined by Kenneth Frampton, works to mediate the world of universal globalization with the particularities inherent in individual regions. This mediation requires a “high level of critical self-consciousness.”

4. “Regionalisms for the Third Millennium” expands the possibilities of Critical Regionalism, how architecture can mediate between the global and the traditional, through the consideration of how a community functions over time and within a particular network of traditions, meanings, and relationships.

5. Human experiences are given through acts that occur in places, as defined by Christian Norberg-Schulz. Place is understood through the stimmung or character or atmosphere of particular places in which meaning in the world is given. Character is determined by how the environment is made through building.

6. The work of Brian MacKay-Lyons and Marlon Blackwell illustrates built precedents that utilize a Critically Regionalist design process, enhanced through a phenomenological and hermeneutic understanding, that negotiate between the global and the regional, through poetically revealing the deep meanings and relationships inherent in a particular community that exists in a particular time.
06_Thesis Proposition

The St. Henry Town Hall will develop a Critical Regionalist design process, utilizing a hermeneutic phenomenological ontology, to define a built identity for St. Henry and enhance the particularities of the sense of place. Investigation into the propositions of how strong architecture exists, as presented by the authors cited previously, will help position this design process within St. Henry and the surrounding region, involving both physical and psychological structures of meaning and relationships. Explicating Martin Heidegger’s oft-cited reference to the Greek temple, John Hancock explains how works of architecture are ‘at work,’

“…giving visibility and structure to the inexhaustibly complex network of things, meanings, and relationships, that constitute “being-in-the-world” for a particular society, bringing forward into explicitness those thick, invisible, traditional, habitual, intertwined patterns of everyday existence, toil, experience, community, and meaning.”

Architecture ‘works’ properly when it is able to presence the truths that exist in the lifeworld, when architecture reveals-the-concealed-out-of-concealment. These truths come from the particular regional relationships that are universal in a sense that we exist as humans on this earth, but yet unique compared to the developments of modernization and globalization. Christian Norberg-Schulz discusses place and its relationship to the lifeworld that always already exists behind and beneath:

The existential purpose of building (architecture) is therefore to make a site become a place, that is, to uncover the meanings potentially present

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22 Pg. 271, Hancock, John. “The Earthworks Hermeneutically Considered.”
in the given environment. The structure of a place is not a fixed, eternal state. As a rule, places change...[having] the capacity of receiving different contents...[that] may be interpreted in different ways. 23

In this consideration, meaning does not result solely from unconcealing concealed truths within the lifeworld, but through a process of revealing meanings in numerous ways; ways that may be interpreted through numerous processes. The variations of interpretation are related to particular relationships of the character of the place during the particular time of engagement, as well as with the contexts and assumptions within those experiencing the place. James Corner discusses hermeneutic phenomenology further presenting how meanings may be interpreted:

A responsible and critical theory might be one that would seek to reconcile previous cosmologies with those of our own time, attempting to find new joints of meaning between our ancestry and our future...[devising] new meanings (futures) from a critical and yet imaginative reinterpretation of our tradition (past). In cultivating traditions from within, hermeneutics enables a re-cognition: a knowing of things anew. 24

Corner discusses the idea of understanding the ways in which particular places and regions exist through presenting this existence in a new contemporary manner, through a process of futuring the tradition, of strange-making the accepted, or as Kenneth Frampton defines as deconstructing and reconstructing or defamiliarization. But how can these concepts be applied to architectural means and processes? Juhani Pallasmaa discusses architecture in experiential terms rather than as components arranged and assembled. This definition starts to provide a design process that can work with the telluric, tectonic, and tactile at the center of Critical Regional discourse. Pallasmaa explains,

A building is not an end to itself; it frames, articulates, restructures, gives significance, relates, separates and unites, facilitates and prohibits. Consequently, elements of an architectural experience seem to have a verb form rather than being nouns. Authentic architectural experiences consist then of approaching, or confronting a building rather than the

23 Pg. 18, Norberg-Schulz, Christian. *Genius Loci, Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture.*
façade; of the act of entering and not simply the frame of the door; of looking in or out of a window, rather than the window itself. 25

The propositions presented by the architectural theorists cited in this thesis provide the theoretical foundation in which a truly Critical Regionalist design process can develop not only works of architecture, but phenomenological understandings into how architecture possesses meaning related to the history of past communities, the engagement within present communities, and the aspirations of future communities.

“*In memorable experiences of architecture, space, matter, and time fuse into one single dimension, into the basic substance of being, that penetrates the consciousness. We identify ourselves with this space, this place, this moment, and these dimensions as they become ingredients of our very existence.*” 26 – Juhani Pallasmaa

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25 Pg. 35, Pallasmaa, Juhani. *An Architecture of the Seven Senses.*
26 Pg. 37, Ibid.
07_Defining a Region

“A boundary is not that at which something stops, but as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that, from which something begins its presencing.” – Martin Heidegger

Along with developing a Critical Regionalist design process, grounded within hermeneutic phenomenological ontology, this thesis will work to define the particularities of St. Henry and the Midwestern Ohio region, resulting in a distinct sense of place in which a built identity can be established. Five key relationships will be explored to discover and reveal complex meanings and relationships in the Midwestern Ohio region. The relationships are:

- geography / place
- history / time
- culture / identity
- material / presencing
- tectonic / engagement

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Geography / Place

The geographic conditions of the region work to shape the character of the region’s sense of place. Natural features play a large role in shaping human development which in turn influence the particularities of place.

