

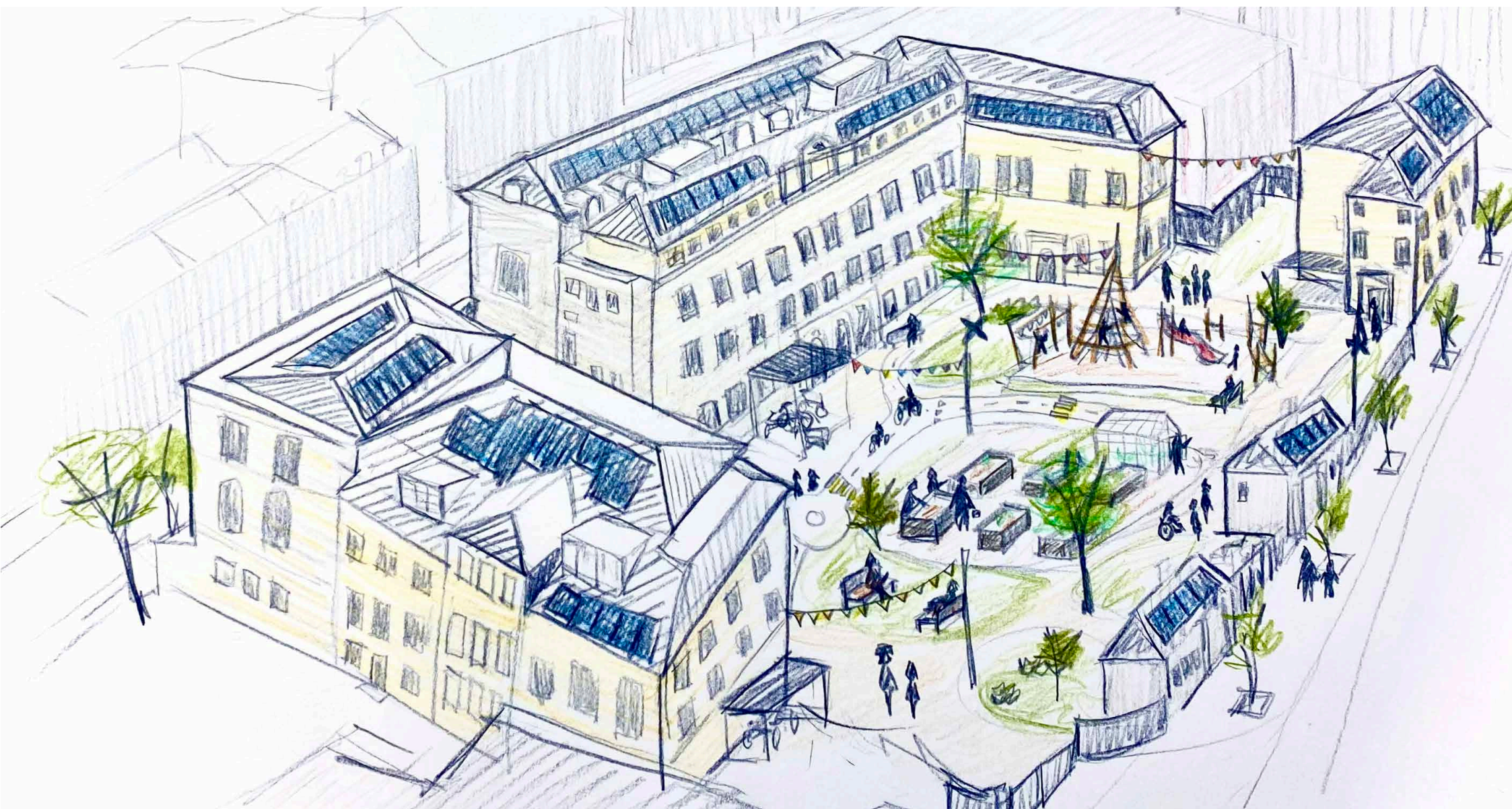
The Garten.

A SUSTAINABLE CO-LIVING COMMUNITY BY LESLIE A BECK

With a trademark Teutonic «t», **The Garten** stands for transforming together as individuals and as a society. It is a celebration of the transformative power of inclusive and sustainable design, embodying the vision of a future where everyone has access to a supportive and nurturing environment.

Confronted with today's pressing challenges, both local and global, I have come to understand that with societal privilege comes **responsibility**: The responsibility not to look away when faced with hatred and violence, discrimination and isolation, inequality and environmental destruction.

