

BEYOND THE EYE

The Beyond the Eye project emerged as a visionary endeavor to create an inclusive space within the historic South Sydney Mitchell Building in Edinburgh, tailored to the needs of the visually impaired.

Initially imagined as a museum featuring tactile, auditory, and sensory experiences to make art, history, and culture accessible, the project's scope broadened to include skill development for newly visually impaired individuals, facilitating their reintegration back to society.

By repurposing the building, previously part of the Royal Infirmary, into an educational and social hub, the initiative aimed to serve not only as a cultural nexus for the visually impaired but also as a platform for the sighted community to gain insights into visual impairment.

Through phases of understanding, adapting, and living/thriving, the project sought to promote inclusivity, empower individuals, and foster a more empathetic society by bridging the gap between the visually impaired and sighted communities, enriching lives beyond the visual realm.

SENSES



Touch

The sense of touch, often overlooked, is vital in how we interact with buildings, highlighted by tactile experiences with everyday elements like door handles and flooring. Pallasmaa and Sennett discuss the sensory experiences in modern environments, contrasting the rich, tactile nature of traditional materials with the a prevailing sense of sensory deprivation; noting a pervasive dullness, monotony, and tactile sterility afflicts the urban environment in contemporary designs (Sennett, 1994, p. 15).

Pallasmaa, Juhani. (1996) *The eyes of the skin : architecture and the senses*. Chichester: Wiley-Academy.
 Sennett, R. (1994). *Flesh and stone: The body and the city in western civilization*. New York: Norton.
 Rasmussen, S.E. (1962) *Experiencing Architecture*.



Sound

Rasmussen in his book *Experiencing architecture* (1959), presents a similar notion that architecture transcends the visual experience through auditory perceptions. Just as light reflects off surfaces enabling visual comprehension of architectural elements, sound, too, reflects off or is absorbed by the same forms and materials.

He further criticizes the prevailing trend of contemporary interior designs that favors one glass wall and three other smooth, hard surfaces that acoustically deafened spaces. Such contemporary interior have become homogenized, making it increasingly challenging for visually impaired individuals in terms of identification and navigation.

Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



Smell and Taste

The intrinsic makeup of a memory of a spatial environment is profoundly influenced by the sense of smell — a sense that is frequently overlooked in the context of spatial design.

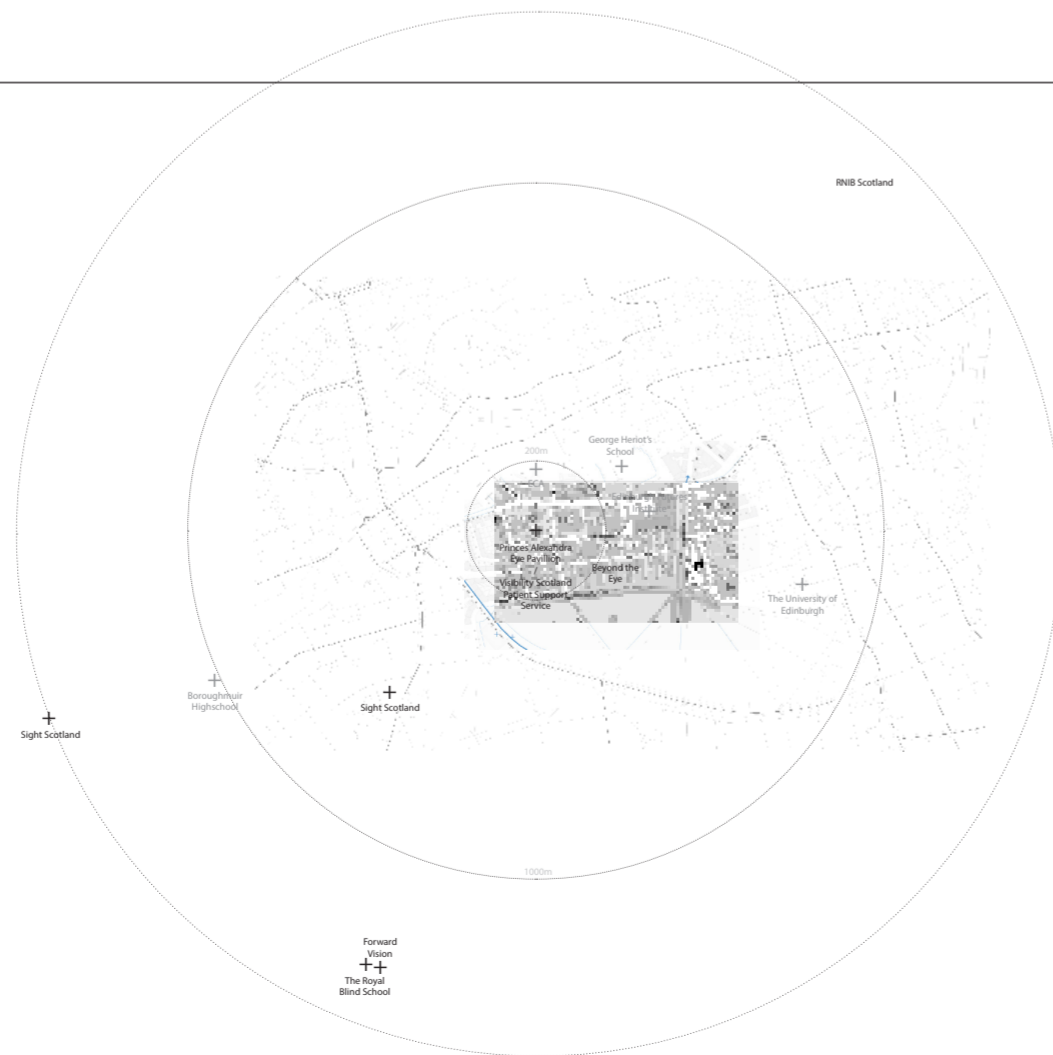
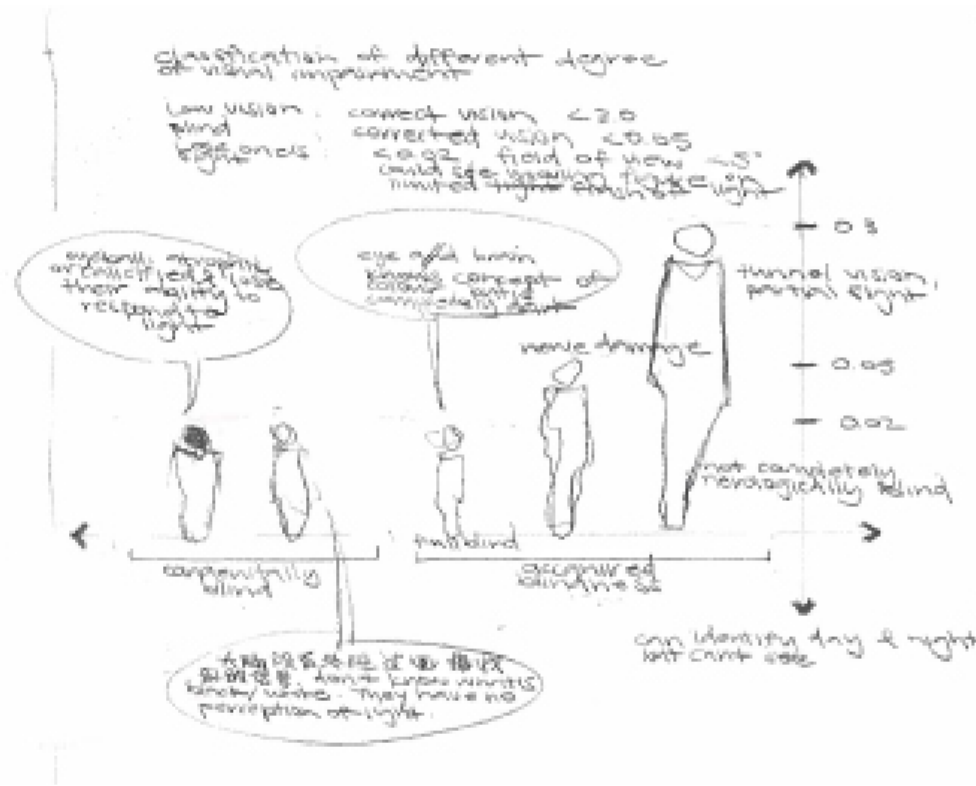
Each space possesses a distinctive blend of odors that are shaped by an array of factors including the materials and finishes used in construction and the human activities that take place within it.

