

Growth and Stability:
Cultivating Spirituality in a Working Landscape

A non-degree-required thesis submitted to the
Master of Landscape Architecture Program
Department of Landscape Architecture

by

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Abstract

The Growth and Stability thesis project is the beginning of a comprehensive growth plan for Hiranyagarbha Yuga Ashram (HYA), of which I am a part. The project is located on 116 acres in Callaway, VA in SW VA and is made up of a group of devoted spiritual aspirants ranging in age and background. At its core, HYA is group of individuals seeking healing on all levels of their being and finding ways to be of true service to themselves, others, and the earth.

This project explores the intricacies of spirituality and landscape. Our world is broken and breaking, its people are headed the same way. I argue that this dysfunction is in direct causation with our growing distance between what we identify with and the true beings that we are. We have allowed ourselves to be disconnected from the wholeness that connects all things. In large part this is a spiritual ailment, one that must be addressed through slowness, and reconnection with our physical earth. There are many routes to addressing this issue, my project does this through re-embedding intentionality and selflessness into our relationship with the landscape.



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Table of Contents

1...	Title Page
2...	Copyright
3...	Abstract
4...	Acknowledgments
5...	Introduction
6...	Site Analysis
9...	HYA Growth Plan
10...	Master Plan
11...	Entrance Sequence
14...	The Great Hall
16...	Family Residence
19...	Silvopasture

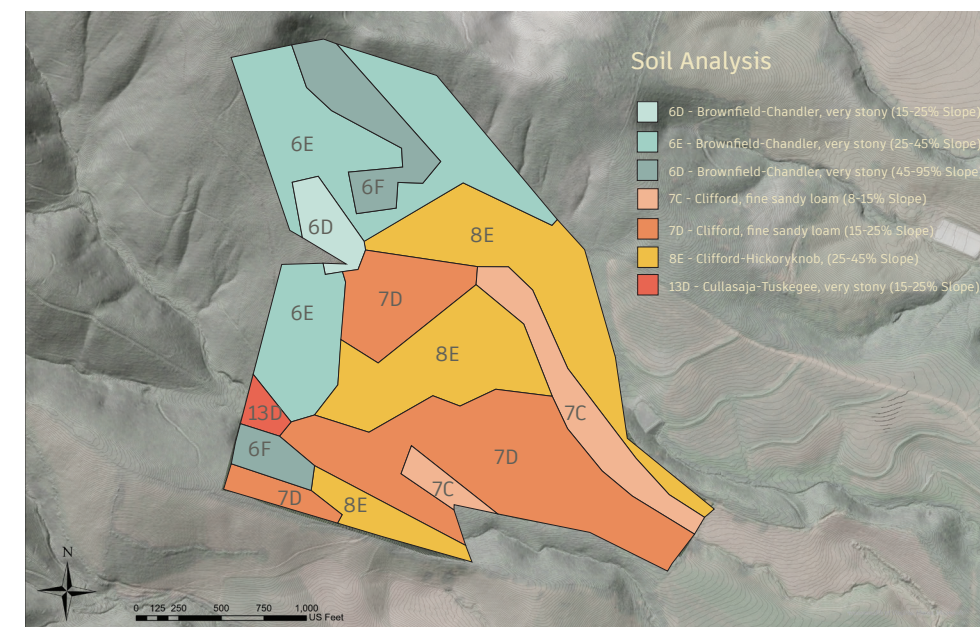
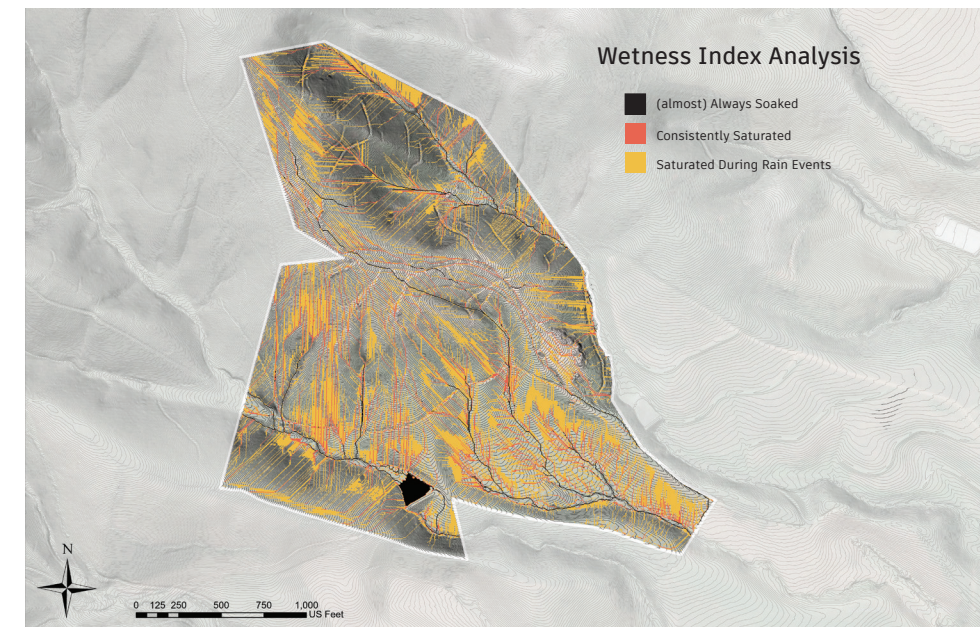
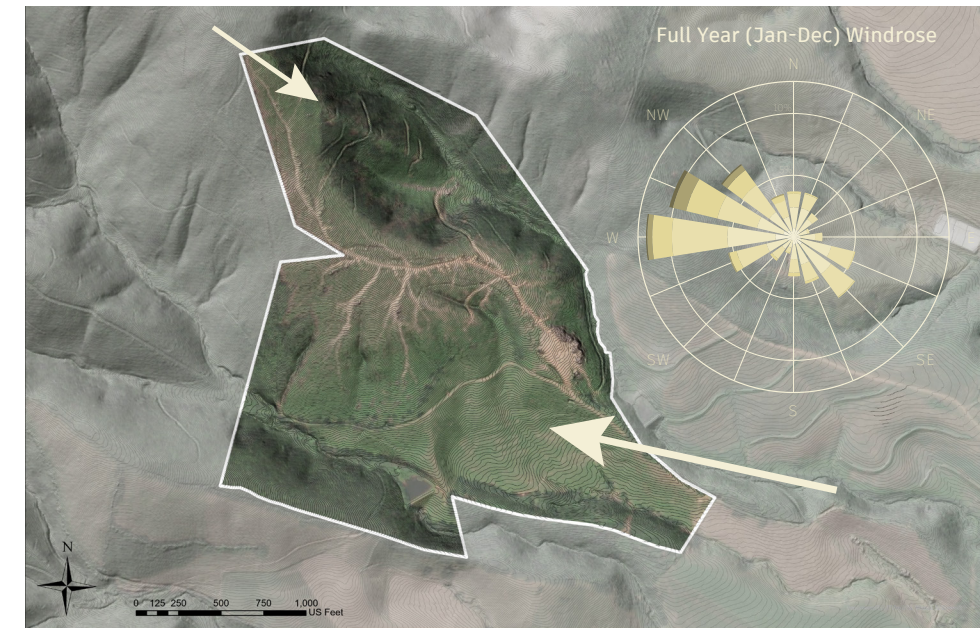
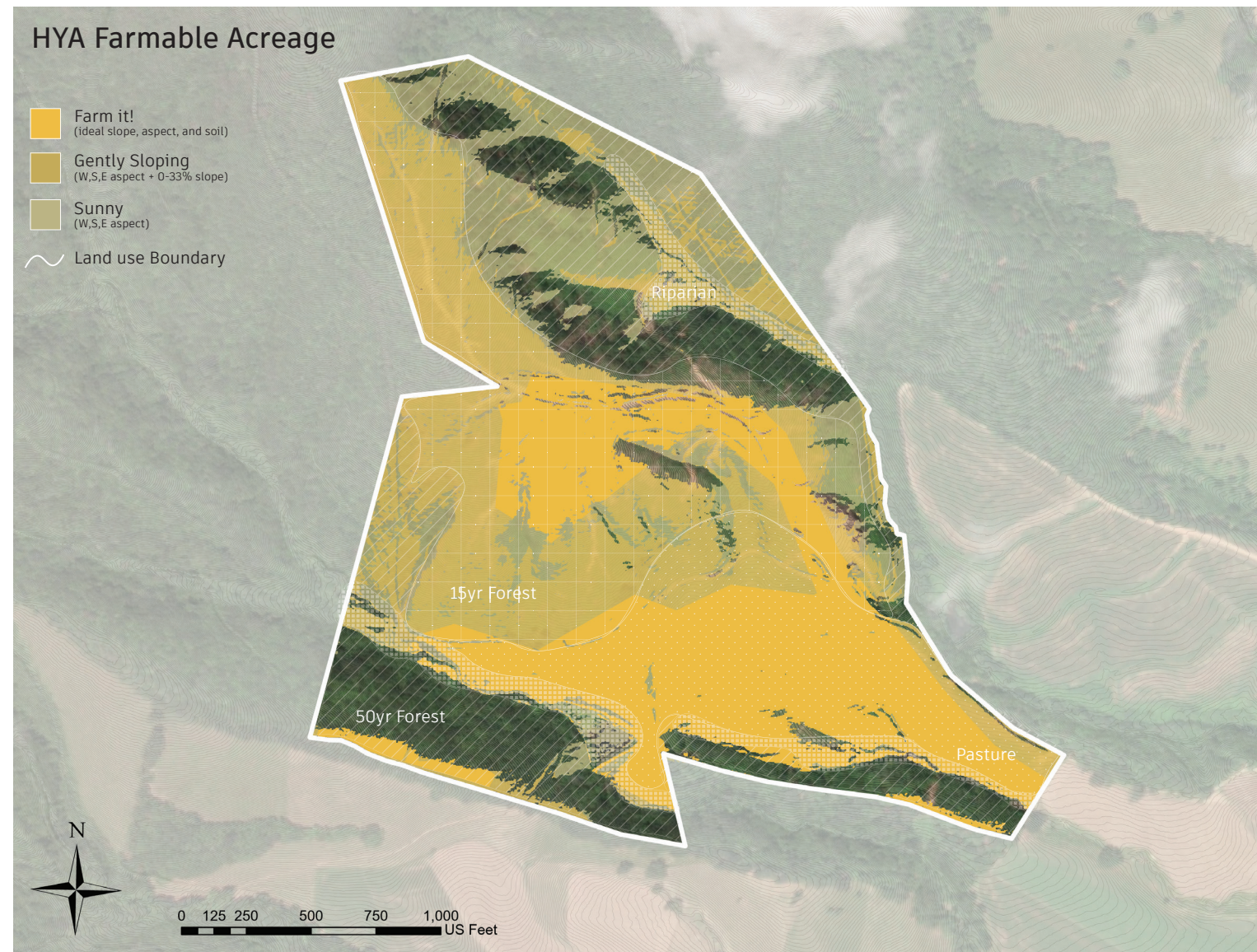




