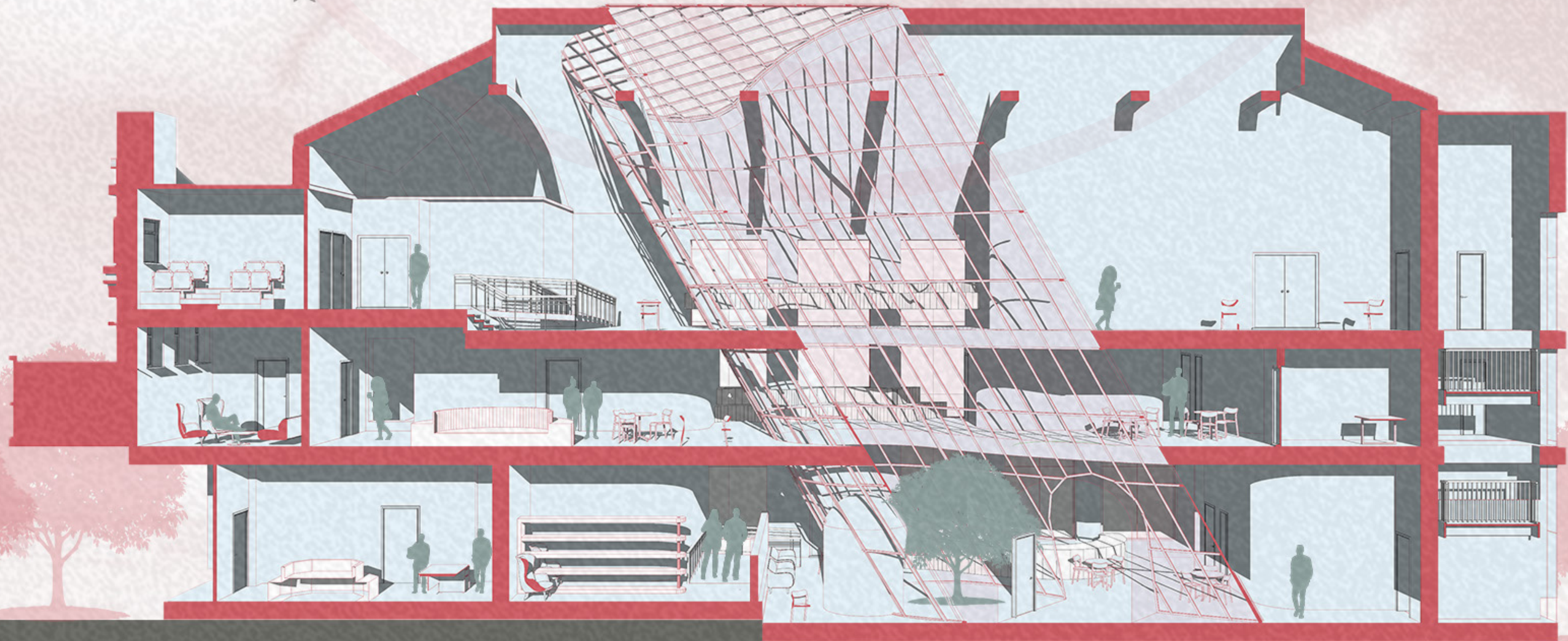


Aperture



A Clearer View Of Agoraphobia



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IAD663

Aperture [Noun]: An opening or open space, the opening in a photographic lens that admits the light.

Aperture empowers understanding and change around agoraphobia through immersive experiences, education, and community. It connects lived experience with professional practice, inspiring more inclusive, empathetic environments. Visitors leave not only informed, but emotionally impacted, equipped with insights they can apply to their personal lives, workplaces, and wider communities to drive lasting change.

Problem

Agoraphobia is an often misunderstood anxiety disorder marked by intense fear of situations where escape feels difficult, leading many to avoid public spaces or become housebound. Despite rising mental health issues in the UK, stigma, lack of education, and limited design responses have left those with agoraphobia without the support or environments they need to feel safe, seen, and included.

Symbolism

The term Aperture symbolizes both an opening and a point of focus, reflecting the project's aim to gently open up dialogue around agoraphobia while helping others see it more clearly. Just as an aperture controls light in a lens, the center creates controlled, comfortable exposure to public space, tailored to each visitor's needs.