For those who are visually impaired, olfactory cues can help individuals construct a cognitive map of their surroundings. The olfactory guidance assists in orientation and can trigger spatial memories that act as landmarks.

Globally, at least 2.2 billion people have vision impairment.

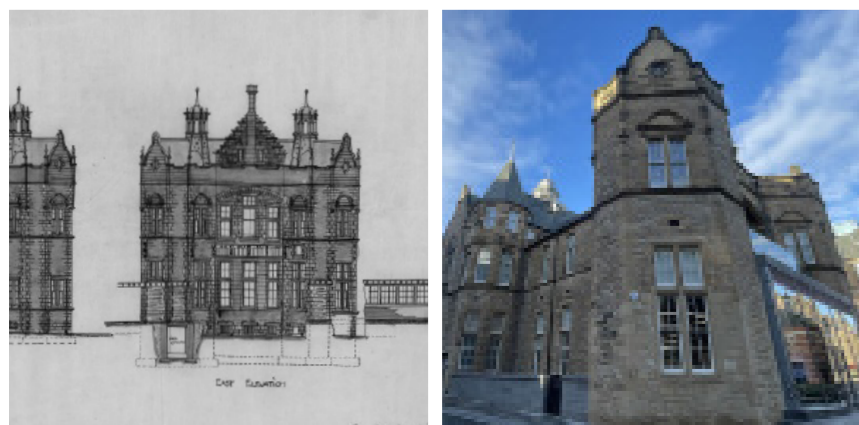
In at least 1 billion of these, vision impairment could have been prevented or is yet to be addressed.

(World Health Organization, 2022)



SITE

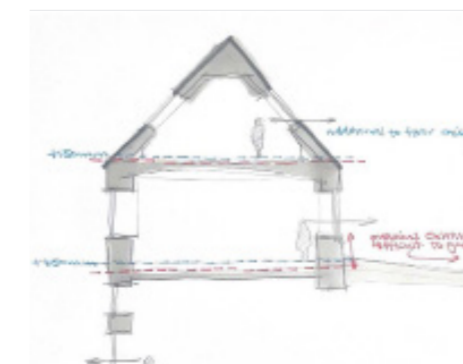
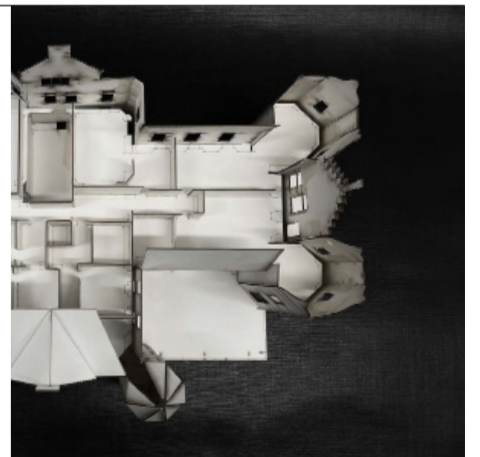
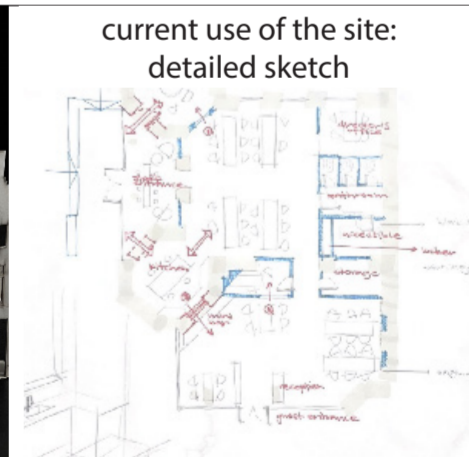
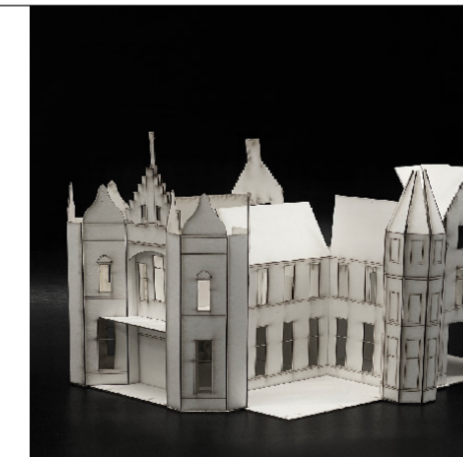
South Sydney Mitchell Building