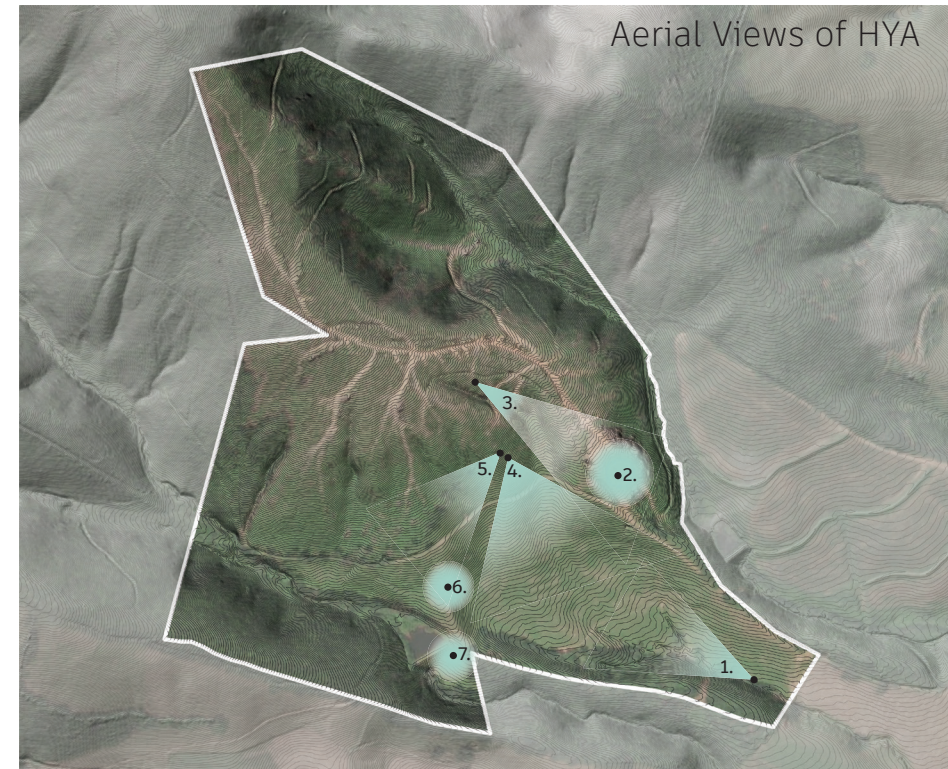
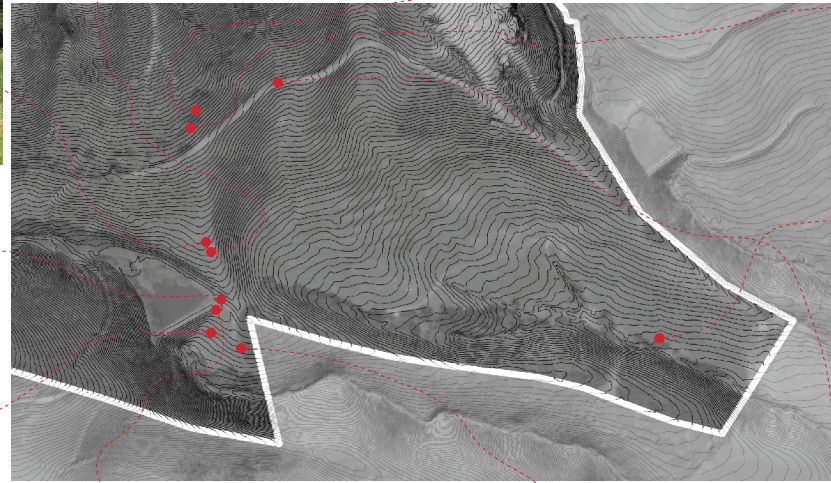
FACES OF THE HYA



HYA itself is a 501c3 governed by a board of directors, and composed of about 30 people both on the ground and dispersed. HYA has a long term goal of becoming self-sustaining and independent of fossil fuels for a total of 200-250 people year round. This means growing the majority of our own food, producing our own energy, and capturing and dispersing our own water. These functional goals are coupled with the spiritual goals of providing space and opportunities for anyone to come and learn about how to choose love and reconnect with the true being that they are.



Life at HYA



4. Silvopasture facing south east. Entrance in upper left.



5. View west of first two house sites and clear cut acreage to North



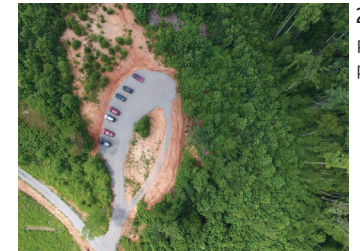
6. Access Road, cabin, shower, western edge of silvopasture