Archetypes



Jack, 21 - Agoraphobia Sufferer



Sarah, 40 - Interior Designer



Dr. Wright, 60 - Educator/Researcher



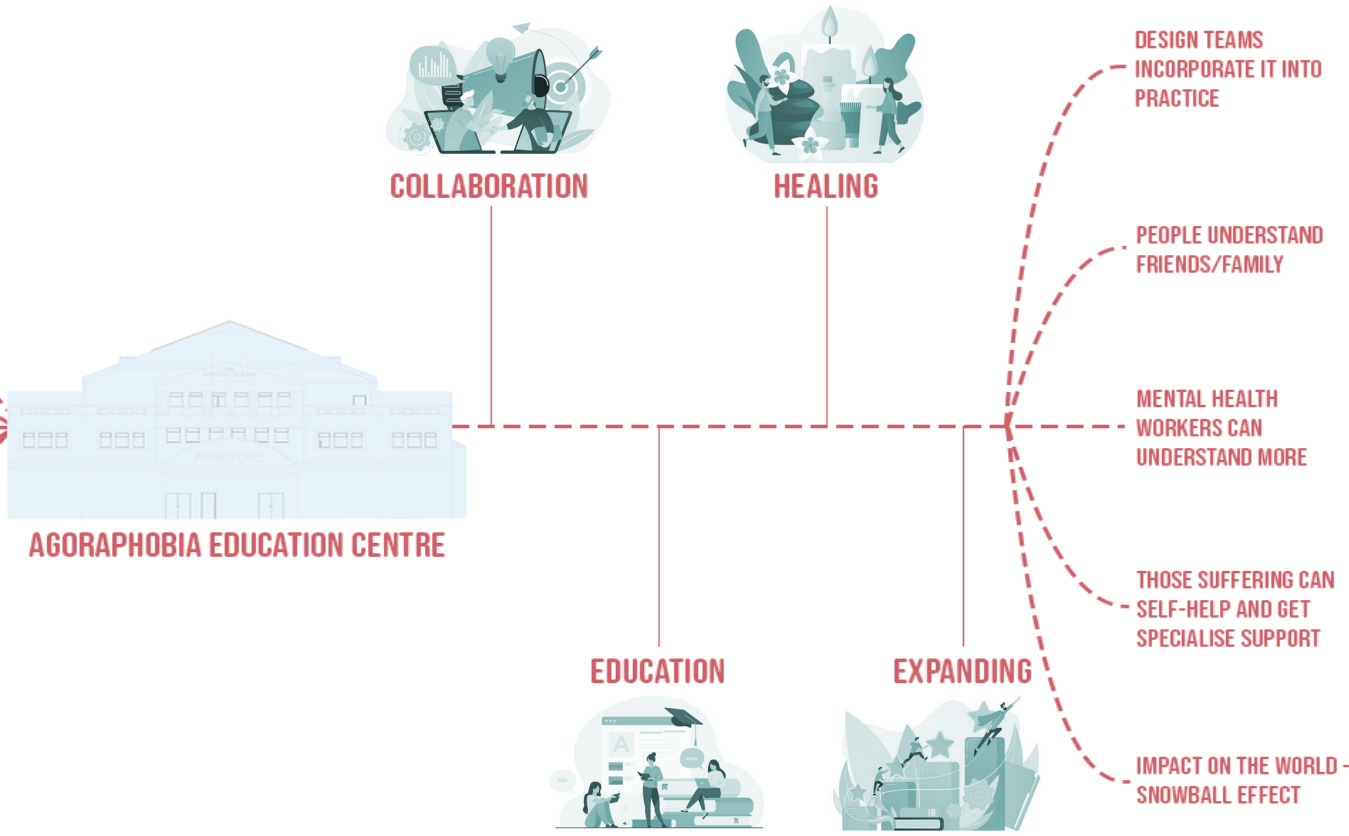
Margaret, 64, Late-Onset Agoraphobia Sufferer



Daniel, 35 - Mental Health Worker (Counselor)