Some influential characteristics include:

- Glacial recession created a relatively flat landscape, with slightly rolling hills
- Three major glacial deposits account for fertile soil
- The region was historically covered by a dense deciduous forest
- The region is a part of the southern extreme of the Great Black Swamp which accounts for the dense clay that exist below the fertile top soil
- This top soil becomes profitable for agricultural use if drained and managed properly
- The land was drained with the construction of the reservoir Grand Lake St. Marys, a feeder for the Miami Erie Canal
- An intricate network of creeks, streams, and small rivers drain the region through Grand Lake St. Marys to the St. Marys River and the Wabash River

Along with these natural features, the development of agriculture and its effect on the hermeneutic landscape illustrate significant meanings and relationships between geographic entities and the region’s sense of place as delineated by the earth. Climatic characteristics and the distinct seasonality of the region greatly contribute to the character that defines the Midwestern Ohio’s sense of place as delineated by the sky.
07.04. Natural virgin deciduous forest transformed to open maintained farmland.

07.05. Seasonality of the Midwestern Ohio Region.


**History / Time**

The relationship between history and time can be understood through the analysis of the process of development of the built environment of the region.

Key historic influences that help reveal an understanding of a current ongoing, lived tradition include:

- Forts and supply outposts were constructed throughout the region during the late 18th and early 19th century before the region could be properly accessible, cleared, and drained for transportation, settlement, and agriculture.

- The region was the site of Native American contention during the settlement of the Northwest Territory and the Mercer County area following the passing of the Northwest Ordinances and the Treaty of Greenville.

- Transportation developments influenced regional settlement and the evolution of the built environment.

- 1845 - the Miami and Erie Canal connected the Midwestern Ohio Region to an influx of people, products, and technology, as well as opening up markets for commercial agriculture and manufacturing.

- 1870s-1880s - railroads connected farms and manufacturers to larger markets encouraging increased growth, strengthening the region’s economy, spurring further development and expanded settlement.

- A mixed economy based upon a cyclical process built around agriculture and manufacturing was strengthened by the region’s strong tie to its seasonality and developing transportation access.

- The largest communities developed along historic transportation routes, primarily towns tied to the canal, allowing them to reinforce particular built identities.

The transportation systems, along with cultural influences, resulted in the founding and development of numerous small communities with individual built identities that function within a larger network of the region. The development of these communities led to specific examples and highly-crafted structures and planning, relating each community to its place in history and its connection to the present day experience as delineated by time.
07.07. 1908 Map of Ohio.

07.08. Town Square Diagrams in the Midwestern Ohio Region (L to R: Ft. Loramie, Minster, Coldwater, Ft. Recovery, New Bremen, Burkettesville).
Culture / Identity

The relationship between culture and identity can be understood through the analysis of the process of tradition and how individuals can relate to the past as tradition through the presencing of the everyday activities within individual communities as well as the Midwestern Ohio Region overall.

Key cultural influences that strengthen a sense of community identity include:

- The region’s predominance of German Catholic ancestry
- The development of individual Catholic churches for rural congregations, churches that are located approximately two miles from one to another
- A strong sense of community within individual towns and the region as a whole
- Loyalty and pride for the town in which an individual grows up taking part in the traditions of that town in particular the competitive culture of high school sporting events
- Emergence of cyclical community events within individual communities, resulting in regional social calendar that includes similar events around similar times each year
- Prevalence of social drinking culture
- Emergence of strong work ethic and pride in work and pride in the overall appearance and function of the towns and communities in which individuals live and work

Cultural particularities of place provide the primary process in which individuals within these communities find meanings and interact with other communities both regionally and globally. Cultural particularities also provide a way in which individuals relate to a particular history, denoting the passage of time, and a particular geography, creating a sense of place.

These three developments – geography and place, history and time, and culture and identity – work within one another as well as with one another to define a sense of place in St. Henry that will provide the foundation on which a built identity for rural Ohio can be explored, explained, and enhanced.

07.11. A strong sense of community pride and loyalty shown at high school sporting events.

07.12. A strong sense of community continues at the local sports bar after these games.
The final two relationships explored by this thesis will be developed through the design process of the St. Henry Town Hall and Town Square. Insights from the analysis of these relationships will inform how the work of architecture ultimately presences and engages the community through materiality, tectonic expression, and construction processes. These final two relationships will provide a built expression of concepts explored by the first three, providing a physical architectural experience of the geographic, historic, and cultural themes that give St. Henry and the Midwestern Ohio Region a particular sense of place, strengthening its identity.

**Material / Presencing**
- Availability of craftsmen and craftsmanship
- Availability of local materials, processes, and technologies, not only the availability of a particular material or construction process, but also its prevalence (as backgrounded) within the built environment of St. Henry and the region
- Associations with materials and significant meaning of particular materials, past and present, as well as associations with specific construction processes
- How can the St. Henry Town Hall and Town Square presence through materials the nuances and meanings inherent in St. Henry and the Midwestern Ohio Region?
- How can these subtle differences be re-presented and built upon?