7. Main living area. Kitchen garden, pond, 3 small cabins.



1. Silvopasture view West near entrance



2. Parking lot. No cars past this point



3. View east above logging road. (50 acres clear cut in 2010)

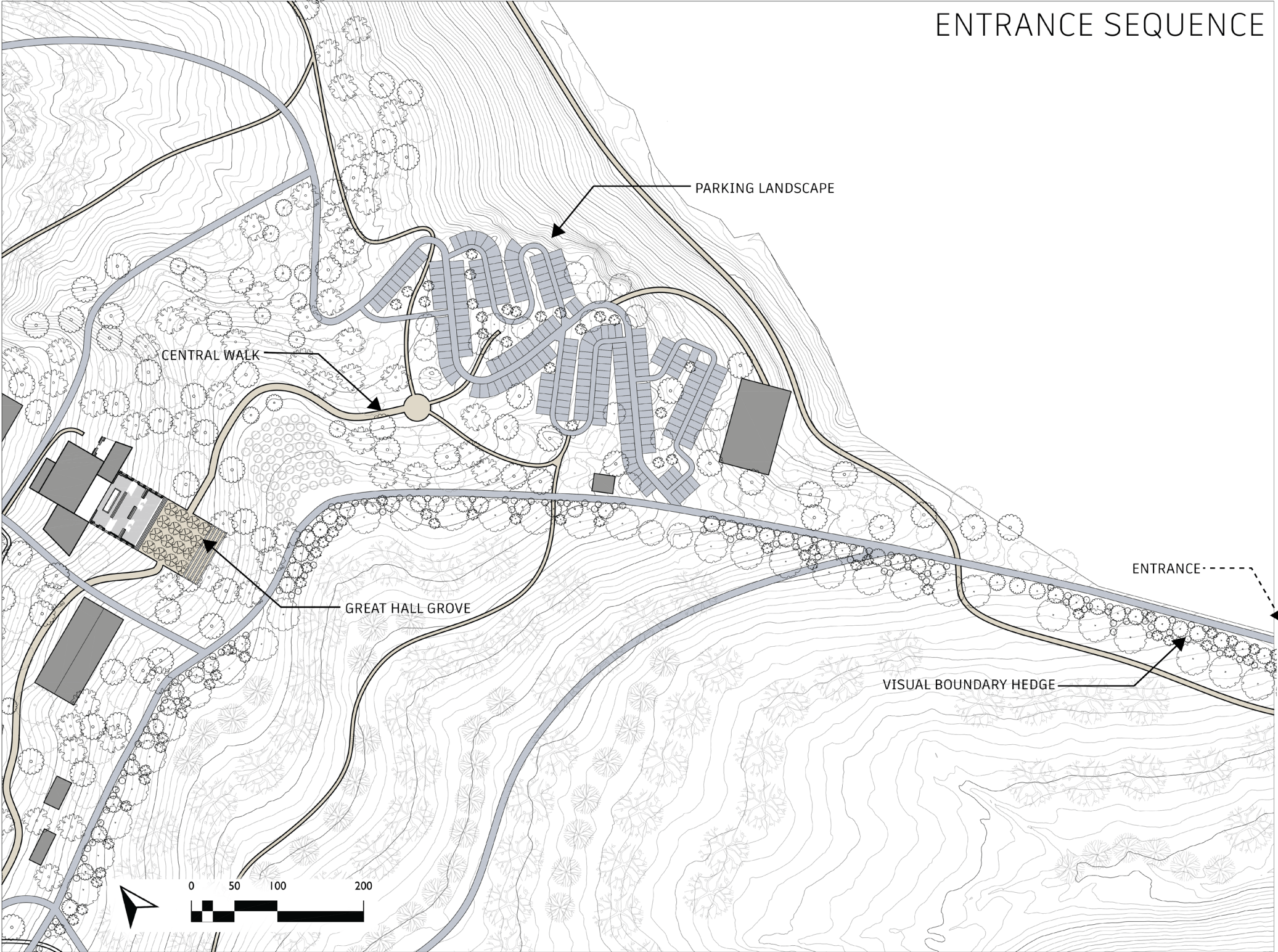
HYA 5-Stage Plan



With these dual purposes in mind, the growth plan for the community seeks to combine these goals at every turn. At a large scale, the layout of the 116 acre property seeks to provide space to a wide range of program from individual family housing, to communal dorm living, to an addiction recovery center with short term housing, to a school, to a silvopasture, to a vegetable farm. All of these are integrated and working together to create a cohesive goal. For example, notice how food production is not relegated to one part of the site but is integrated across the landscape at different scales.

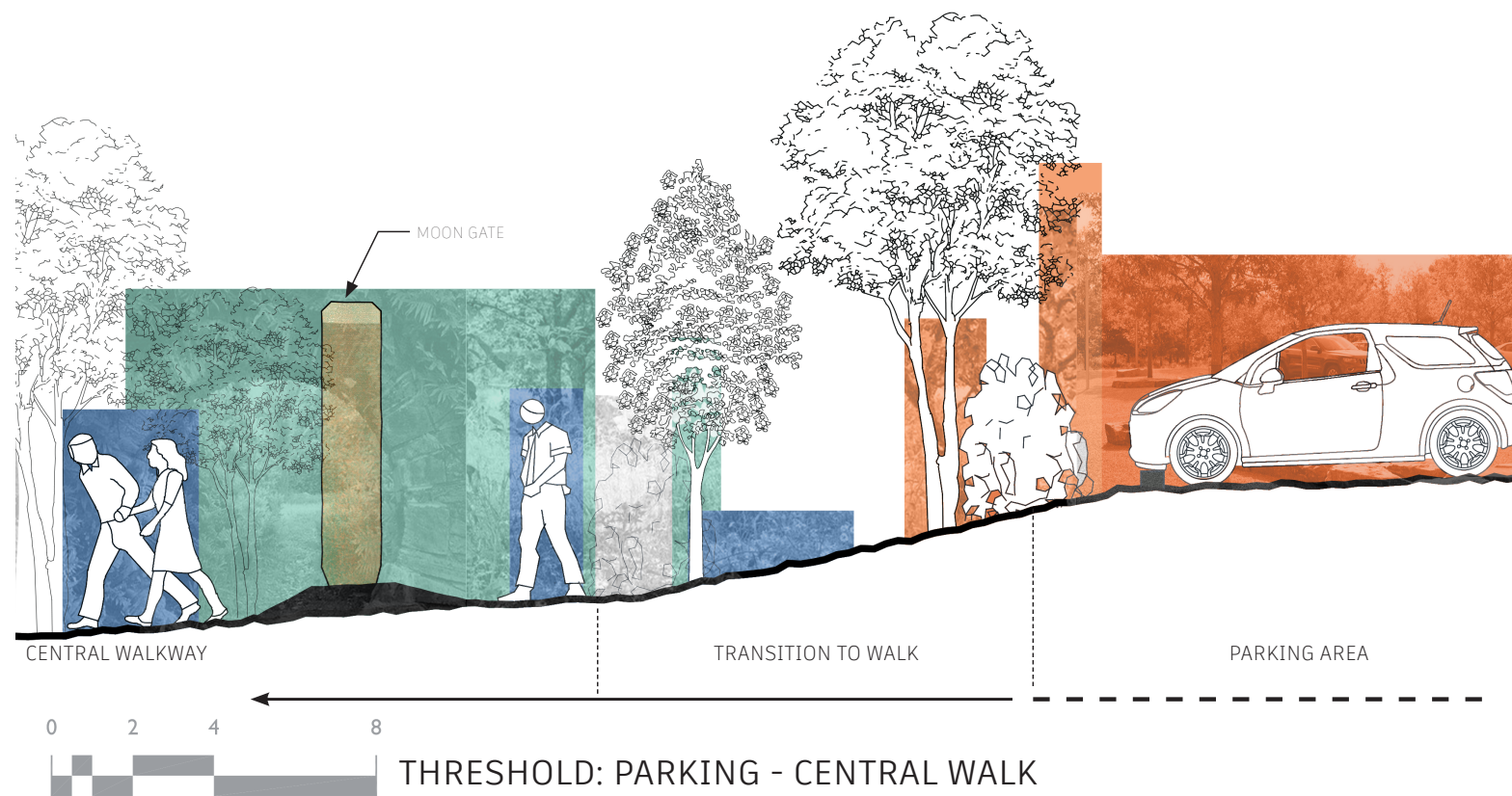
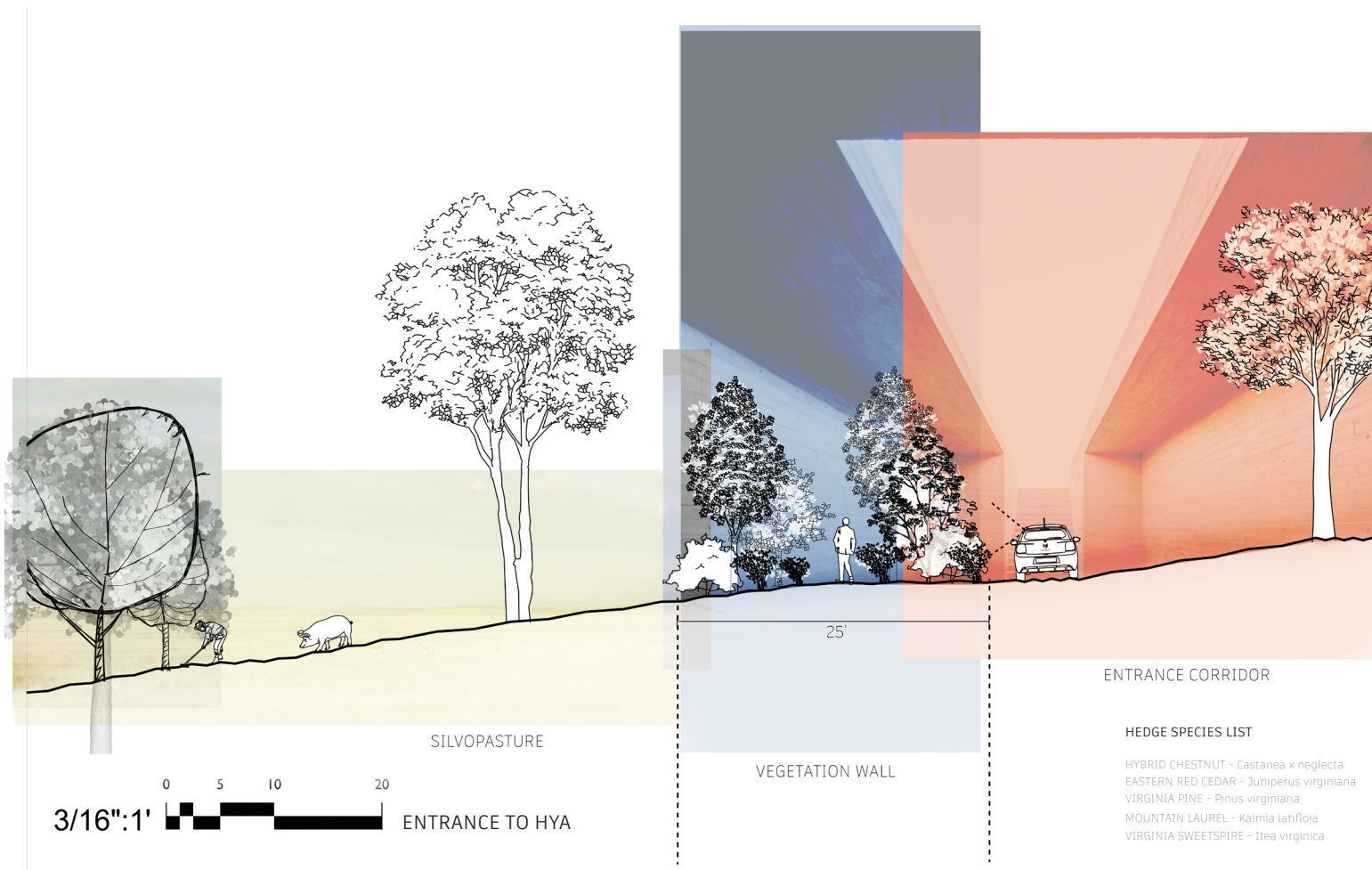