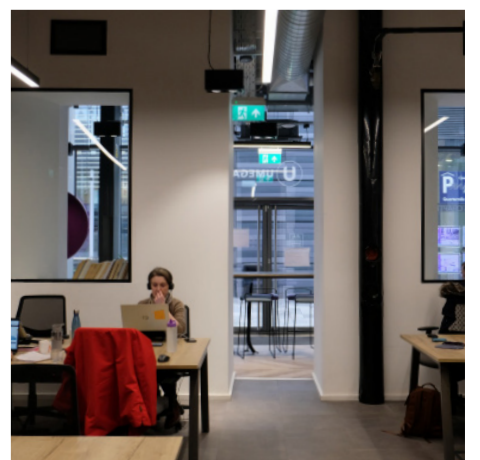
The site is strategically chosen in close proximity to the Eye Pavilion, functioning as a support facility designed to assist newly visually impaired individuals, those at risk, and their families.

Furthermore, the location is advantageously near the center of Edinburgh, addressing a significant lack of such facilities in the area.

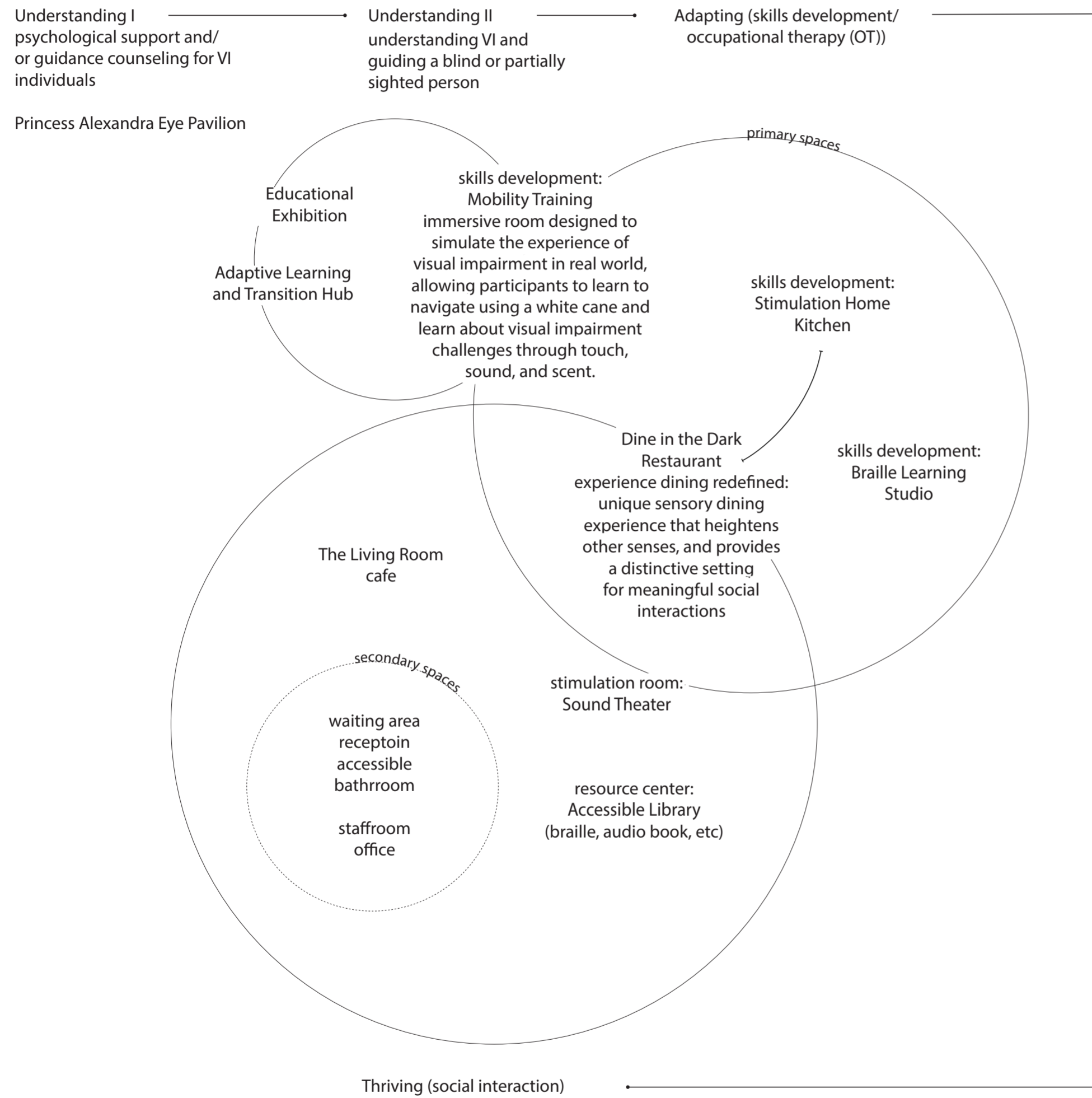
The site also benefits from its close vicinity to various educational institutions, spanning from middle schools to universities.