**Tectonic / Engagement**
- Why does the region build?
- What denotes building from architecture and architecture from building?
- What defines intentional design from natural development?
- Architectural development of agriculture typology and utilitarian functionality
- Architectural development of commercial typology and efficiency
- Architectural development of residential typology and dwelling
- Architectural development of institutional typology and community

These two relationships are developed further through strategic precedent analysis.
The following precedents utilize a Critical Regionalist design process that re-presents the role and composition of the barn, contributing to a concept this thesis will refer to as the “articulated barn.” These precedents manipulate materials, construction methods, tectonic expression, and particularities of place to create engaging contemporary works of regional architecture. The concept of the articulated barn helps clarify how these projects work within the framework of meanings, traditions, and relationships in which they exist, and how this thesis can develop a design process for the particularities of St. Henry and the Midwestern Ohio Region to be applied to and explored through the St. Henry Town Hall and Town Square.
Ghost Studio Projects, 1994-2008
Kingsburg, Nova Scotia
Ghost Studio, Brian MacKay-Lyons

08.01. Interior shadows of Ghost 9.

08.02. Ghost 6 glowing during a night event.

08.03. Ghost 9 glowing as the sun sets on the Nova Scotia coast.
Mason Lane Farm, 2009
Goshen, Kentucky
De Leon and Primmer Architecture Workshop

08.04. View of entire building arrangement.

08.05. View from maintenance area to storage barn.

08.06. End gable elevations of storage barn and tool/maintenance barn.
Riverview Park Service Building, 2009
Louisville, Kentucky
De Leon and Primmer Architecture Workshop

08.07. Detail view of perforated steel grate elevation.
08.08. Overall view of the service building.
08.09. Night view illustrating the project’s translucency, strengthening the park’s sense of place.
Parrish Art Museum, 2012
Water Mill, New York
Herzog and de Meuron

08.10. Overall view showing the gable form intersection.

08.11. Overall view of the side concrete elevation.

08.12. Interior view within the main exhibition gallery looking down the building’s spine.
Shearer’s Quarters, 2009
Bruny Island, Australia
John Wardle Architects

08.13. Overall view of the back elevation.


08.15. View of short elevation looking towards the existing farmhouse.
09_Choice / Culture

St. Henry Town Hall

This thesis will develop a design for a Town Hall and Town Square for the community of St. Henry, Ohio, a small west-central Ohio town of 2,400 residents. The proposed Town Hall and Town Square will provide contemporary facilities for the governmental, municipal, and community functions currently active in the community, as well as provide the framework for increased community awareness and engagement with the functions that govern, maintain, and plan for the town. It will work to connect the various institutions and organizations that shape the development of the village, physically and theoretically. While the government and municipal institutions, such as the Village Council, Administration Office, and Public Utilities of the village would act as the primary day to day users, the proposed town hall will also provide facilities for the various civic and cultural institutions active in the St. Henry Community including the Heritage Club, the Community Club, and the St. Henry Chamber of Commerce. Many of these organizations lack formal meeting and administration space, utilizing various banquet spaces throughout the town. The proposed Town Hall will provide proper space and equipment for annual meetings, presentations, and lectures pertinent to these organizations. By inviting these organizations to meet and discuss within the same space utilized by the formal government, the Saint Henry Town Hall will encourage collaboration and interaction between the formal processes inherent in government and the grass roots processes driving the goals of the community organizations. Along with the governmental, administrative, and community organizations, the St. Henry Town Hall will connect the new spaces with the existing library to utilize the resources present in the existing library system. The Town Square, currently
an underwhelming, undefined parking lot, will provide an outdoor community gathering place in which the institutions and organizations utilizing the Town Hall can interact with the members of the community. This Town Square will also act as the threshold between the governing institutions housed in the Town Hall and the private and public institutions that surround the Square, including the Catholic church, elementary school, community bank, and funeral home. The Town Square will connect the everyday functions inherent in the surrounding institutions with the functions of the Town Hall, promoting interaction and engagement between the activities of the everyday and of the extraordinary. The St. Henry Town Hall unifies, connects, and encourages the development and goals already present in the governmental, municipal, and community institutions in the town and provides the spaces, tools, and interactions needed to preserve the past, enhance the present, and plan for the future.
Town Hall Typology

With the particularities of the Midwestern Ohio region in mind, a study of the town hall typology provides useful insight into the understanding of the historic development, present applications, and appropriate interpretations of the town hall typology. The act of gathering for communal discussion, decision making, and ceremony can be traced back to prehistoric community development and town formation. Starting with more recent interpretations, the town hall typology can be found in colonial New England meeting halls (fig. 09.05), both secular and religious. Traditionally these spaces acted as the political and intellectual center of early American communities that provided communal space for public discourse, public meetings, and public votes. These meeting halls represented the presence of the democratic decision making process and served as an important structure within the community. Colonial New England meeting halls can be traced back to the moot hall of Anglo-Saxon England which provided a permanent structure for the activities associated with earlier developments of moot hills, ring shaped hills that served as a landmark for the gathering of regional elders. The moot hall (fig. 09.06) provided a permanent enclosed structure, supplementing the moot hill, in which regional meeting and discussion could take place, providing a built entity to represent the seat of the decision making process.