ENTRANCE SEQUENCE



The entrance sequence is critical to embodying the values of the community as it is the first foray onto the property. The primary value that it embodies is letting go of the past and the future and dwelling in the eternal Now. From the entrance gate, running along the road to the parking area, it is an elongated transition period to leave the past in the past and prepare oneself to be in a new space, in the now. From the road, the rest of the property is hidden from view by a hill to the north and a densely planted hedgerow to the south.

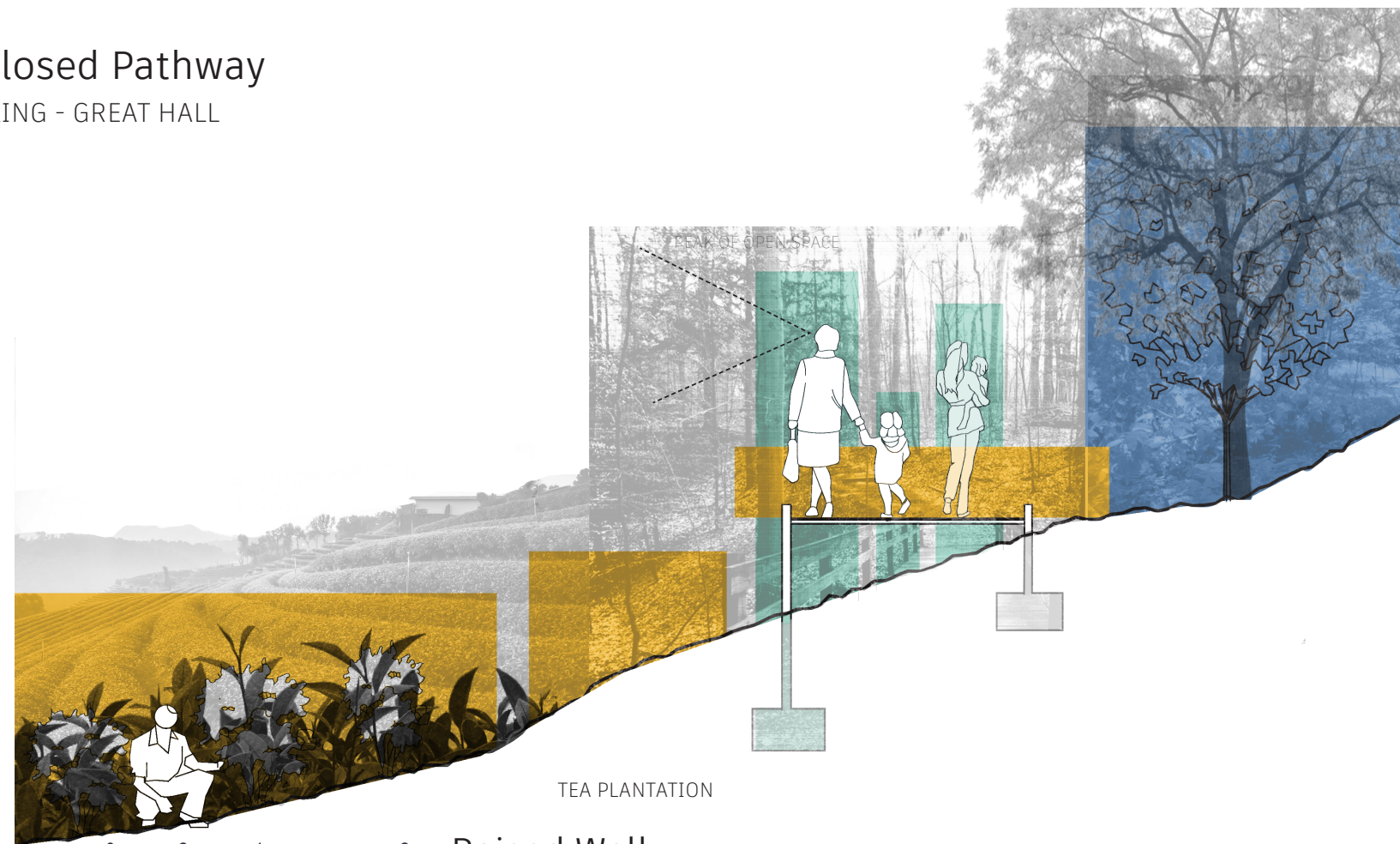
The purpose of this is to provide a period of transition while limiting the sound and smell of vehicle traffic for the rest of the community. It is important that cars and fossil fuels are not privileged at HYA, so the parking area is intentionally further away from the majority of living areas on the rest of the grounds.