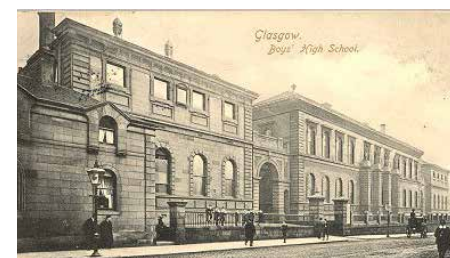
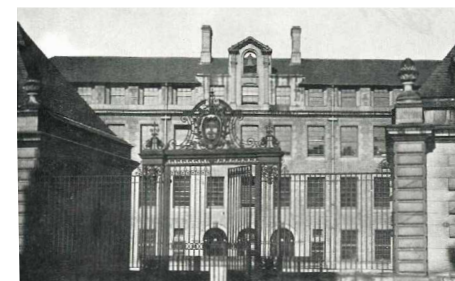
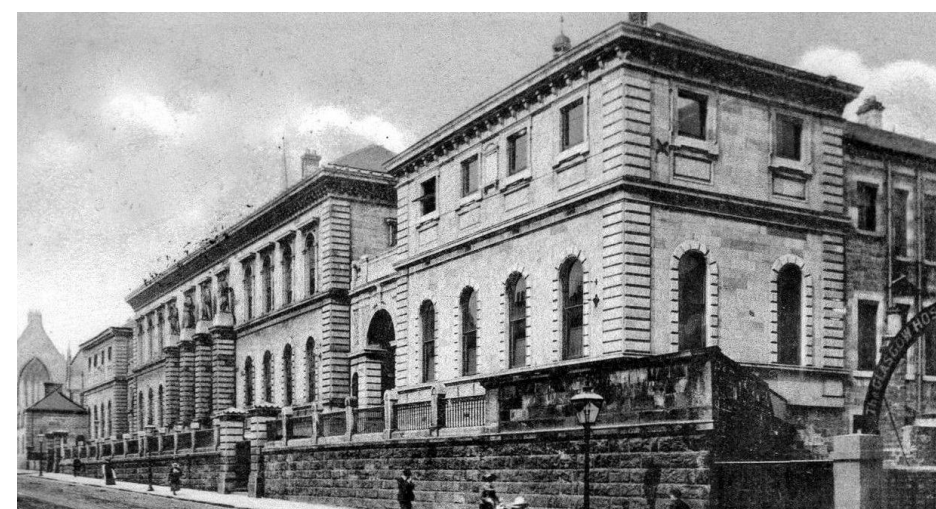
Born from the heart, **The Garten** is a vision, an ambitious project in scope as well as size, striving for a more connected, inclusive and sustainable world. It is also a manifesto of my unwavering commitment to mindful and informed design, hoping to spark conversation and collaboration in creating a kinder, more equitable world for generations to come. At the same time, it is a further step in who I want to be as a human being, a Buddhist, and as a designer.



Concept Illustration

The Garten is an innovative residential complex that seeks to breathe new life into a Victorian High School building in Glasgow, creating a vibrant, interconnected community. Rooted in the core principles of **community, inclusivity, and sustainability**, **The Garten** serves as an urban sanctuary where residents can thrive in harmony with their environment.

Inspired by the concept of a thriving garden ecosystem, the name **“Garten”** symbolises the project's dedication to promoting well-being and nurturing a harmonious environment for all residents. **The Garten** stands for growth, resilience, and the celebration of diversity, much like the variety of plants and beings found in a vibrant garden.



Historic Imaged from the early and mid 20th century



I UNDERTAKE TO ABSTAIN FROM TAKING LIFE./
WITH DEEDS OF LOVING KINDNESS, I PURIFY MY BODY.

I UNDERTAKE TO ABSTAIN FROM TAKING THE NOT-GIVEN./
WITH OPENHANDED GENEROSITY, I PURIFY MY BODY.

I UNDERTAKE TO ABSTAIN FROM SEXUAL MISCONDUCT./
WITH STILLNESS, SIMPLICITY, AND CONTENTMENT, I PURIFY MY BODY.

I UNDERTAKE TO ABSTAIN FROM FALSE SPEECH./
WITH TRUTHFUL COMMUNICATION, I PURIFY MY SPEECH.

I UNDERTAKE TO ABSTAIN FROM TAKING INTOXICATION./
WITH MINDFULNESS CLEAR AND RADIANT, I PURIFY MY MIND.

- THE FIVE (ETHICAL) PRECEPTS AS TAUGHT
IN THE TRIRATNA BUDDHIST TRADITION



Located between Elmbank and Holland Streets in Glasgow, **The Garten** is housed within the historic Old High School. Designed by Charles Wilson, the building is a Grade A-listed structure. Established in 1846 as a private institution, the school's roots can be traced back to the 12th century as the Sang School of Glasgow Cathedral. In the 20th century, the school continued to grow and adapt, eventually relocating to Anniesland in the late 1970s. After the High School left, Strathclyde Regional Council converted the buildings into their new offices before they became the offices of Police Scotland when the Council was reorganised. The site has been abandoned for the last couple of decades.



SITE PLAN | COURTYARD

RESIDENTS.

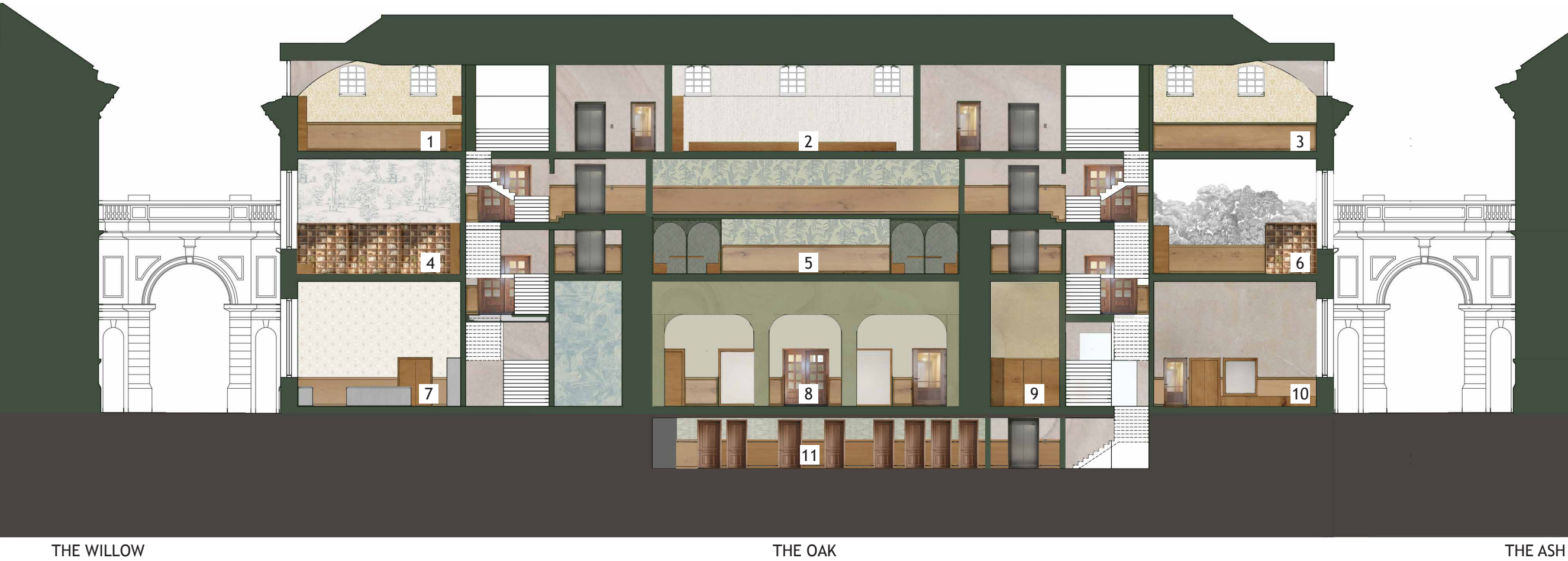
At **The Garten**, inclusivity and accessibility are not just buzzwords but integral values that shape every aspect of the project. This approach goes beyond standard design practices, focusing instead on real people’s diverse needs and experiences.