Further tracing shows the development of the moot hall emerged from the early Anglo Saxon mead hall (fig. 09.07), the physical manifestation of the power of the lord and lady of the land. It acted as the government seat to enforce regional regulations, the feasting hall to host visiting dignitaries, and the gathering lodge to celebrate significant cultural events. These early development of the meeting hall, moot hall, and mead hall can be traced back further to the Neolithic longhouse, an element that emerged from the need for grain storage during early agricultural development. Social, political, and technological developments often led to the next interpretation of the communal gathering space, each building iteration building upon the previous examples. The role of community gathering, connection, and communication remains at the heart of the evolution of the town hall typology.

09.05. Colonial Meeting House, Mass., 1714.
09.06. English Moot Hall, Suffolk, 1520.
09.07. Anglo Saxon Mead Hall Reconstruct., 980.
Saint Henry was founded in 1836 by Heinrich Roemer, a native of Ehlerup, Germany, a small town in Lower Saxony, a state in northern Germany. Considering the predominant German heritage of the Midwestern Ohio region, the development of the Neolithic longhouse, the German Low house, and the German town hall are considered to be another important typological root for to the St. Henry Town Hall. The development of the German Low house (fig. 09.08) – a type of timber-framed farmhouse, typical to the North German Plain, containing the living quarters, byre, and barn under one roof – provides significant influence in the construction of the built environment of the Midwestern Ohio Region. Many of the area’s early settlers hail from the northern territories of Germany, much like Heinrich Roemer, and would have been very familiar with the construction and utilization of this typology. The structures of early barns in the area match the layouts of traditional Fachhallenhauses (German Low house) typologies of the North German Plain.

Along with the evolution of the German Low house, the rathaus (fig. 09.09), German meaning “council’s house,” can provide insight into an intervention appropriate for the St. Henry Town Hall. The development of the rathaus draw from the developments of the mead hall explored earlier, with the mead portion explored programmatically. The development of the ratskeller, or “council’s cellar,” refers to the beer hall in the lower level of, or in close proximity to, the town hall. The ratskeller illustrates the role beer and wine played in the functions of the town hall in German culture. These specific developments illustrate the necessity to gather communally to express beliefs, ideas, and politics. The German Low house, German rathaus, and the neolithic longhouse (fig. 09.10) illustrate the archetypal structural, programmatic, and cultural influences respectively of the town hall typology. Again, the role of community gathering, connection, and communication and their influence in the shaping of this community – past, present, and future – remains at the heart of the evolution of the town hall typology.
The Role of the Town Hall

The fundamental function of the institution, the Village of St. Henry, is to provide basic utilities, services, and policies to help maintain and develop the public infrastructure, private equity, and quality of life for residents, businesses, and visitors in and around the St. Henry community. St. Henry Town Hall will provide the programmatic and technologic necessities for the various forms of community involvement available whether it is through elected office, organized citizen groups, or interested individuals, acting as the catalyst to enhance the quality of space, sense of place, and quality of life of St. Henry. The current proceedings of these institutions often go unnoticed by the general population of St. Henry and the region. The St. Henry Town Hall will provide regularity, transparency, and openness to these activities, informing the community of the goals and projects of these institutions as well as promoting an increased participation from the surrounding community. Collaboration and debate between these intuitions is also introduced and encouraged. The St. Henry Town Hall will create a platform in which discussion, debate, and deliberation can take place easily and often. Through encouraging participation, the new architectural intervention will act as a community catalyst socially, politically, and architecturally.

The St. Henry Town Hall defines a built identity for the St. Henry community and the surrounding Midwest Ohio region through the application of critical design principles – built upon a hermeneutic phenomenological understanding of a particular culture and identity, geography and place, and history and time – that enables the interactions and collaborations between the community institutions and community members. The St. Henry Town Hall activates the historic center of St. Henry, Ohio once more, enhancing its sense of community, built identity, and sense of place, providing a means in which architecture can provide the motivation and articulation of the strong pride, loyalty, and passion held by the members of the small towns within this region. The St. Henry Town Hall and Town Square will not work to illustrate how previous development is lacking in engagement, but rather identify an intervention that embraces the future while building upon the past, through the interactive engagement of the present.
St. Henry Institutions and Organizations

- St. Henry Town Council
- Granville Township Council
- St. Henry Village Offices
- Public Works
- Public Utilities
- Parks and Recreation
- St. Henry Chamber of Commerce
- Heritage Club
- Community Club
- St. Henry Picnic Committee
- St. Patrick’s Day Parade Committee
- St. Henry Boy Scouts, Troop #101
- Friends of the Freedom Amphitheater Committee
- St. Henry Athletic Boosters Committee
- St. Henry Band Boosters

09.11. Panoramic view of existing St. Henry Town Square site, with the St. Henry Catholic Church (left), the Elementary School (center), and the St. Henry Library (right).
The Town Square

The Town Square will play a significant role in developing and reinforcing a sense of place in which the St. Henry Town Hall can work to establish a built identity. Paul Zucker, in his book *Town and Square, from the Agora to the Village Green*, relates a concise evolution of the town square throughout the history of the human built environment:

“Planned squares, clearly recognizable as such appeared in ancient Greece and her colonies from the fifth century B.C. on. They resulted indirectly from the gridiron scheme which then was introduced into Greece and Asia Minor by Hippodamus. After the decline of ancient civilization with its Hellenistic and Roman creations, planned squares appeared again in French and English bastides and the foundations by the Teutonic Knights in eastern Germany. In the early Renaissance, architects competed as fervently in the planning of whole towns and of individual squares as they did in creating churches, palaces, villas, and gardens. Later this architectural interest in the design and execution of squares reached its climax during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the era to which posterity owes the majority of world-famous squares.”