THRESHOLD: MOON GATE



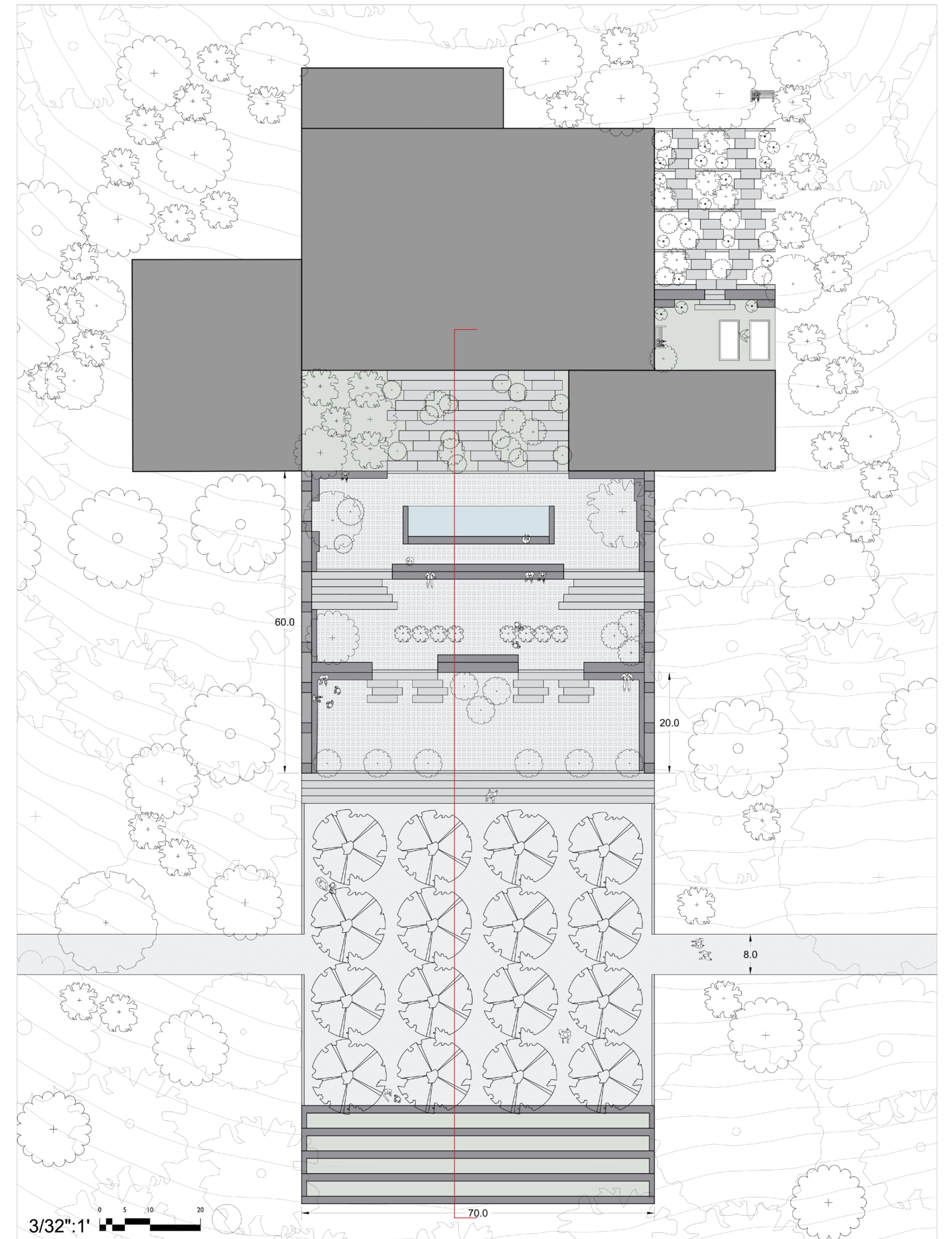
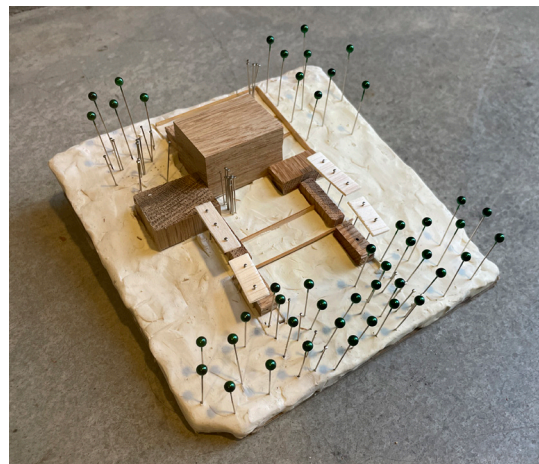
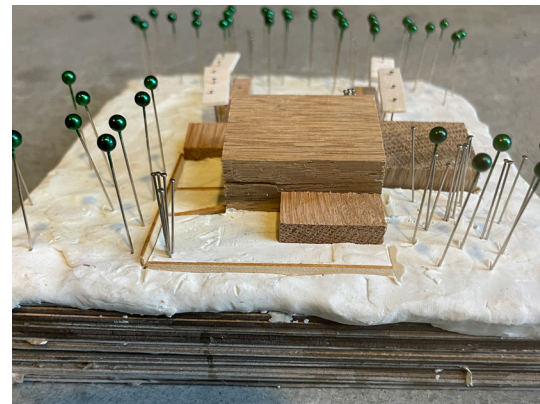
Enclosed Pathway
PARKING - GREAT HALL