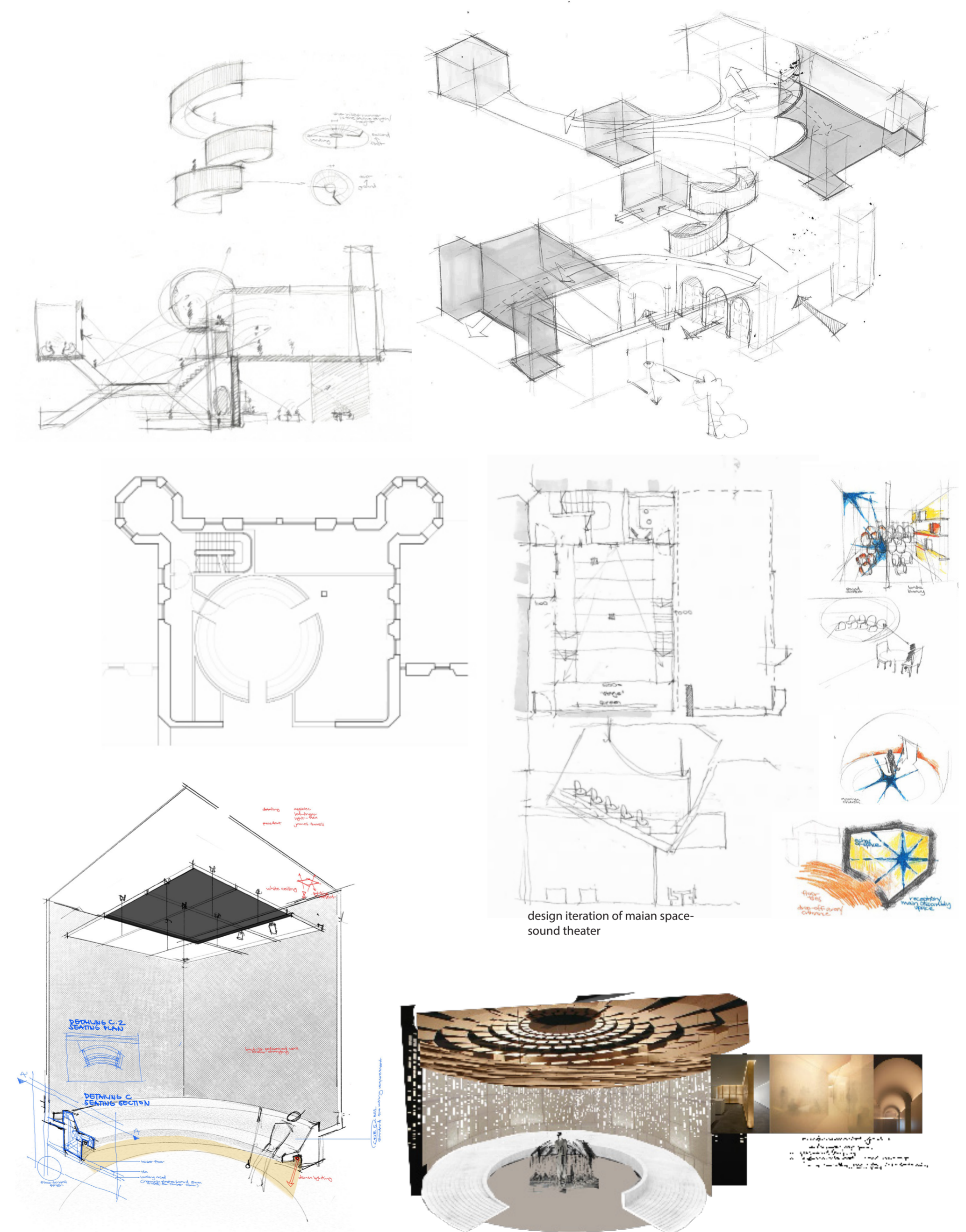
refurbishment work on existing site



FROM SENSES TO SPACES
FROM SENSES TO SPACES



DESIGN DEVELOPMENT
DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

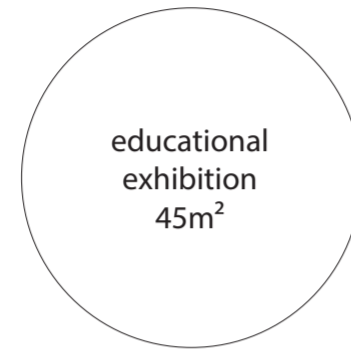


Understanding II
Understanding II