Emily, 18 - Supportive Teenager



Impact

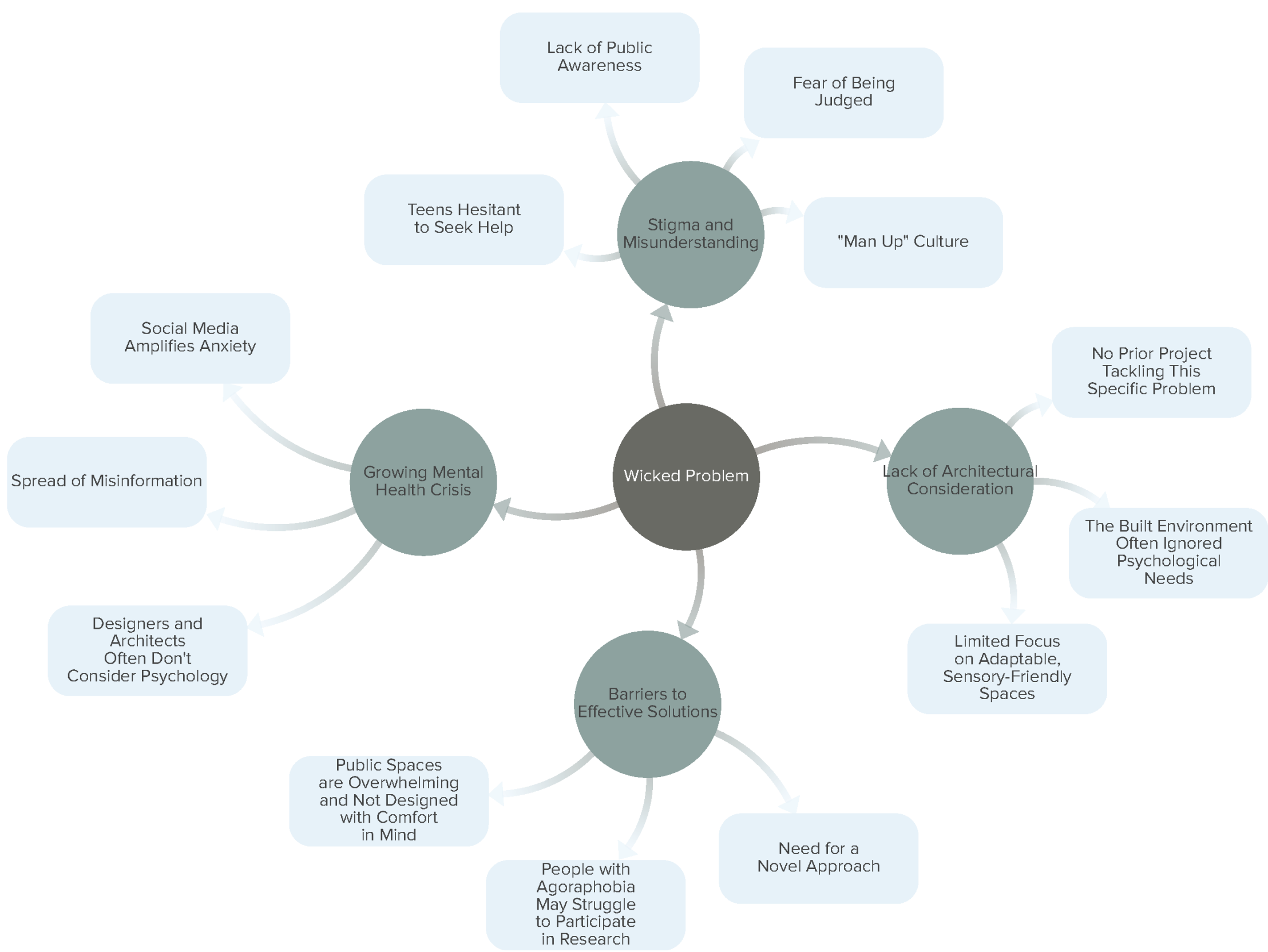
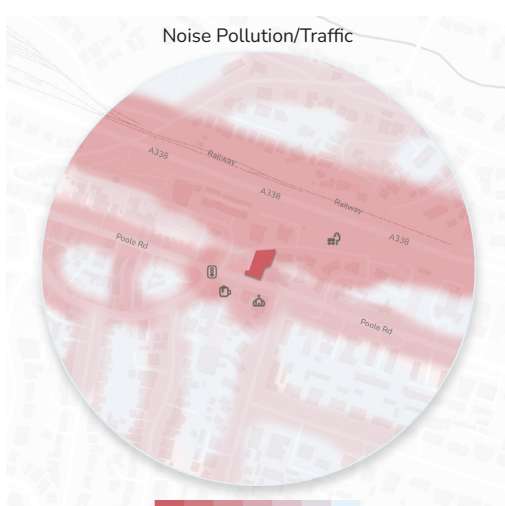
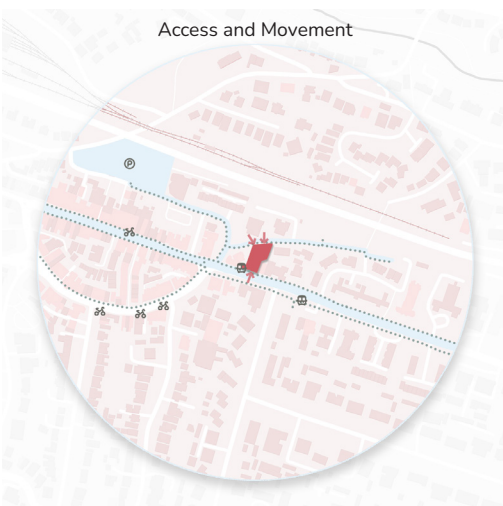
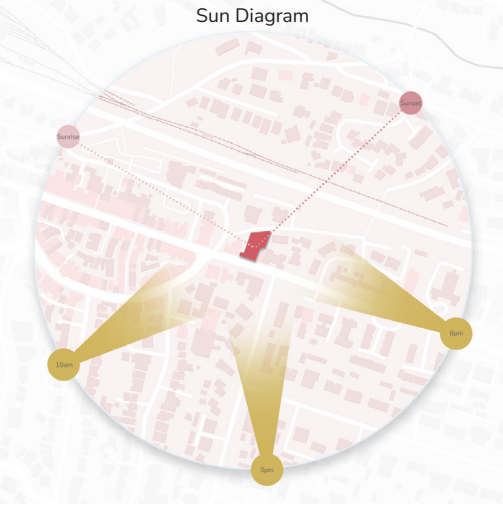
Personal Impact: Helping individuals with agoraphobia gain confidence, build independence, and experience public spaces differently.