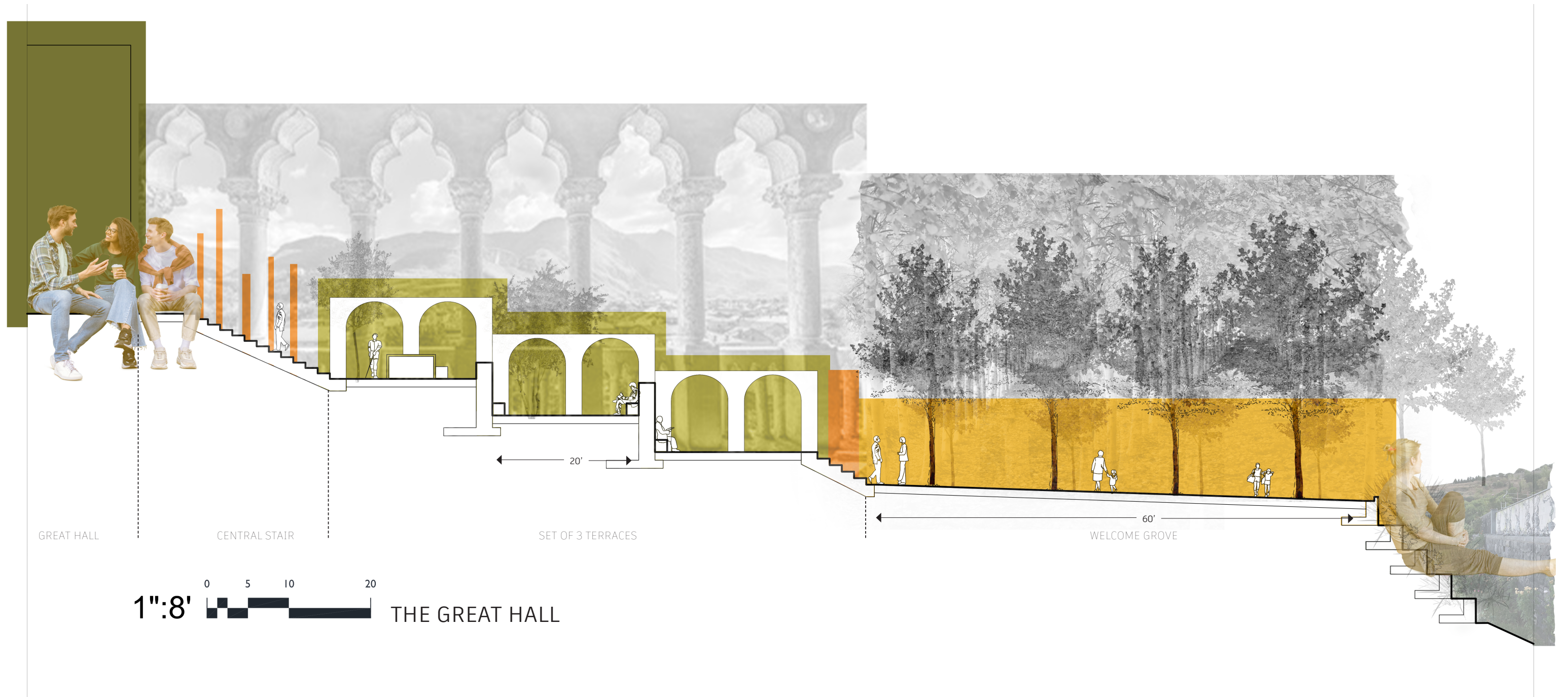
Raised Walk
PARKING - GREAT HALL



THE BIRCH GROVE - LOOKING OUT



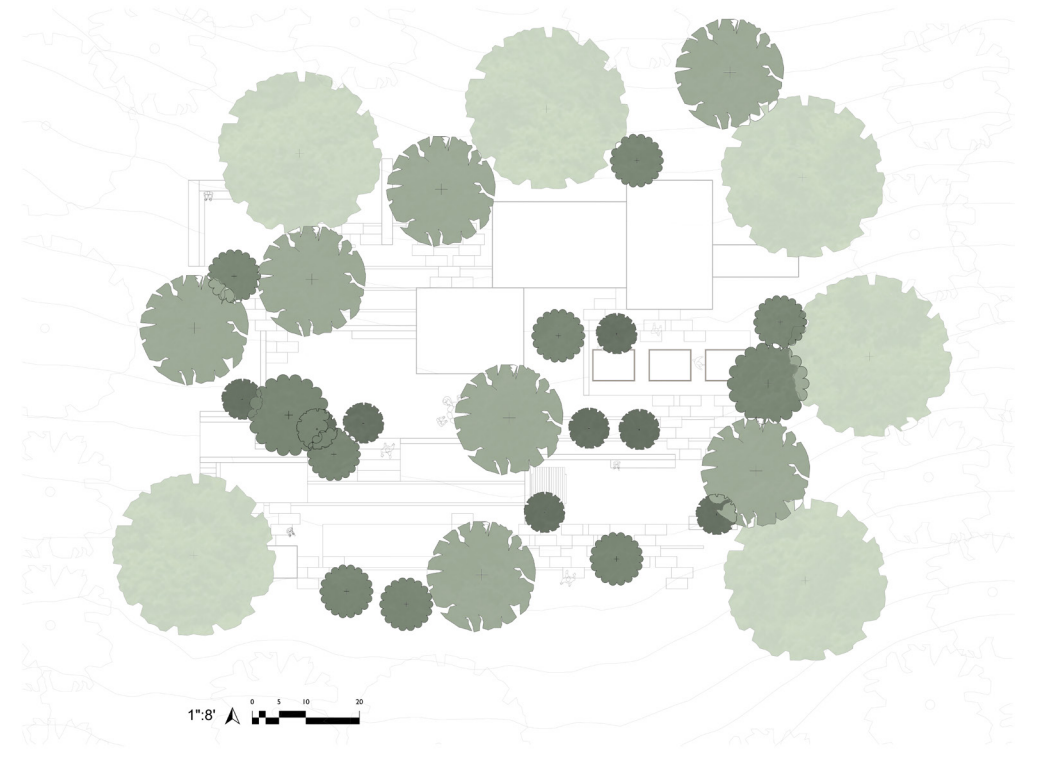
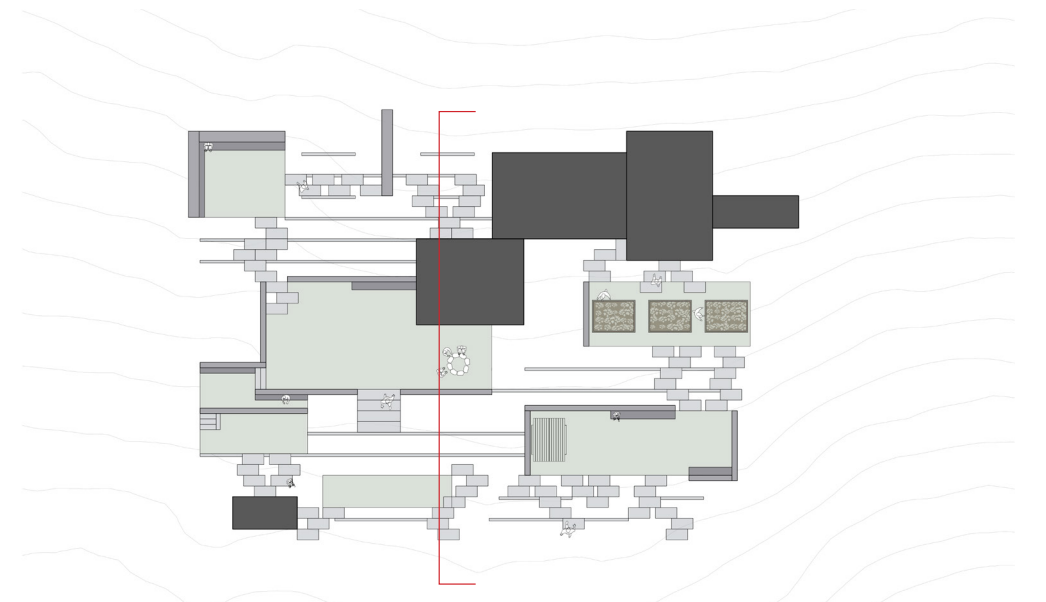
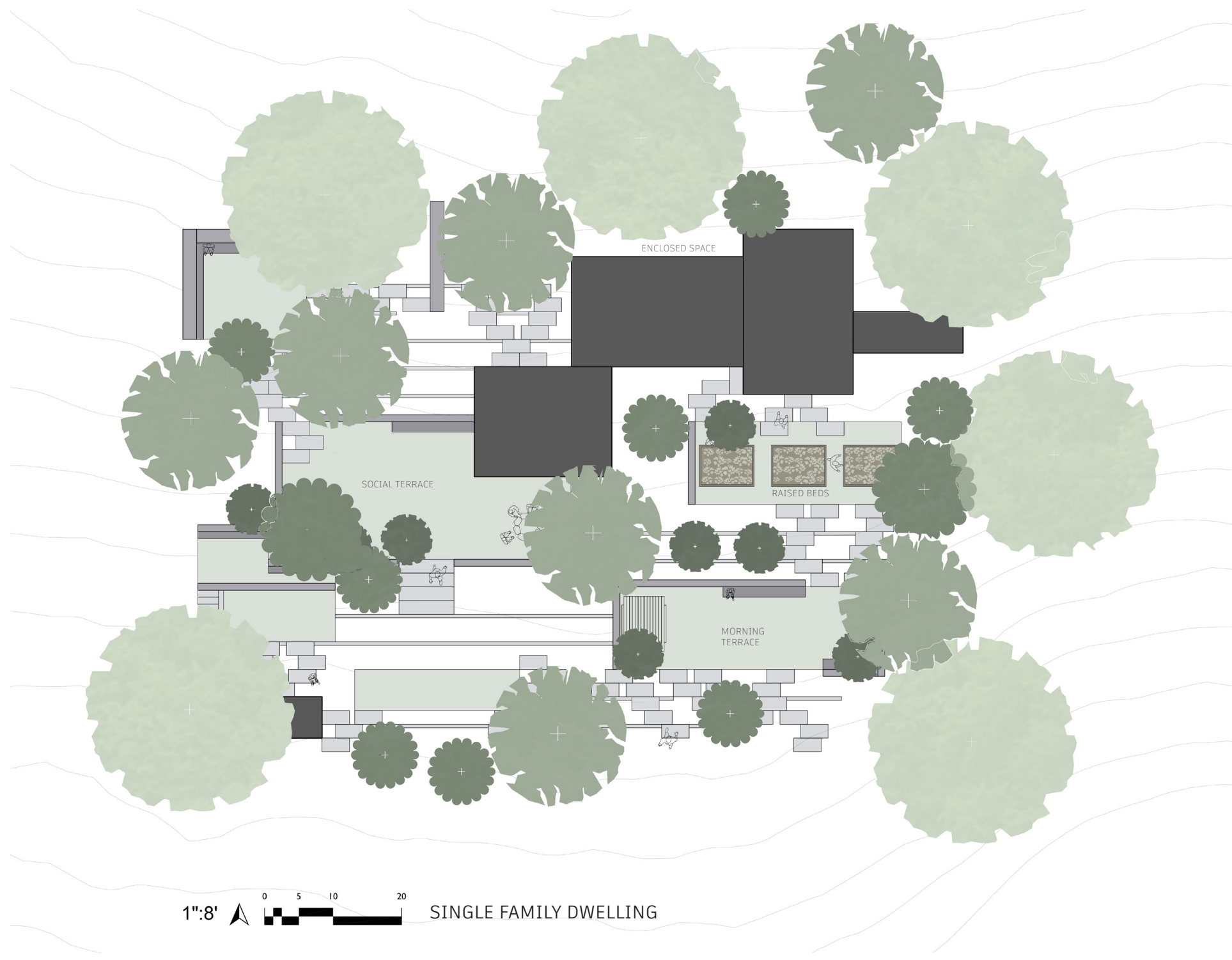
THE GREAT HALL

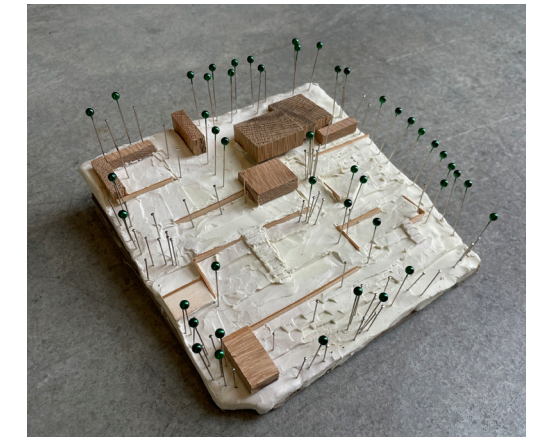


The great hall is also structured to embody the core values of the community. Specifically, the great hall embodies the principles of unity and wholeness in community. It is the primary opportunity for all the residents of the space to come together to eat, learn, share, and radiate unconditional love to one another. As is

the social structure of the space, there are people that are staying for as short as a couple weeks to people that are living there full time, so the community hall is the space for everyone to come together in one space. It is the location of town hall meetings, lectures and spiritual teachings, as well as larger scale collective meditation.