Here are a few examples of potential residents and how The Garten caters to their unique needs:

- A single mother with young children: Spacious communal areas allow children to play and connect with others inside and outside.
- A young professional seeking a shared living experience: Six-bedroom flats designed for co-living promote social interaction and connection.
- A person using a wheelchair: Each apartment type has at least one unit designed for wheelchair accessibility, ensuring mobility and independence.
- An elderly couple: A range of flat sizes, including smaller options, offers flexibility for different stages of life. Shared common rooms facilitate connection among residents, helping to combat loneliness and isolation.
- A low-income family: With a third of the apartments designated as social housing, **The Garten** ensures affordability for individuals and families from various socio-economic backgrounds.

The Garten recognizes the diverse cultural, ethnic, religious, and personal backgrounds of its residents and aims to meet their unique needs through thoughtful design. By offering a variety of flat types, shared communal spaces, and inclusive features, The Garten creates an environment that promotes genuine connection and well-being for all its residents.

- 1 Oak Refuge: Quiet Library
- 2 Oak Refuge: Multi-faith Meditation and Prayer Hall
- 3 Oak Refuge: Conscious Movement Studio
- 4 The Library
- 5 The Study (with mezzanine)
- 6 The Lounge
- 7 The kitchen
- 8 The Green Hall (Foyer)
- 9 Office (for the reception)
- 10 The Leisure Salon
- 11 Mixed Toilets



SHILA
she/her

cis woman, caucasian, 39 years old, bisexual, practising Buddhist, lives in a monogamous marriage with her husband and her 6-year-old daughter, middle-class
She lives in a 2-bedroom apartment

- KEY CHALLENGES:**
- wheelchair accessibility
 - sharing child care work
 - building social connections and support

TONI
they/them

non-binary, caucasian, 64 years old, queer, atheist, lives in an open relationship with their partner and with their dog, lower middle-class
They live in a 4-bedroom shared apartment

- KEY CHALLENGES:**
- visual impairment
 - loneliness
 - queer friendly design

ALI
he/him

boy, Syrian Arab, 3 years old, Muslim, lives with his parents, uncle and grandmother, middle-class
They live in a 4-bedroom apartment

- KEY CHALLENGES:**
- toddler- and family-friendly design
 - space for religious practice
 - building inter-cultural connections

JAYA
she/they

Cis woman, caucasian, 27 years old, spiritual, pansexual, lives by herself, upper class
They live in a studio apartment

- KEY CHALLENGES:**
- autism-friendly design
 - clear signage of spaces
 - noise sensitivity



SUSTAINABLE VICTORIAN MATERIALS & FURNISHINGS
sustainably restoring and celebrating the site’s history as a former Victorian high school



SUSTAINABLE PROPOSED MATERIALS & FURNISHINGS
bringing in biophilic design, sustainable natural and recycled materials which have a positive impact on the nervous system and environment

wheelchair accessible private and communal kitchen which are functional for wheelchair users and non-wheelchair users

inclusive bathrooms and toilets: gender-neutral, female, male, family and accessible toilets

mobile and adaptable learning towers for toddlers and younger children to be able to access worktop surfaces and help in the communal kitchen

clear signage, a community board with weekly schedules for communal events



THE DESIGN OF A HOME
The Garten’s flats are designed to serve as the backbone for residents to create individualised homes tailored to their unique tastes and needs.