skills development:
Mobility Training

Educational Exhibition

independent functional space



total area: 950m²

Adapting
Adapting

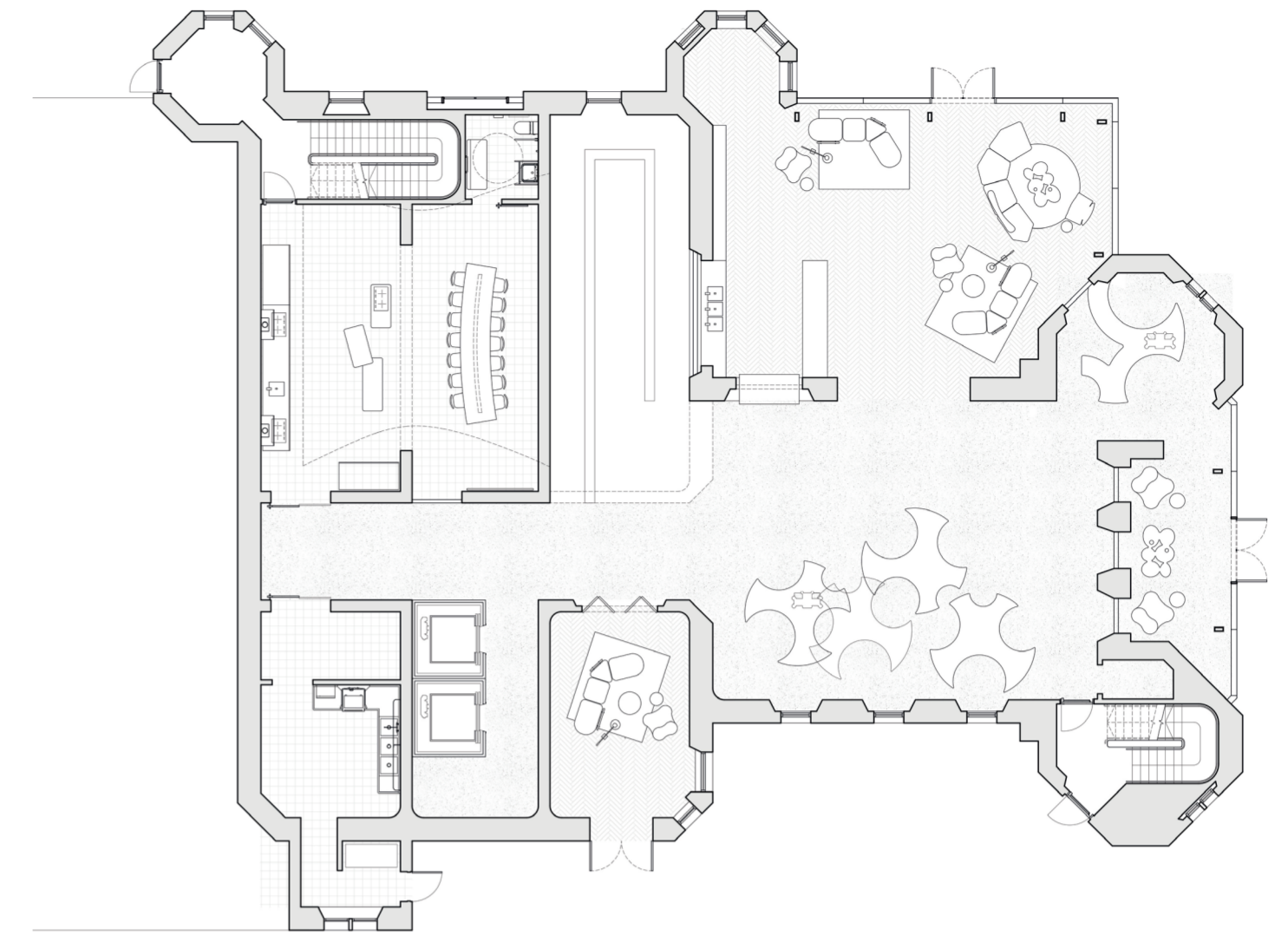
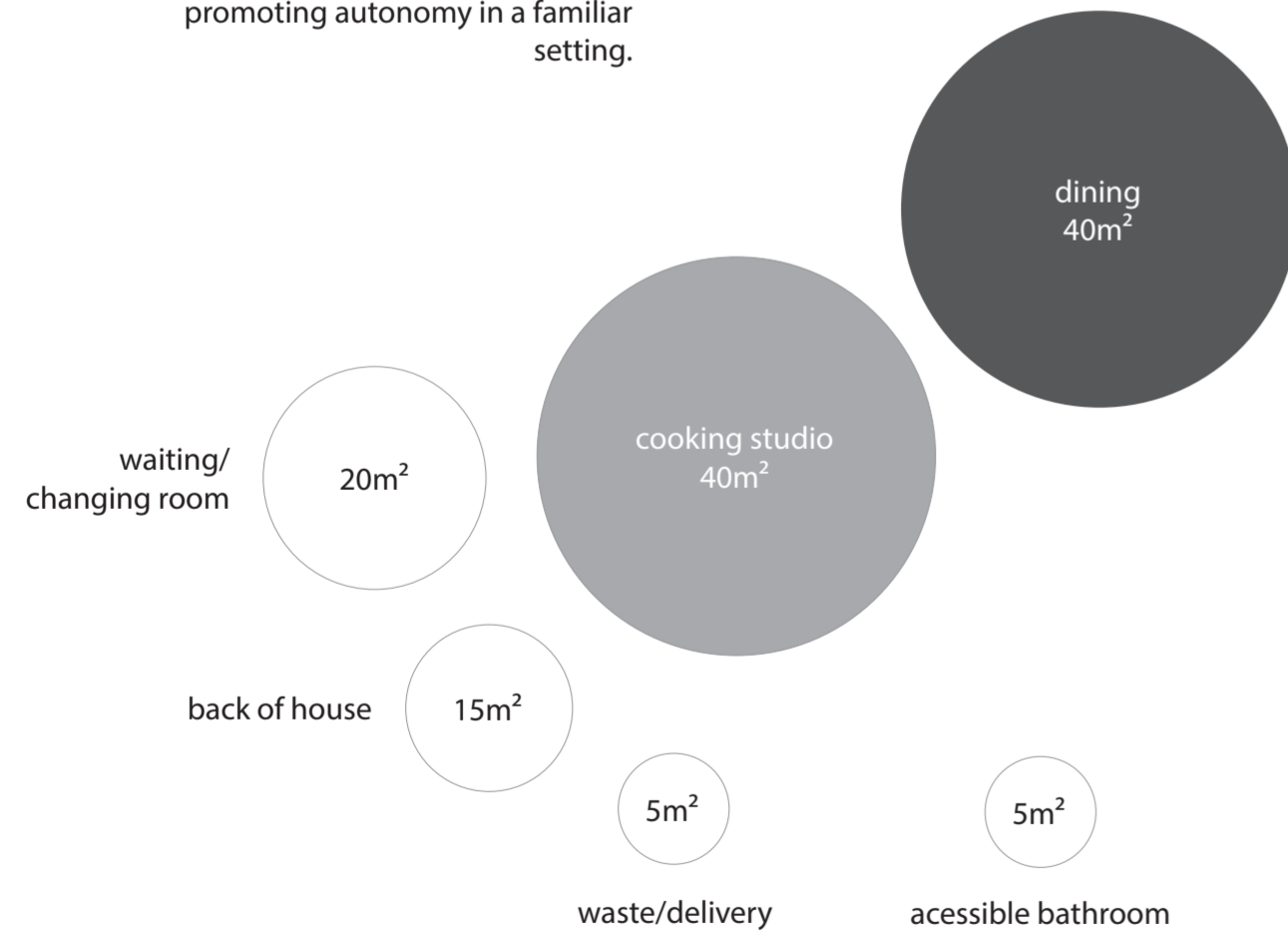
skills development:
Stimulation Home Kitchen
80m²