FAMILY RESIDENTIAL



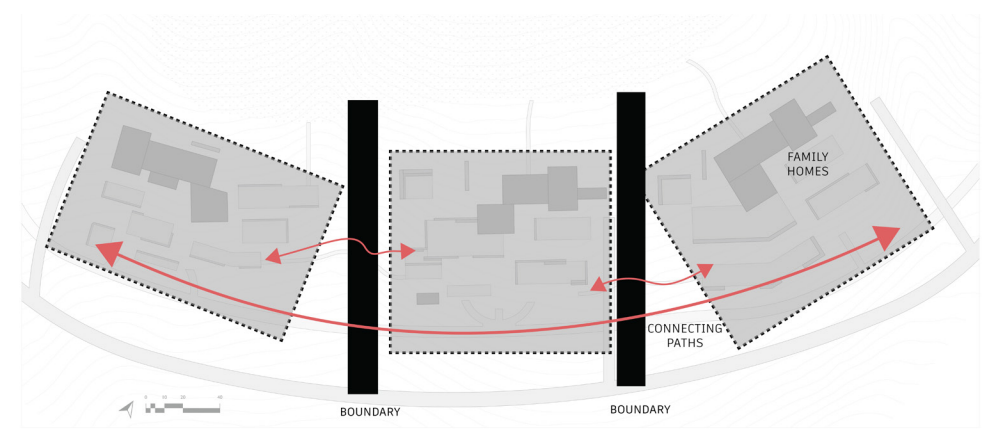
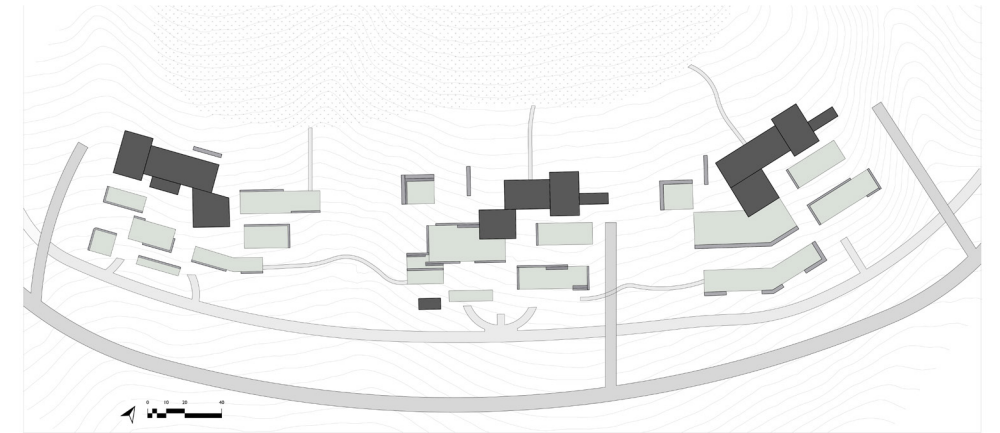
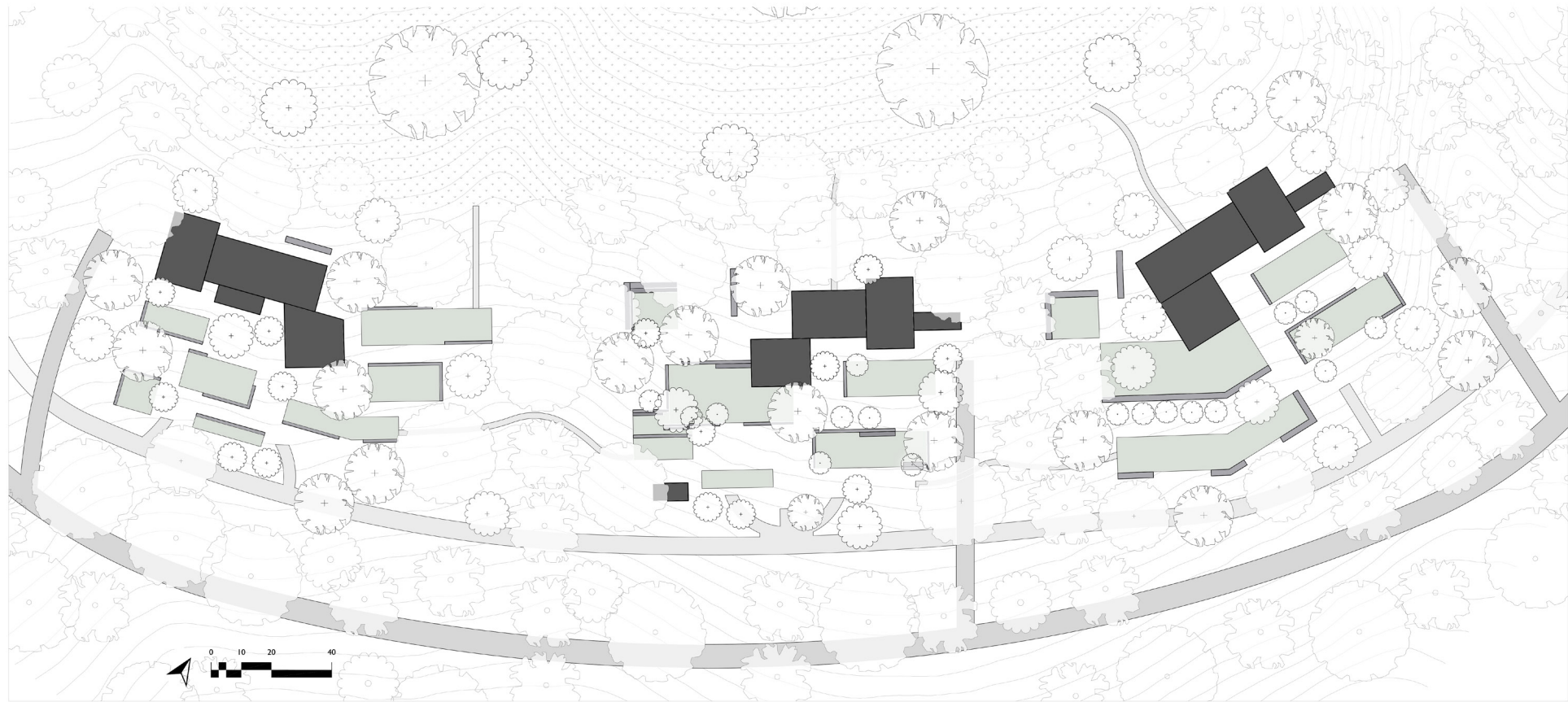


SKETCH MODEL PHOTOS

Individual family residences will be grouped in pods of 2-4 with a shared acre for each set of 2 pods. Each individual family residence embodies the values of personal reflection and growth, of creating proper boundaries for oneself, of being a unique and beautiful being part of a larger community, of integrating the sacred into the everyday. The family residence, in many ways,

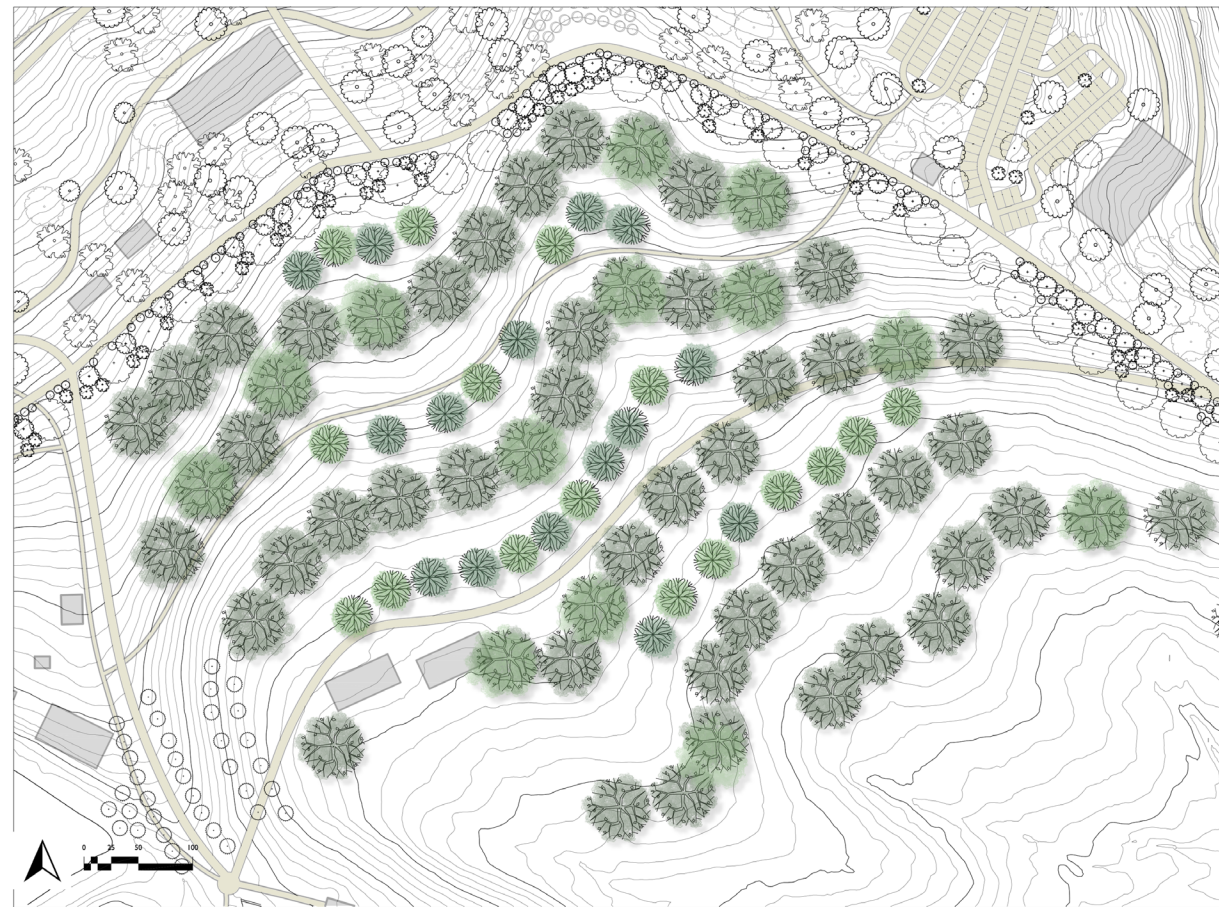
is the backbone of the community as a whole as it provides an opportunity to practice and integrate what they learn from life and from HYA into their daily life. A family residence is part of an opportunity to grow their own food and create personal moments of respite and meditation.