SITE PLAN
GROUND FLOOR
1:400



COMMUNAL SPACES

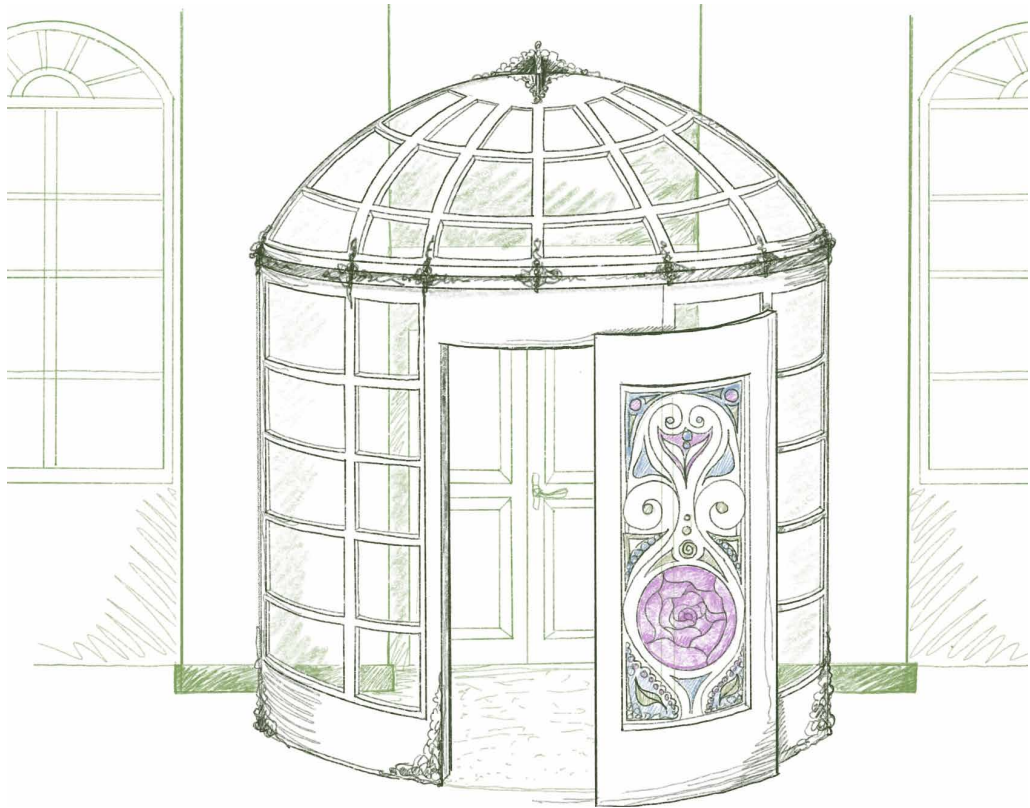
- 1 The Green Hall (Foyer)
- 2 The Nursery
- 3 The Great Hall
- 4 The Leisure Salon
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Laundry Room
- 7 Workshop

COURTYARD

- 8 Pollinator meadow with fruit trees
- 9 Communal garden with wheelchair-accessible raised beds & greenhouses
- 10 Wheelchair-accessible Playground
- 11 Kitchen herb garden

ADDITIONAL FEATURES

- 12 Stairs from the Garage
- 13 Entry to the guest house
- Heather, bike storage, shared e-bikes and cargo bikes & bike repair station
- 14 Entry to the guest house
- Sage, recycling station, storage for gardening equipment and childrens toys



Bespoke vestibule with stained glass inspired by the Kibble Palace (in the botanic gardens of Glasgow) in the Green Hall (the Entry Hall)



bespoke wheelchair accessible reception desk with a notch to hold a white cane



bespoke planter with Scottish native plants and victorian fountain and all letterboxes on the site



The Green Hall

GROUND FLOOR.

Situated on a sloping hillside, **The Garten's** main entrance welcomes visitors from Holland Street into the central courtyard, which has been raised to ensure step-free access to all buildings. Walking through the courtyard or ascending the steps from Elmbank Street, residents and guests arrive at the Oak, the community's focal point, with the Green Hall (foyer).

The ground floor epitomises **The Garten's** communal spirit, with shared spaces encircling the vibrant courtyard. These spaces include the Nursery, Great Hall, Laundry, and Workshop, allowing residents to participate in various activities while enjoying views of the playground and gardens. The seamless connection between indoor and outdoor spaces fosters a sense of community and visibility among neighbours.

To ensure safety and privacy, the community utilises a key card system for site access. This feature allows children to play freely in the courtyard while providing peace of mind for all residents.

THE GREEN HALL.

The Green Hall is a central gathering point for **the Garten** community, acting as both a foyer and a lively circulation area. Upon arrival from Elmbank Street, visitors are welcomed by grand wooden doors and a custom vestibule inspired by Glasgow's famed Kibble Palace in the Botanic Gardens.

As the community's core, the Green Hall features an eye-catching green planter with integrated resident letterboxes, along with a reception and community blackboard that pays tribute to the site's former life as a high school. The blackboard serves as a communication hub, displaying cooking schedules, upcoming events, and communal meeting information. This inviting space encourages impromptu interaction among neighbours, promoting a tight-knit, connected community.

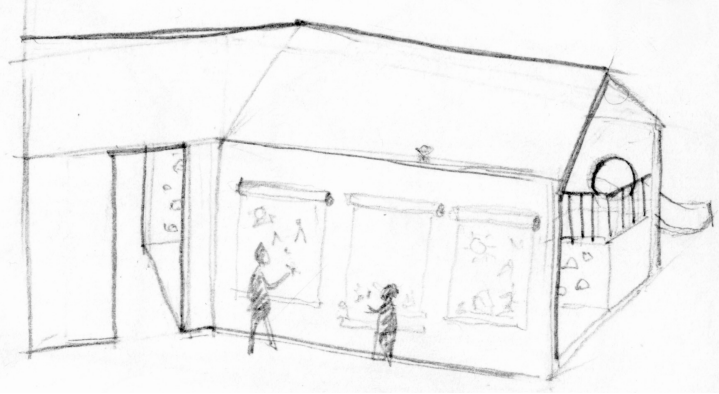
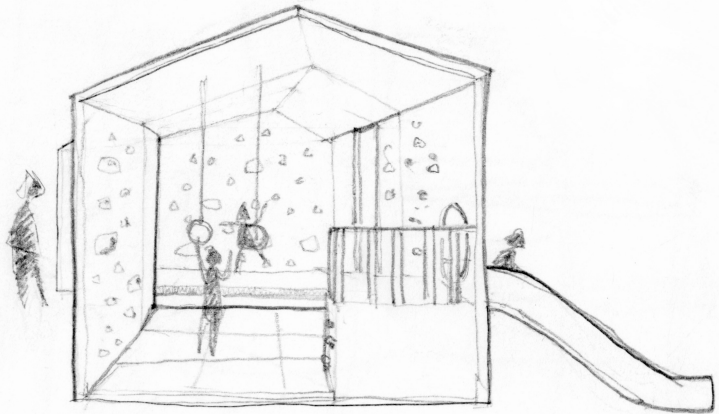