Dine in the Dark Restaurant
45m²

supported independent functional space

This kitchen space is designed to replicate a home environment, encouraging visually impaired individuals to develop independence by mastering daily kitchen tasks; promoting autonomy in a familiar setting.

Experience dining redefined: unique sensory dining experience that heightens other senses, and provides a distinctive setting for meaningful social interactions.



ground floor plan



Adapting Adapting

Adaptive Learning Space
supported functional space

Adjacent to the Accessible Library, the studio is designed to support both individual learning and group discussions, facilitating a multifunctional space that caters to a range of educational and developmental needs.

20m²

or

20m²

or

20m²

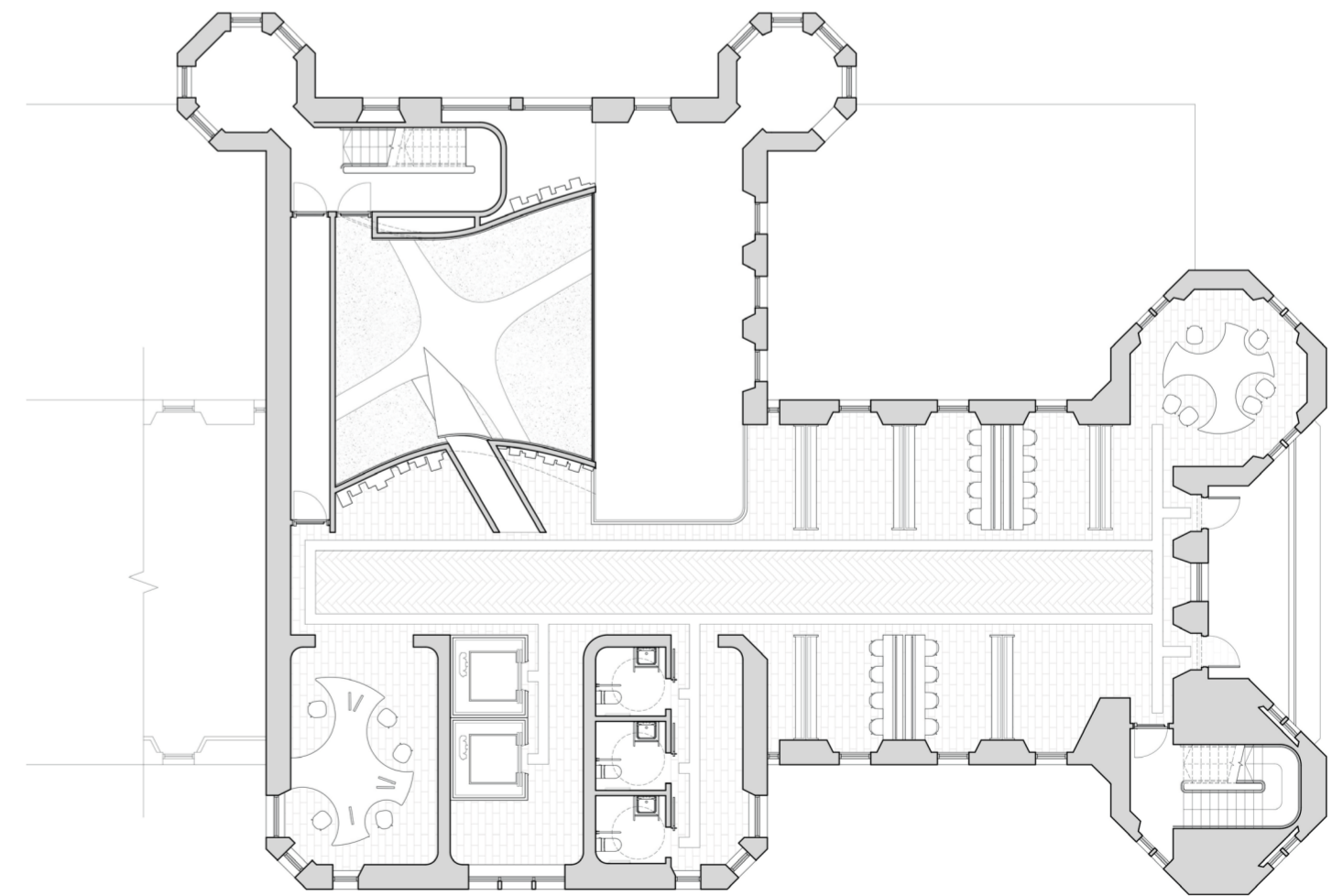
skills development:
Braille Learning
Studio

Casual group
discussion

'Learning from others'
Talk

eg. Transitioning from
school to university,
talk by Chris

eg. understanding
what support is
available, how it can
be of use and how to
access it.