The rectilinear nature of this residence is meant to privilege a notion of simplicity and order while still giving plenty of space to the natural growth of the landscape. Being on a sloped landscape, the steppers, mini terraces, and terraces act as gentle way of navigating the hillside while providing ample space for living comfortably in the landscape.

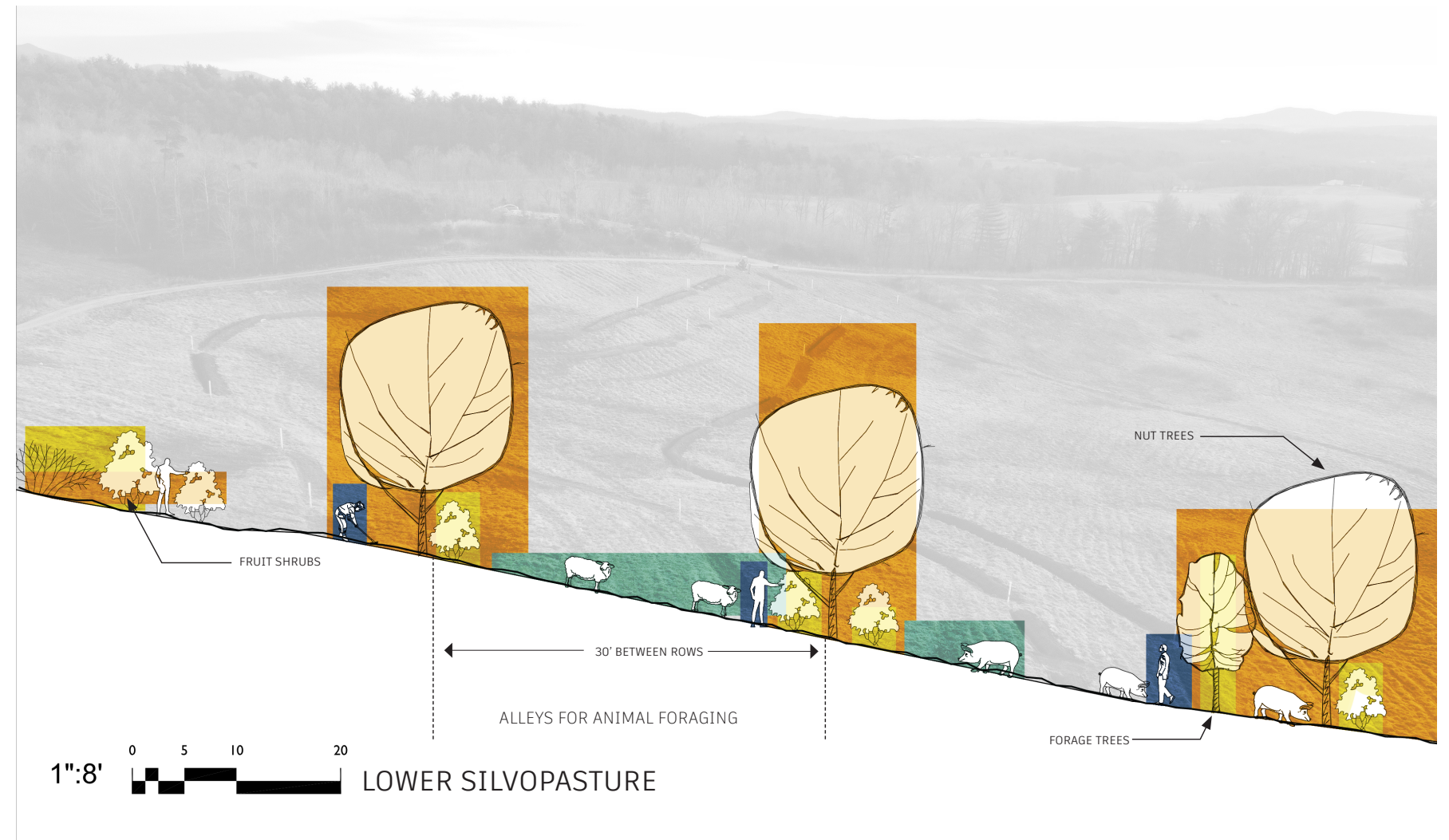


PRIVACY + CONNECTION

SILVOPASTURE



LOWER SILVOPASTURE



The silvopasture, the primary food production system on the property. The silvopasture embodies the values of stewardship and personal responsibility. Being a primary driver towards the goals of self-sustainability, the silvopasture represents HYA choosing to be part of a global solution towards healthy food systems, ecologically healthy food systems, local organic

food, and minimal external inputs. HYA is refusing to put the ball in other's courts and is taking responsibility for being part of a solution to be of service to all beings.

The HYA silvopasture focuses on tree crops and grazing opportunities for a range of healthy animals. The trees in the silvopasture are spaced

in such a way to allow goats, pigs, llamas, chickens, and cows to forage and graze in the understory. The fruit and nut crops (a mix of chestnut, bitternut, hickory, apple, pear, plum and many more) are grown primarily for human consumption, while they are interplanted with foraging trees for the animals such as honey and black locust, willow, and false indigo.



Castanea mollissima
CHINESE CHESTNUT



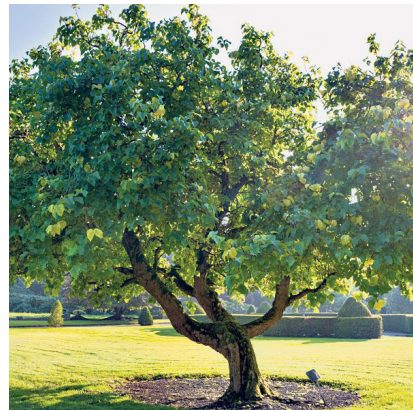
Carya illinoensis
NORTHERN PECAN



Salix spp.
WILLOW (VARIOUS)



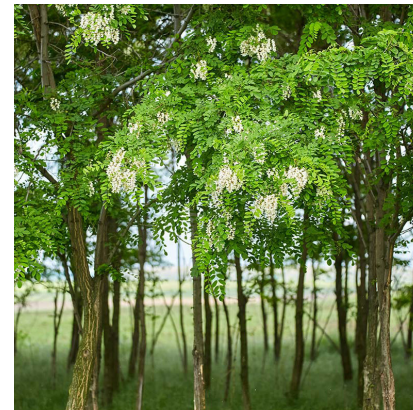
Corylus americana
AMERICAN HAZELNUT



Morus nigra
BLACK MULBERRY



Diospyros virginiana
AMERICAN PERSIMMON



Robinia pseudoacacia
BLACK LOCUST



Sambucus nigra
ELDERBERRY

SILVOPASTURE PLANT PALETTE



Silvopasture looking west



New berms and basins with cover crop



Air prune raised beds with hazelnut seeds



Finishing last tree planting for the day



Tree planting with excavator



Digging up trees from HYA nursery



Digging berms and basins with excavator



Community and friends help plant willow stakes



The berms in action! Holding water