The Nursery

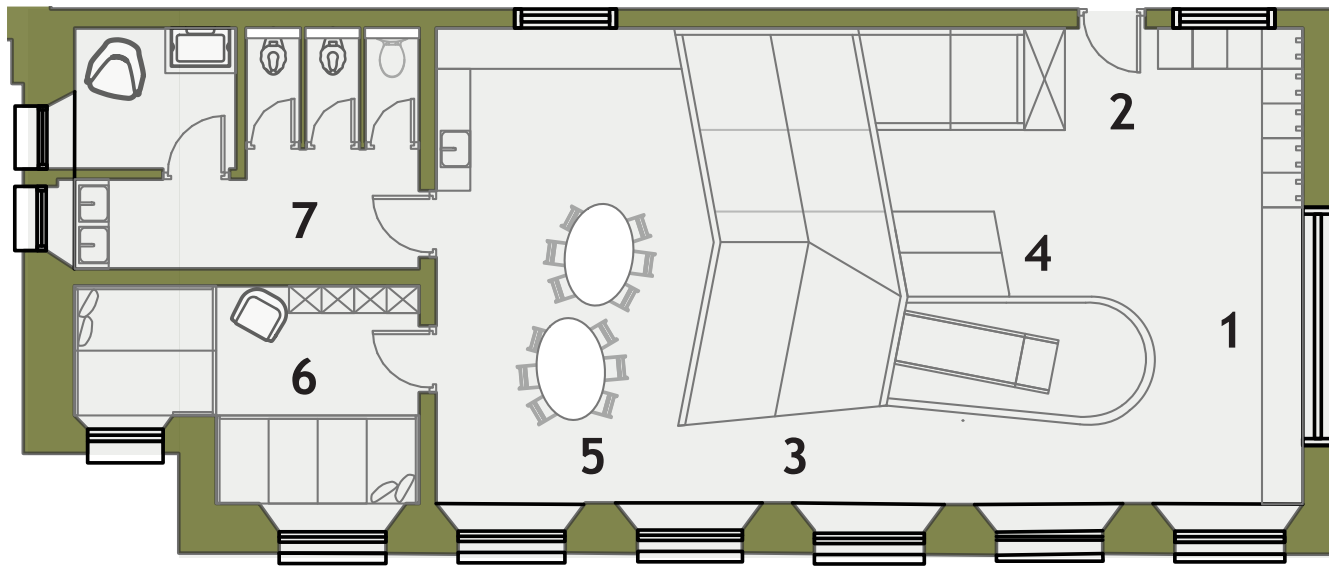
THE NURSERY.

The Nursery is strategically located near most communal spaces with large windows (1) providing visibility from the corridor, foyer, and vestibule, ensuring adults can easily monitor children at play. A small wardrobe (2) at the entrance accommodates shoes and outerwear, while a bespoke miniature “Oak House” (3) offers a fun climbing wall, slide, and ball pit alongside two playhouses (4). The multi-functional area (5) in the back of the room features small tables for crafts, homework, and painting, with a board mounted against the climbing house for displaying and painting artwork.