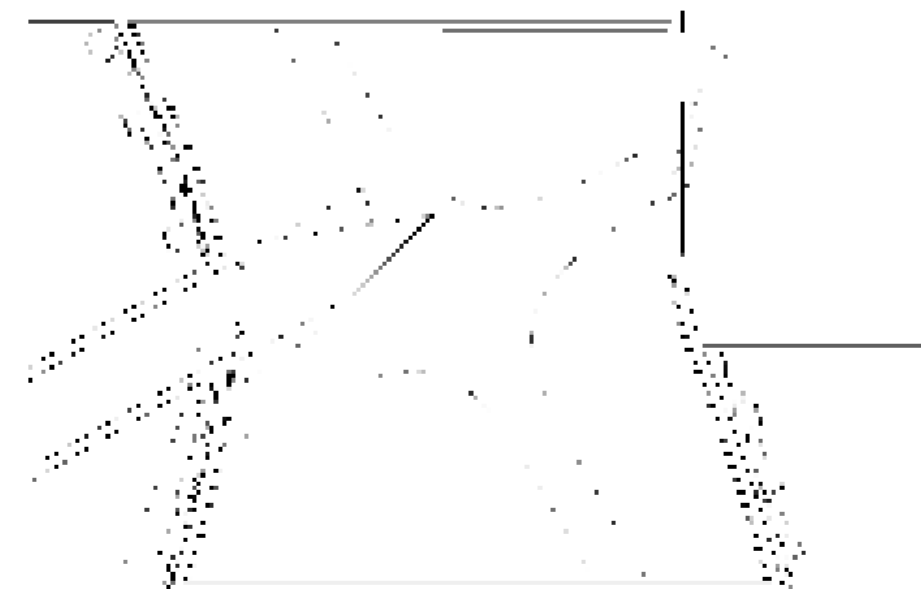
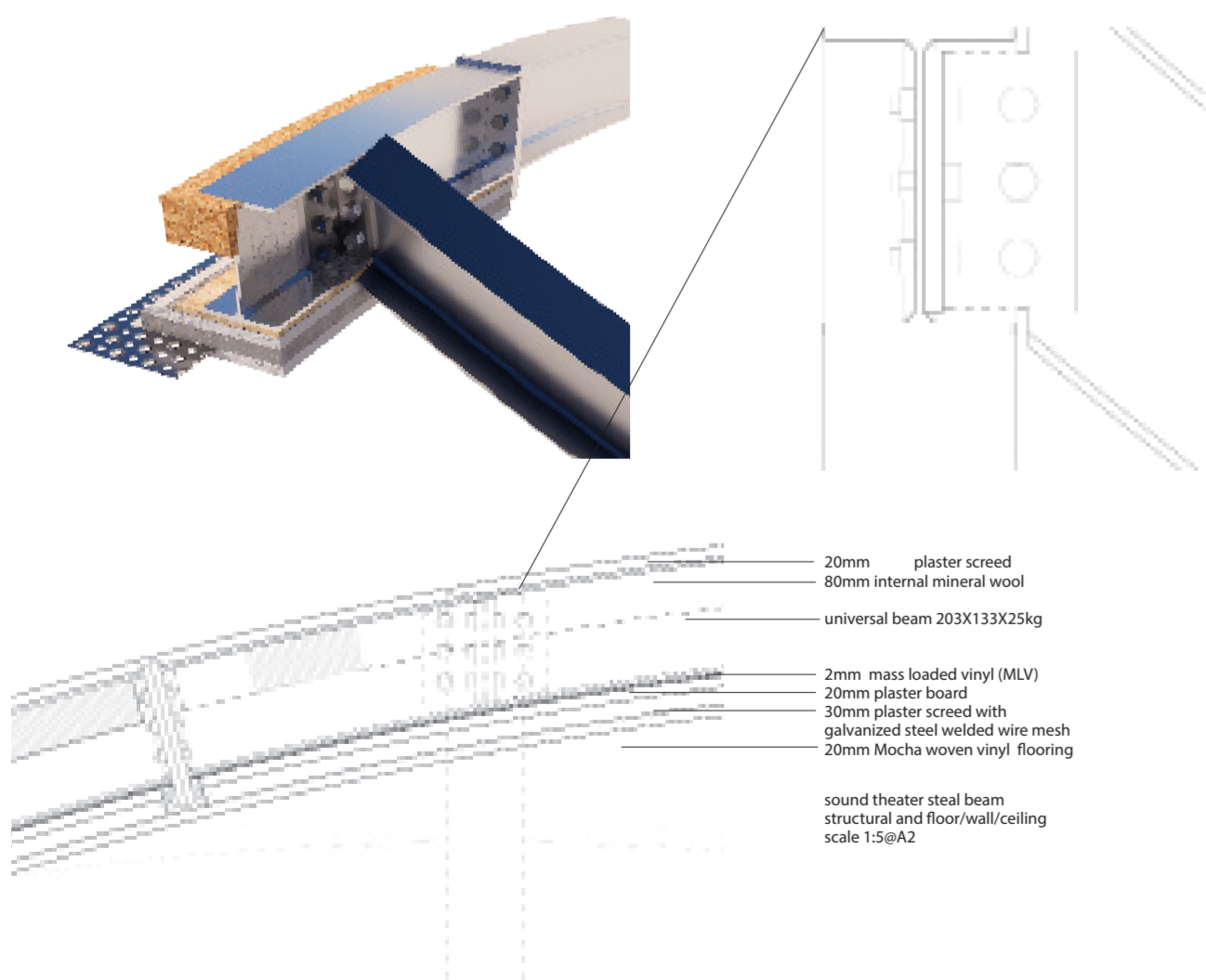
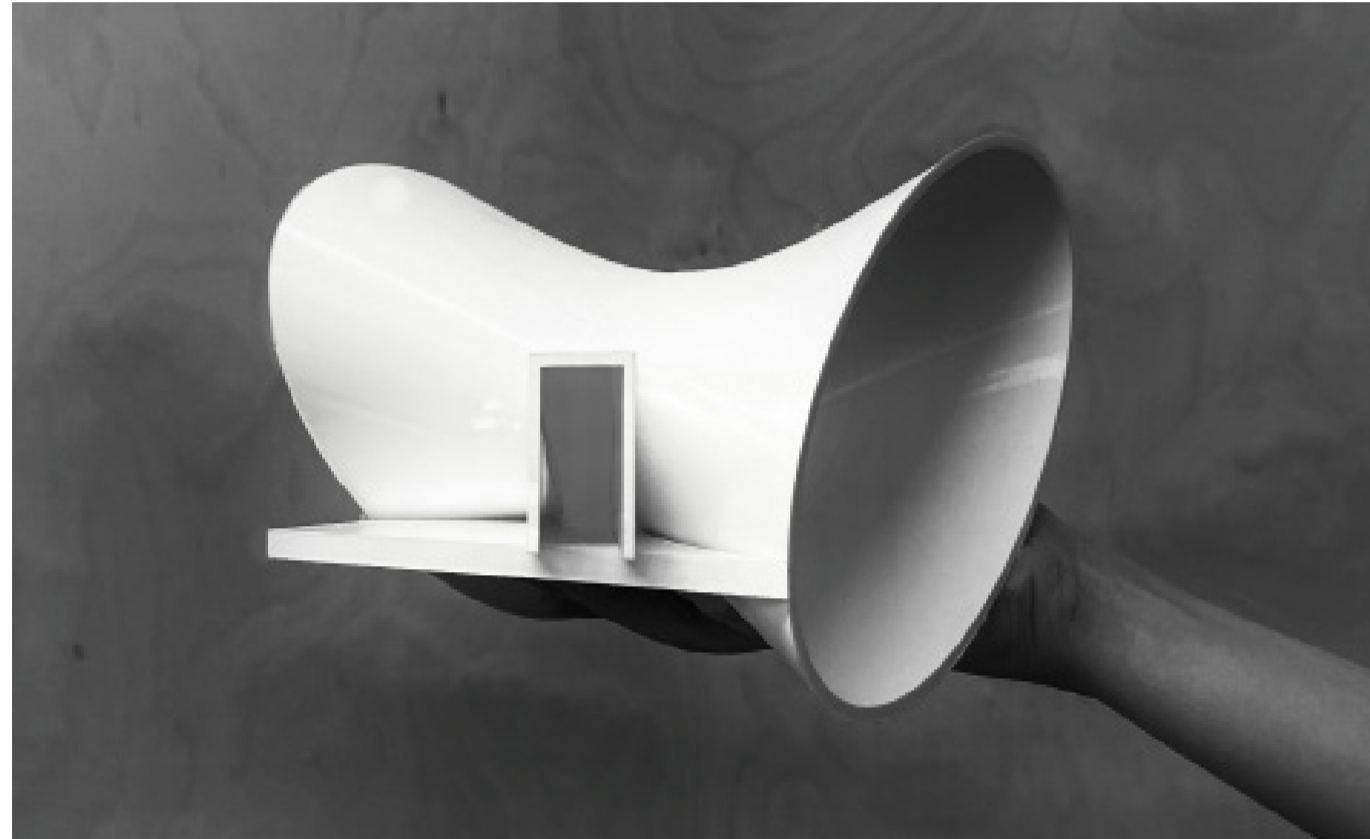