Two world-famous squares that will serve as European precedents for this thesis are the Piazza San Marco in Venice, Italy (fig. 09.14) and the Marktplatz in Bremen, Germany (fig. 09.15). Both squares are prominent civic rooms that set the stage for major institutional buildings as well as social and public interactions. Each square is faced with a significant and historic cathedral (St. Mark’s Basilica and Bremen Cathedral) and with historic civic buildings (the Palazzo Ducale and the Town Hall of Bremen). Both squares are comprised of a series of major and minor public spaces connected by navigating around the built environment of the historic city centers. These squares each represent a dynamic urban space consisting of unique human-scaled spaces in which various scale of activities can be accommodated from intimate conversation to community festivals. These complex European precedents served as the ultimate inspiration for the design and implementation of early American town squares, if not spatially but programmatically.

Paul Zucker continues to trace the evolution of the town square and its function.
in the establishment and development of early American towns and cities:

Since the square always and everywhere serves many functions, it is not surprising to find that in America, too, the square has multiple uses. But often, as in the Old World, several squares were developed in these early plans, and to each were assigned special duties. The most frequent uses and typical functions of squares from the very first settlements and continuing throughout the pioneering period in the United States were:

1. The communal use of a fenced, open area for grazing and for storing cattle at night. These "commons" were in the center of the towns for the convenience of guarding against straying and depredation.

2. The community use of a central square for the drilling of militia and for public gatherings (the Parade).

3. The use of the square as a site on which faced, or on which were placed, ecclesiastical and public buildings. Such squares were often decorated with trees and ornamental lawns, frequently in formal design relationships. In New England, such squares are best known as "the Green."

4. The use of the square as a purely ornamental and social amenity or for creating or improving a view.

5. The use of the square for a market. This is less common than the other uses and much less common than in Europe or Latin America, and is usually combined with other functions. 29

Examples of early town squares that shaped how towns and cities developed, as well as how social activities and public transactions were structured, can be illustrated through the Public Squares of Savannah, Georgia, (fig. 09.16) and the Boston Common in Boston, Massachusetts. Both public squares provide a combination of formal composition with natural forms of vegetation. These public spaces also encourage an array of private and public activities to occur within, around, and through them. These American adaptations of European civic space influenced the development of small town squares of the pioneering territories. Paul Zucker continues:

29 Pg. 238, Zucker, Paul. *Town and Square, From the Agora to the Village Green.*
A great number of Midwestern towns with their squares were based on plans by surveyors who were simultaneously military engineers, educated at West Point and for whom aesthetic considerations were of only secondary interest.

The public square in Ohio and Indiana settlements was the community center. Many were large and served as spacious trading spots...It was common practice in this region to place a market building, courthouse, or town hall at the center of the square.

It would be hard to say where this practice originated since the examples are relatively few on the Atlantic seaboard...Avoiding the ungainly effect of frontalism of a classic temple, the architect of these buildings developed a compact, four-square building type. 30

Celina, Ohio, the county seat of Mercer County (where St. Henry is located) historically was centered on one of these community squares. The large county courthouse sits in the center of the square creating four equal spaces on each corner (fig. 09.19). The periphery is lined with shops, offices, and other public institutions that help to define the boundary of the courthouse square. This courthouse square, along with other well-defined town squares within the region, such as those in the canal towns of Minster (fig. 09.20), New Bremen (fig. 09.21), and St. Marys, can help define design principles that can enhance St. Henry’s sense of place, while also building upon positive elements of town squares from their ancestors, both American and European.

“There is a continuing need for the creation of festal places on the ground of everyday dwellings, places where individuals come together and affirm themselves as members of the community, as they join in public reenactments of the essential celebrations of those central aspects of life that maintain and give meaning to existence. The highest function of architecture remains what it has always been; to invite such festivals.” 31 – Karsten Harries

30 Pg. 252, Zucker, Paul. Town and Square, From the Agora to the Village Green.
31 Pg. 365, Harries, Karsten. The Ethical Function of Architecture.
10_Typology Precedents

The following precedents utilize a Critical Regionalist design process that re-presents the role and functions of the town hall and public institutions, at a building level, an institutional level, and a community level. These precedents manipulate the telluric (site), the tectonic (the way it is made), and the tactile (what it is like to experience it), much like the articulated barn precedents introduced previously, in a way that encourages and reinterprets the roles and functions of a town hall in the present. The town hall and public institution typology precedents presented here have a similar size and scale, physically and programmatically, to the proposed St. Henry Town Hall. These projects also engage the public in ways that are sensitive to the particularities of place and ultimately strengthen this sense through contemporary architectural intervention, presencing how a community lives in its time, built upon its history, and striving for its particular future.
Town Hall in Saynatsalo, 1956
Saynatsalo, Finland
Alvar Aalto

10.01. View into the elevated Town Hall courtyard
10.02. Interior view of the Council Chambers.
10.03. Exterior view of Town Hall showing the elevated Council Chambers.
Brainbridge Island City Hall, 2000
Brainbridge Island, Washington
Miller Hull Partnership