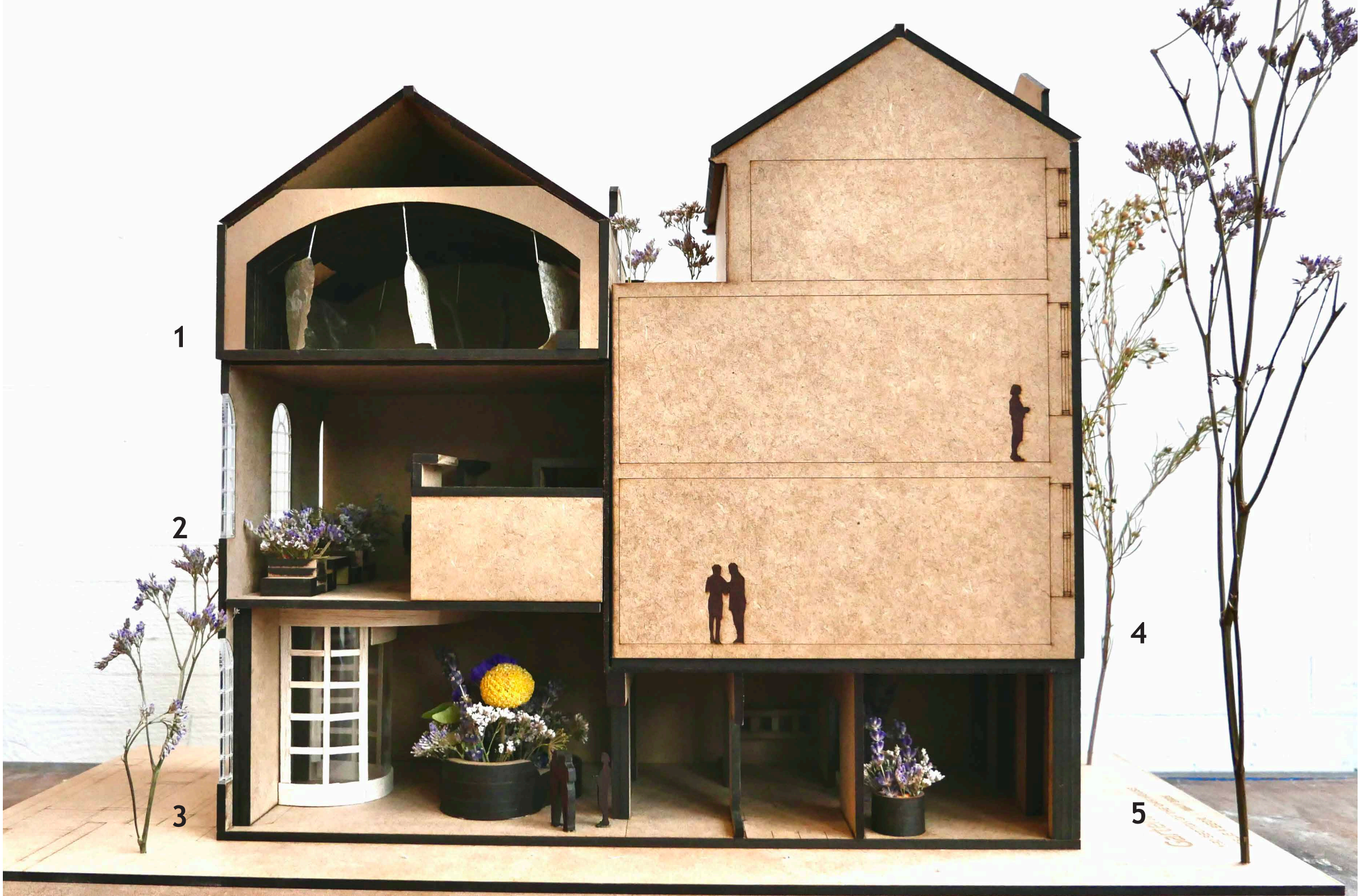
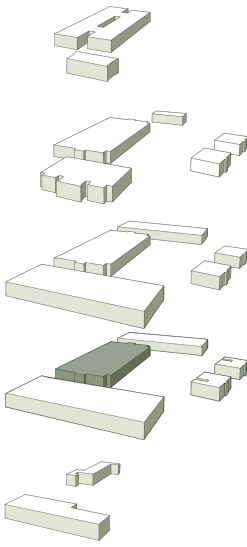
A cosy reading corner (6) doubles as a napping room, while child-friendly toilets and a nursing room (7) offer convenience. A small kitchenette provides storage for toys, crafting supplies, and a sink for washing hands and materials. Natural materials create a soothing yet playful atmosphere, enhanced by an acoustic timber ceiling that absorbs noise, ensuring a comfortable environment for children to learn and grow.



concept sketches of the climbing, exercise and art “oak house”



The Nursery, Floor Plan, Ground Floor



1. Oak Refuge: Multi-faith Meditation & Prayer Hall
2. The Study

3. The Green Hall (entry from Elmbank Street)
4. Private Residential Flats

5. Entry from the courtyard

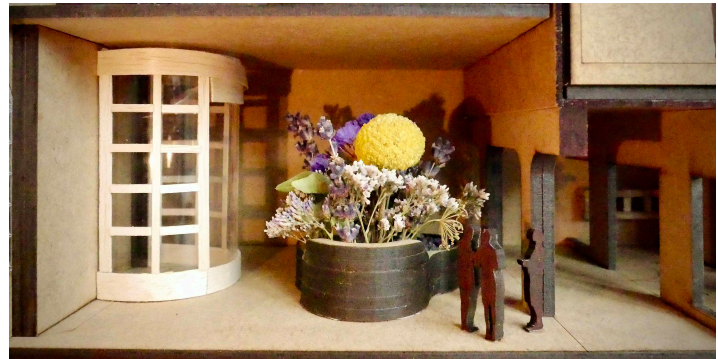
1:50 Section Model of the Oak House shows the entry ways from Elmbank Street into the Green Hall and from the courtyard. Communal spaces are highlighted in contrast to the private residential flats (top right) demonstrating the Oak House’s key function in building a connected and sustainable community.



View from Elmbank Street



The Study



The Green Hall



View from the courtyard

THE OAK REFUGE.

The **Oak Refuge**, nestled on the quiet top floor of **The Garten**’s central communal building, serves as a spiritual sanctuary welcoming all residents. It acknowledges the importance of spirituality in fostering a united and supportive community. This interfaith space offers three key areas: a movement studio, a library and, at its heart, the multi-faith meditation and prayer hall. Each area has been thoughtfully designed to celebrate diverse religious beliefs and spiritual practices reflecting **The Garten**’s values of community, sustainability and inclusivity.

Humans have created and engaged in spiritual practices, rituals, and traditions for millennia. Whether it’s a belief in a soul-like immaterial essence or a connection to something greater, spirituality can help us find meaning and purpose, emotional well-being and resilience.

Buddhism teaches that the spiritual community (*Sanskrit Sangha*) is the most important pillar in life. Drawing on this wisdom, the **Oak Refuge** is designed to be a background that supports residents of different individual and collective spiritual practices.