first floor plan

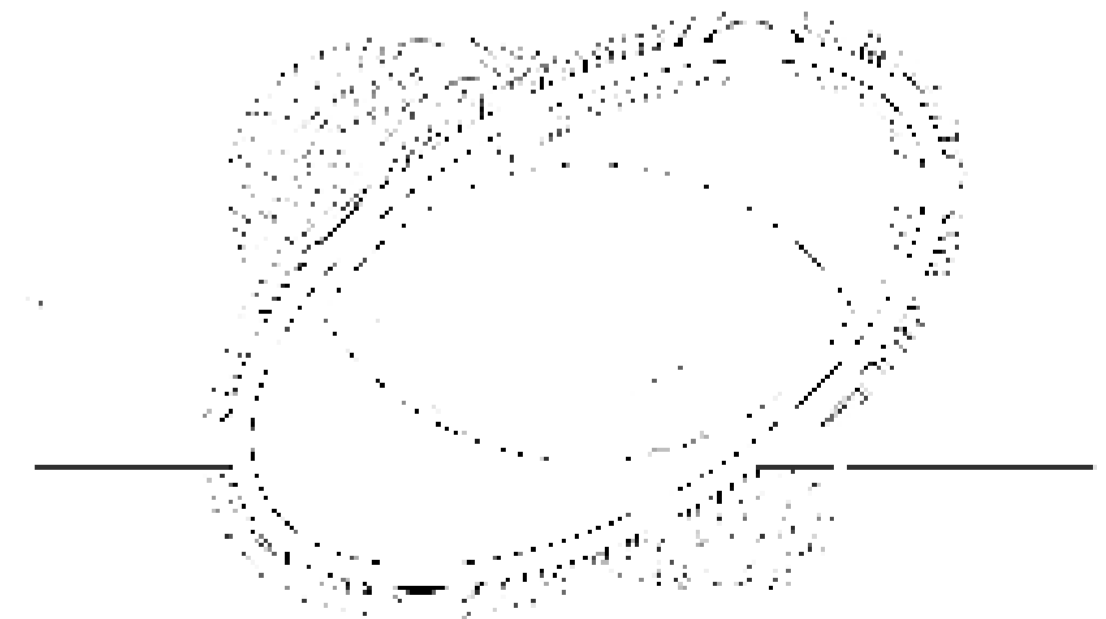
Thriving
Thriving

stimulation room:
Sound Theater
supported functional space

The Sound Theater offers a unique space for both visually impaired and sighted individuals to explore and experience new auditory sensations in a new setting.



plan



section