10.04. View of the building’s main entrance.

10.05. Interior view of the Council Chambers.

10.06. Exterior view of the articulated barn and glass entry space of the town hall.
Newbern Town Hall, 2011
Newbern, Alabama
The Rural Studio
Giant’s Causeway Visitors’ Center, 2012
Antrim, Ireland
Heneghan and Peng Architects

10.10. View up the habitable roof that conceals the Center.

10.11. Detailed view of the facade inspired by the coastline.

10.12. View of the Visitor’s Center lobby showing the contrast between the concrete ceiling and skylight.
SCAD Art Museum, 2012
Savannah, Georgia
Sottile and Sottile Architects

10.14. The addition connects the new with the historic.

10.15. View of the channel glass tower that marks the institution in the civic skyline.

10.13. The tower acts as a lantern at night.
11_Site / Context

Situating the St. Henry Town Hall and Town Square within the deep relationships and meanings inherent in the region will ensure an outcome built from and for the community’s past, present, and future. The events, interactions, and principles that shape the essence of the region can be thought of hermeneutically as a process of tradition, that implies a happening or event phenomena, a continual unfolding of human endeavor that acts as a dynamic artifact, the gathering of a community that holds a common set of aspirations or goals for the future. The prior analysis of the five relationships that define the Midwestern Ohio Region (geography and place; history and time; culture and identity; material and presencing; and tectonics and engagement) position deep relationships and meanings in which a particular work of architecture can reveal and re-present these meanings and relationships to individuals of a community through poetic experience. The site of the St. Henry Town Hall will provide the foundation in which the work of architecture can hermeneutically engage with the region.

11.01. St. Henry Catholic Church built 1897.
The Site

The St. Henry Town Hall will be adjacent to the existing Town Square and the existing Granville Township Branch Library. The St. Henry Catholic Church, the St. Henry Catechetical Center, the St. Henry Elementary School, the St. Henry Bank, and Hogenkamp’s Funeral Home are also adjacent to the civic space of the Town Square. The existing Town Square serves as a parking lot for all the primary adjacent institutions. There is also a small veteran’s memorial and two historic markers relating a condensed account of the founding and development of the town and individuals who played a significant role in the St. Henry community. A playground that serves the elementary school also exists on the current Town Square site. The shared parking function of the square links the spiritual, educational, and community infrastructure that currently exists in the town. The St. Henry Town Hall will directly engage the adjacent library architecturally. This location will enhance the notion of “town square” and work to recenter the development of the town on this historic location, geographically, civically, and spiritually.

Through the development of the St. Henry Town Hall, this thesis will reconfigure the existing parking lot as an enhanced town square and provide quality public space for the community. The site is surrounded by a mixture of building heights from 1.5 story homes to 2 story businesses, to a 200 foot historic brick church. The varying scale of the surrounding buildings is one factor that the proposed Town Hall must address, namely how to negotiate the various building forms, including gable roof buildings, hip roof buildings, rectilinear commercial buildings, and a traditional church building. Another site characteristic is the concentration and intersection of various programmatic typologies of the community - residential, commercial, spiritual, and educational. The site is adjacent to all of these functions and through the negotiation and interaction of these typologies the St. Henry Town Hall will be able to reveal and re-present more complex meanings, traditions, and relationships among them and strengthen the importance within the community of this institution and its related work of architecture. The proposed Town Hall site stands at the intersection of numerous characteristics of the community from programmatic, spatial, formal, and social interactions.
St. Henry is located in Climate Region 3, known for cold winter winds, high summer temperatures with high humidity, and evenly dispersed precipitation throughout the year. Key climatic design priorities include: 1. Keep heat in and cold temperatures out in the winter, 2. Protect from the cold winter winds, and 3. Let the winter sun in. This region has significantly more heating degree days than cooling degree days, so my design must address the cold months and more specifically the cold winter winds. The design will open up to the adjacent town square socially and physically. This opening on the square and surrounding outdoor spaces will allow for the activities happening within the Town Hall to spill out, and invite activities taking place in the Town Square in. This adaptability will allow for various configurations of space to accommodate the proceedings, activities, and festivals that will take place throughout the building, throughout the square, and throughout the year, under a variety of weather conditions. This flexibility will also encourage the development of creative ways to engage the users, the visitors, and the weather during these events. At the same time, this adaptability and transparency will be a driving design consideration in how the envelope responds during hot summer and cold winter conditions.

11.05. Existing use of buildings surrounding the Site.

11.06. Corporation Limits of St. Henry, Ohio.
11.07. St. Henry Town Hall and Town Square Site Overview.
11.08. View of the existing St. Henry Town Square and the existing Library looking south.