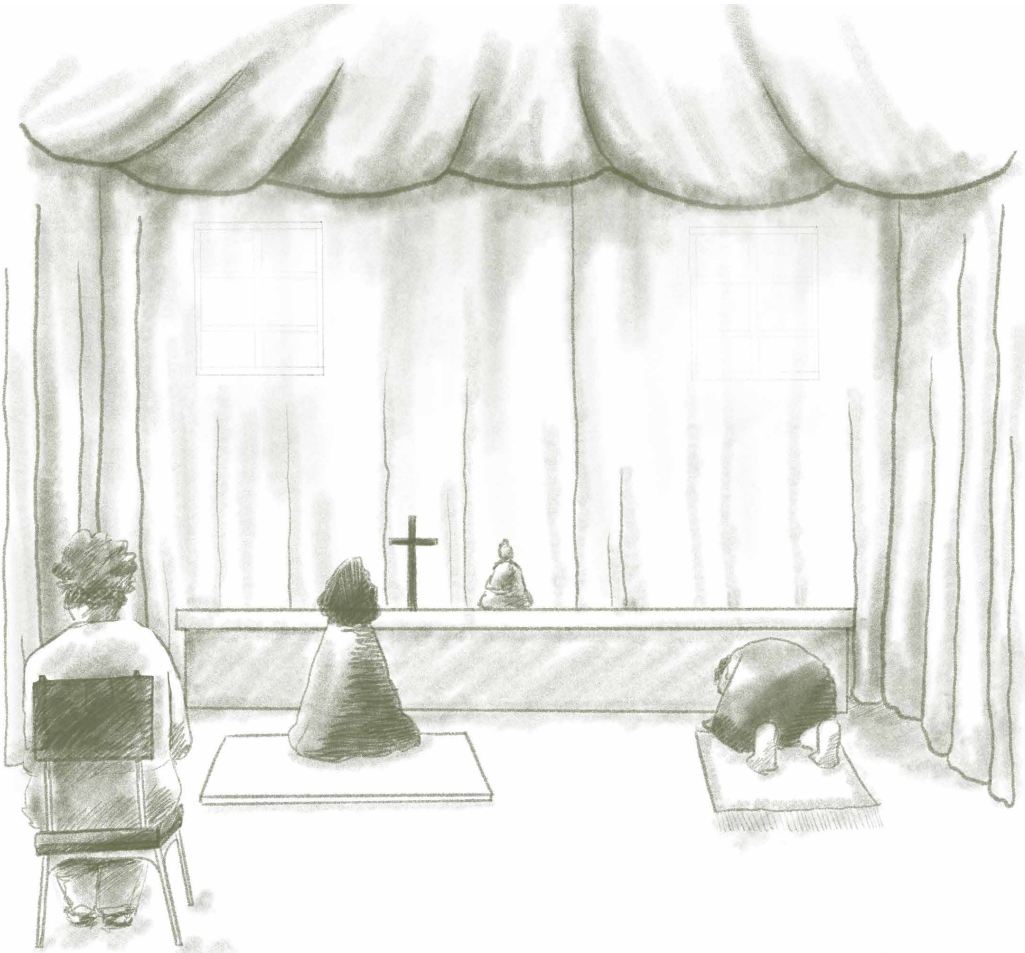
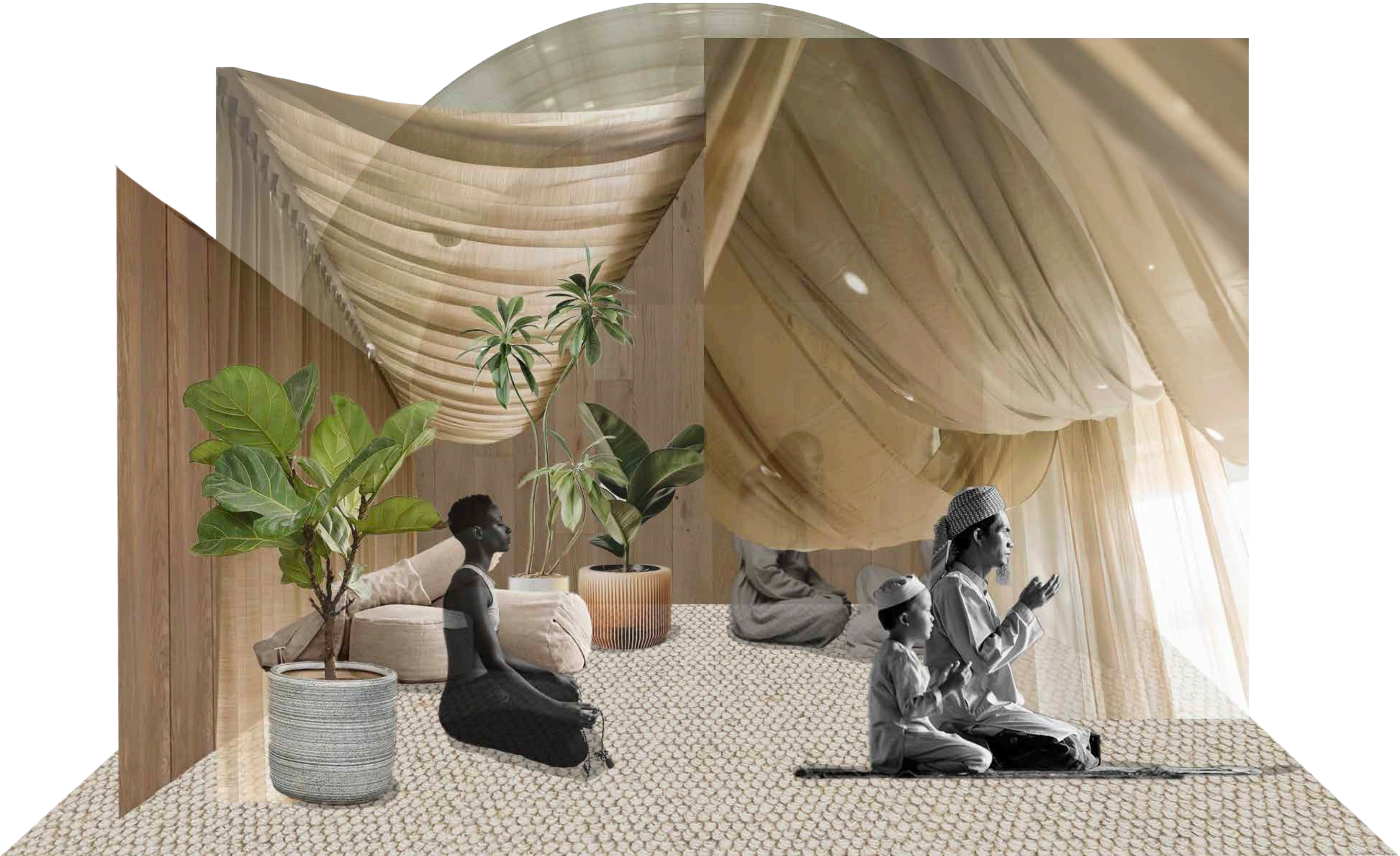
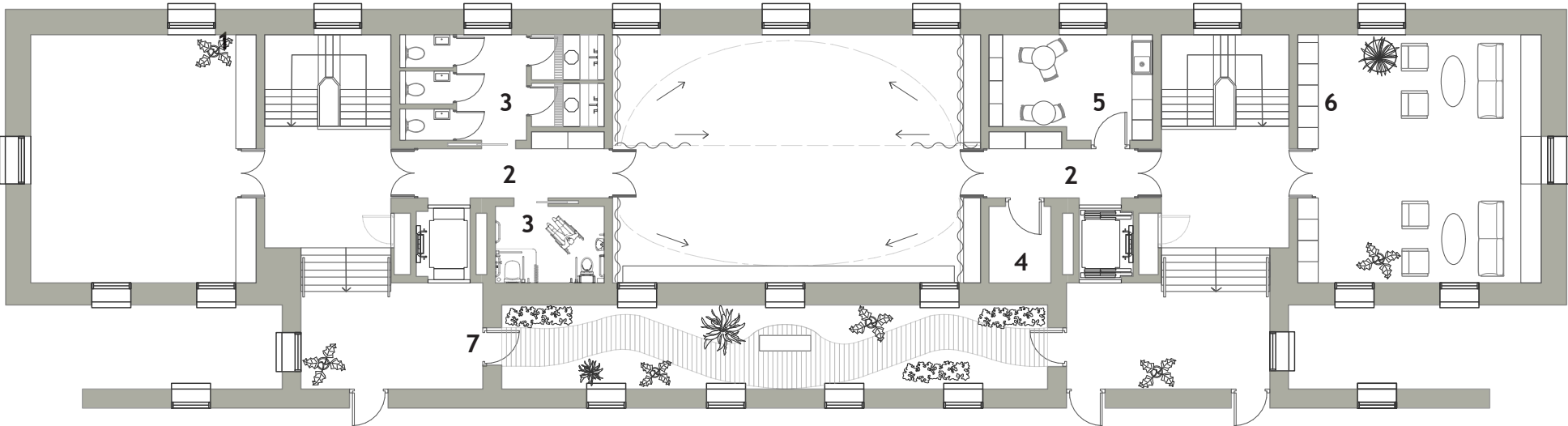