11.09. View of the existing St. Henry Town Square and the existing Library looking northeast.

11.10. View of the existing St. Henry Town Square and the existing Library looking northwest.
Inherent Site Design Issues:

• Connection and relationship with existing library
• Negotiation of various typologies adjacent to the site
• Negotiation of various forms and materials of the adjacent buildings
• Negotiation of extreme variation in building heights between differing typologies
• Provide frontage to Main Street (to the north) and Town Square (to the east)
• Views into and out of the Town Square site (open to Main St., variable towards Walnut St.)
• Approach from visitors (Main St.) and approach from residents (Sycamore St., Columbus St., Walnut St.)
• Creation of a historic Town Square District through road, sidewalk, streetscape, and intersection improvements near the Town Square site and throughout the Original Plat of St. Henry established by Henry Roemer
• Connection and improvement to the existing Town Square
• Enclosure and intimacy within the Town Square that also allows for varying scale of interaction, activities, and festivals
• Creation of secondary public outdoor/indoor spaces for each significant programmatic element of the Town Hall (library, meeting hall, offices) as well as the primary tenants of the Town Square (church, elementary school, bank, etc.)
• Resolution of the requirements for the various institutions that utilize the existing parking lot (church, bank, funeral home, library, catechetical center, elementary school)
• Negotiation of the functions and use of the existing playground
• Negotiation and accommodation of the specific qualities of climatic elements (wind, daylight, temperature)
• Connection/response to mature trees and other positive existing site conditions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home and Garden Market</td>
<td>First Weekend in May</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farmer’s Market</td>
<td>Saturdays in May - October</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Gardens</td>
<td>May - October</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer Concert Series</td>
<td>June - August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arts and Craft Show</td>
<td>First Weekend in June</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>St. Henry Community Picnic</strong></td>
<td>First Weekend in July</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taste of St. Henry</td>
<td>Second Weekend in August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halloween Parade and Fall Festival</td>
<td>Sunday closest to October 31st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran’s Memorial Services</td>
<td>November 11th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas Market</td>
<td>Second Weekend in December</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christmas Tree Lighting</td>
<td>Last Weekend in November</td>
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<td>Santa House</td>
<td>December 1 - 24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Live Nativity</td>
<td>Third Week in December</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter Ice Skating Rink</td>
<td>January - early March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>St. Patrick’s Day Parade and Festival</strong></td>
<td>Sunday closest to March 17th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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12_Space / Experience

The St. Henry Town Hall will concentrate and interconnect the existing organizations and institutions currently active in the community. The spatial organization of the program will be determined by how particular programmed spaces engage with the individuals who engage and use the building. These spaces will revolve around the relation of public and private as well as the relation between service spaces and outreach spaces, across three major programmatic elements, the Library (Knowledge/Past), Meeting Hall (Engagement/Present), and the Village Offices (Projection/Future). These three relationships carry deep meanings and significant traditions, and each will be organized around an inward focus that will create a sense of containment and differentiation yet also reach out to the larger public space of the Town Square as well as Main Street. This outreaching will work to unify the various programmatic elements into a cohesive intervention.
The Program

Knowledge/Past - Library
Community Library - 4400 s.f.
• Stacks
  - Adults, Teens, Children
• Reading/Study Space
  - Quiet Reading Room
  - Work Space
• Circulation Service Space
• Technology Lab
Shared Spaces - 1200 s.f.
• Entry/Reception Space - 200 s.f.
• Reading/Reflection/Research Space - 500 s.f.
• Service Spaces - 500 s.f.
  - Library Archive, General Storage, Mechanical Space, Restrooms
Archive / Historian - 2200 s.f.
• Stacks - 1000 s.f.
  - Local History
  - Genealogy
• Research Writing Room - 500 s.f.
• Archive Desk - 200 s.f.
• Technology Lab - 500 s.f.

Engagement/Present - Meeting Hall
Exhibition Gallery - 2000 s.f.
• Flexible Gallery Space - 1500 s.f.
• Back of House/Staging - 500 s.f.
Shared Spaces - 2000 s.f.
• Entry/Reception Space - 200 s.f.
• Community Room - 500 s.f.
• Ratskeller - 1000 s.f.
  - Full Service Bar, Microbrewery
• General Storage Space - 500 s.f.
  - Gallery Equipment, Chairs/Tables
• Mechanical Space - 500 s.f.
• Public Restrooms: Indoor/Outdoor
Meeting Hall - 3500 s.f.
• Flexible Council Hall - 2000 s.f.
  - Village Council Meetings
  - Public Debates/Lectures
• Back of House/Staging - 500 s.f.
• Conference Space - 1000 s.f.
Community Plaza
• Community Gathering Spaces
• Intimate Gathering Spaces
• Intimate to Building
• Connect to Town Square
• Historic Monument
• Public Water Feature
Community Event Spaces
• Community Picnic
• Church Festivals
• St. Patrick’s Day Parade

Projection/Future - Offices
Technology Outreach Center - 1000 s.f.
• Open Computer Work Stations - 800 s.f.
• Open Office - 200 s.f.
Community Organization Offices - 1000 s.f.
• 6 Organization Offices - 600 s.f.
• Open Office Space - 400 s.f.
Township Administration Offices - 500 s.f.
• 2 Township Offices - 200 s.f.
• Open Office Space - 300 s.f.
Village Council Offices - 500 s.f.
• 2 Council Offices - 200 s.f.
• Open Office Space - 300 s.f.
Village Administration Offices - 1000 s.f.
• 6 Township Offices - 600 s.f.
• Open Office Space - 400 s.f.
Shared Spaces - 1000 s.f.
• Entry/Reception Space - 200 s.f.
• Small Conference Space - 200 s.f.
• Collaboration Space - 400 s.f.
• Copy/Mail Room
• Service Spaces - 200 s.f.
  - Storage Space, Mechanical Space, Restrooms

Process of Tradition - Town Square
Observation Tower
Parking
• Flexible Parking Capacities
The Program

Each of the programmatic relationships within the St. Henry Town Hall will possess its own quality of intent and character yet work to connect to other programmatic activities, leaders, and community members.