Illustration of residents of different faiths practicing together in the Multi-Faith Meditation & Prayer Hall



CONSCIOUS MOVEMENT STUDIO



- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 1 Storage (yoga mats, stretch bands etc) | 4 Storage room for chairs |
| 2 Quiet corridor with shoe and coat storage | 5 Tea kitchen |
| 3 Toilets (gender-neutral, woman, men, accessible) and ablution rooms | 6 Storage and book shelves |
| | 7 Garden of Mindfulness |

MULTI-FAITH MEDITATION AND PRAYER HALL

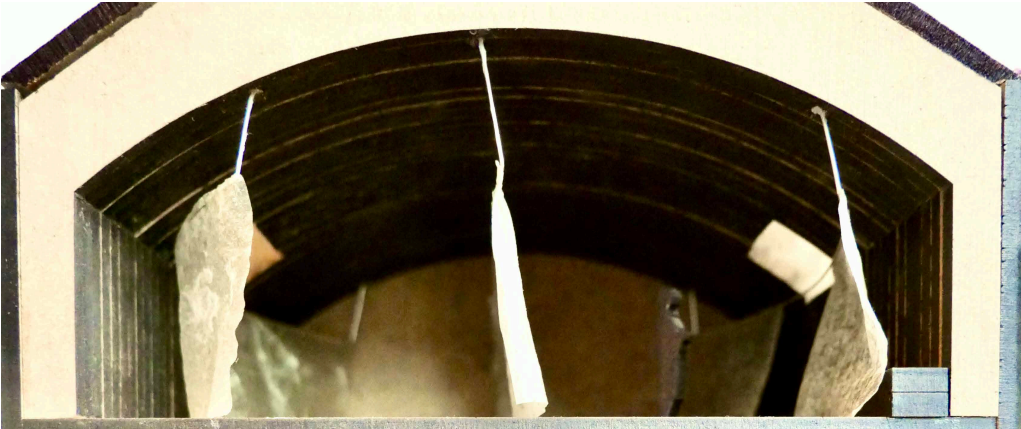
LIBRARY



A resident praying facing Mecca



Garden of Mindfulness



The Multi-faith Meditation & Prayer Hall with curtains separating the space

In the **Oak Refuge**, several key elements demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity:

- Symbols on the wall indicate the direction towards Mecca and Jerusalem for Jewish and Muslim practitioners.
- Gender-separate ablution spaces
- A curtain can be drawn to divide the space between men and women during prayer, as preferred by some Jewish and Muslim practitioners
- A personalisable low shelf-like shrine/ altar along the eastern wall to display different religious and ritual items
- Soft carpeted floors offer comfort for people who walk, pray, or meditate on the floor
- Storage for prayer carpets, meditation gear, and other personal items
- A designated shoe rack outside the rooms respecting the customs of various faiths
- Gender-neutral, women’s, men’s, and wheelchair-accessible toilets ensure all visitors can comfortably use the space