Library - Knowledge/Past

Library - The library aspect of the program is currently housed in an existing building on the northern portion of the site. This building is an example of the institutional brick architecture typical of contemporary building projects in the Midwestern Ohio Region. While the “bones” of this building are good, a reworking of the current building will provide contrast that will begin to presence the architecture of the new Town Hall as a whole. This space will be cozy, quiet, and well lit, spatial qualities at the center of library functions - reading, writing, and researching. This space will promote an individual approach to these types of activities.

Community Archive - The community archive will focus on the collecting, organizing, and preserving the history and heritage of the St. Henry community as well as the surrounding Midwestern Ohio Region. It will also promote further research and writing on the history and evolution of economic (local businesses), cultural (festivals and gatherings), and built environment (town developments) relationships to improve the existing histories, documents, and artifacts within this archive. This space will possess characteristics similar to those of the library, but it will also portray a feeling of research, development, and expansion. The archive will also open out onto a reading garden, a semi-private, outdoor space where readers can interact with the Town Square. Connections to the surrounding community will also be important to illustrate the importance of the community archive to the ongoing life of the town.
Meeting Hall - Engagement/Present

**Museum/Gallery** - The museum space will be a large, airy, and well-lit space. A key element of the atmosphere here is that it must be flexible and accommodating to various types of collections, displays, and exhibits. The materials of the space will be backgrounded while the artwork or historical artifacts displayed will become foregrounded. Lighting will play an important role in communicating and understanding the concepts presented in the various exhibits. This gallery will be the community gallery, a more formal and finished exhibition space, where numerous exhibitions can take place, from historic artifacts, to sports memorabilia, to local artwork. The museum/gallery will also face out onto and interact with a private sculpture garden, providing an outdoor venue in which exhibitions can take place and relate to the community.

**Ratskeller** - The ratskeller will provide an intimate and hospitable atmosphere to promote visitors to the Town Hall to meet, linger, and discuss the topics and issues of the day to day happenings. Informal collections and exhibitions can be displayed in this space. The production and consumption of beer will be another primary focus here. The ratskellar will provide a warm, comfortable, and informal space in which to meet, to gather, and to discuss. This space will open out directly onto the Town Square and provide an outdoor space, with tables, chairs, and umbrellas, to sit and relax while enjoying a beer and the weather, becoming a part of the activities that are taking place in and around the Square.

**Meeting Hall** - The meeting hall portion of the program acts as the formal venue for the Community Organizations, Village Council, and Township Council. The configuration of space will be acoustically tuned for lectures and dialogue, and wired for digital presentations. Flexibility will be required for various meeting sizes and types required by the organizations and institutions. The meeting hall open visually and spatially onto two outdoor spaces, one semi-private space to the west, and the public Town Square to the east. The flexibility and openness of this space will allow the meeting hall activities to interact outwardly into these spaces and the community activities to interact inwardly with the formal meeting proceedings. The meeting hall’s architecture will provide the
clearest and most vivid focus for the community’s built identity that will strengthen the Midwestern Ohio Region’s sense of place, mediating the past with the future.

**Observation Tower** - The observation tower will provide a vertical element and focus the composition and act as an identification element within the community. This element will also give visitors an elevated position from which to appreciate St. Henry and the surrounding agricultural landscape.

**Village Offices - Projection/Future**

**Administration Offices** - Along with providing the necessary space required to complete the day-to-day task of each particular institution, the office spaces of the program will work to encourage collaboration and innovation within each department as well as across the various forms of government and community leadership and participation. Openness and connectivity will drive the architectural outcomes of this particular space. Contemporary technology and equipment will provide the necessary tools for these institutions to improve the ways in which they work. Flexibility and adaptability will also be important, since many of the individuals who participate in these institutions are elected for particular terms over a certain period of time, and are subject to change often.

**Business/Technology Center** - The technology center will act as a community outreach component that connects businesses with emerging technologies such as website design, graphic components, and presentation techniques. This space will also encourage development, outreach, and interaction among the functions and proceedings of the community organizations and institutions that take place in and around the Town Square, and with the citizens. It will provide a platform for the futuring of tradition.
St. Henry Town Hall and Town Square design at mid-review.
13.02. Diagrams illustrating the design considerations for the form and site responses of the Town Hall.

- **existing library form**
- **extrude modified gable addition**
- **layout three bay grid based on gable**
- **layout three grids for three main programmatic spaces**

- **extrude gable form along three programmatic grids**
- **cut reveals utilizing sight lines from church axis and views**

- **push and pull to accommodate specific programmed spaces**
- **pull form to accentuate the meeting hall space**

- **extrude observation tower to create vertical counterpoint**
- **schematic town hall form**
13.03. Floor Plans of the proposed St. Henry Town Hall at mid-review.

13.04. North Elevation, the Main Street Elevation.

13.05. Interior view of the Meeting Hall opening onto square.

13.06. View of the St. Henry Town Hall from the formal approach to the St. Henry Catholic Church.

13.07. View into the Town Square from Main Street.

13.08. View of the Town Hall from the elementary school.
Exploded axonometric of the proposed St. Henry Town Hall.
13.10. Sketch of the proposed Town Square.
13.11. Proposed St. Henry Town Hall and Town Square in the surrounding site context.
14_Bibliography