Industry Impact: Encouraging architects, designers, and urban planners to rethink public and private spaces with accessibility and inclusivity in mind.

Societal Impact: Raising public awareness about agoraphobia and changing how people perceive, accommodate, and support those who struggle with it.

Policy Impact: Informing future guidelines on how mental health-sensitive spaces should be designed and integrated into cities.

Site



Design Requirements


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1. Accessibility and Ease of Navigation
- 

2. Human-Scaled and Calming Environments
- 

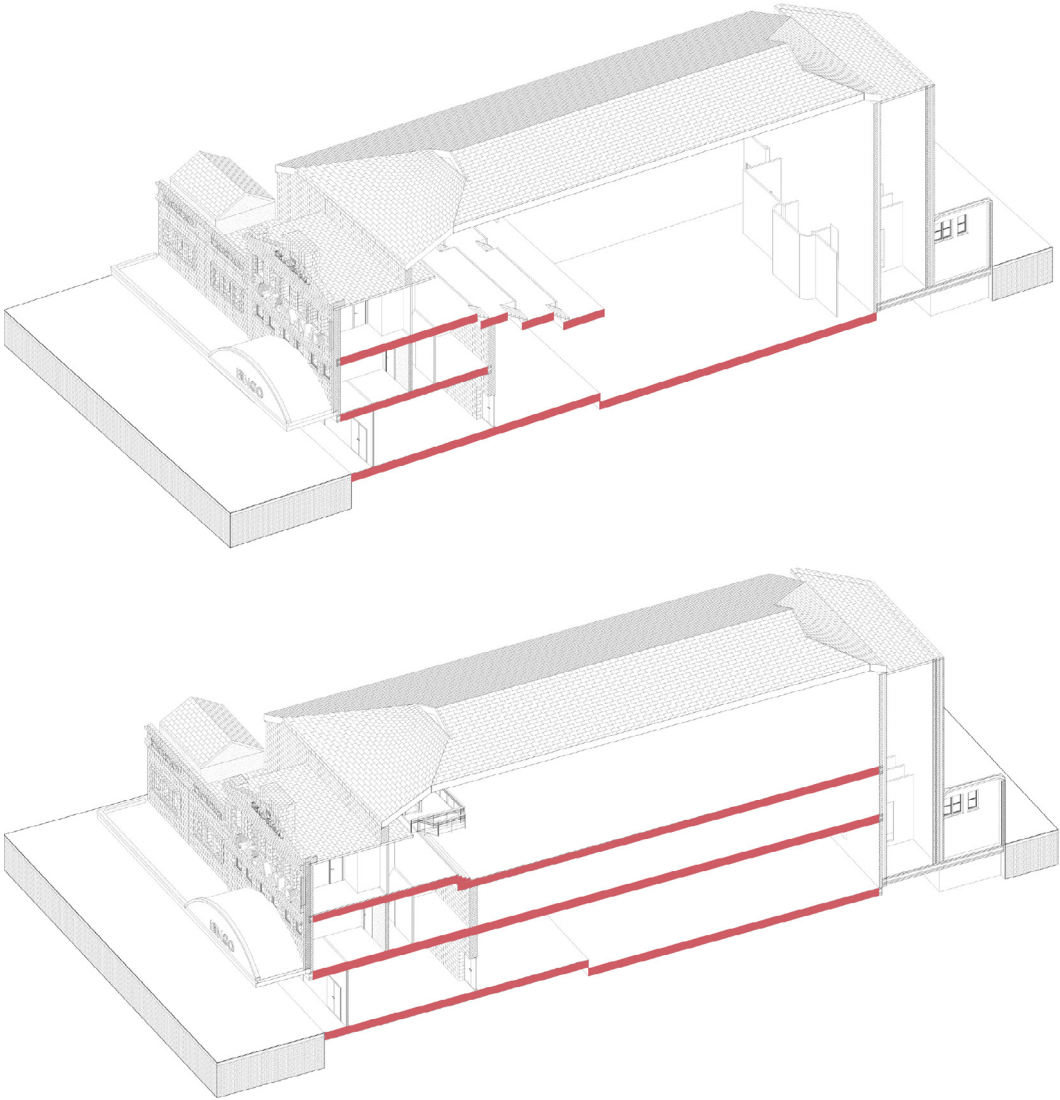
3. Privacy and Personal Space
- 

4. Connection to Nature
- 

5. Gradual Transitions and Adaptability
- 

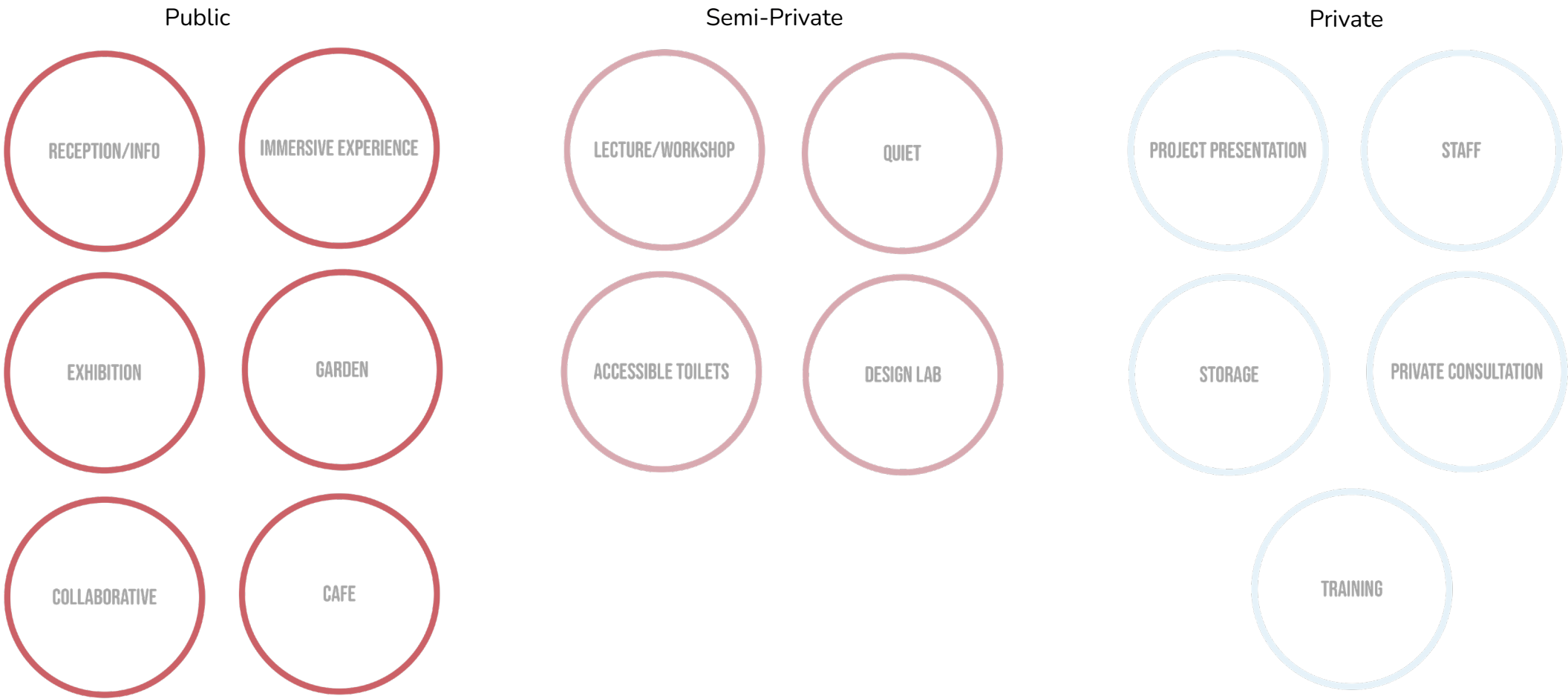
6. Sensory Comfort

Floor Extension

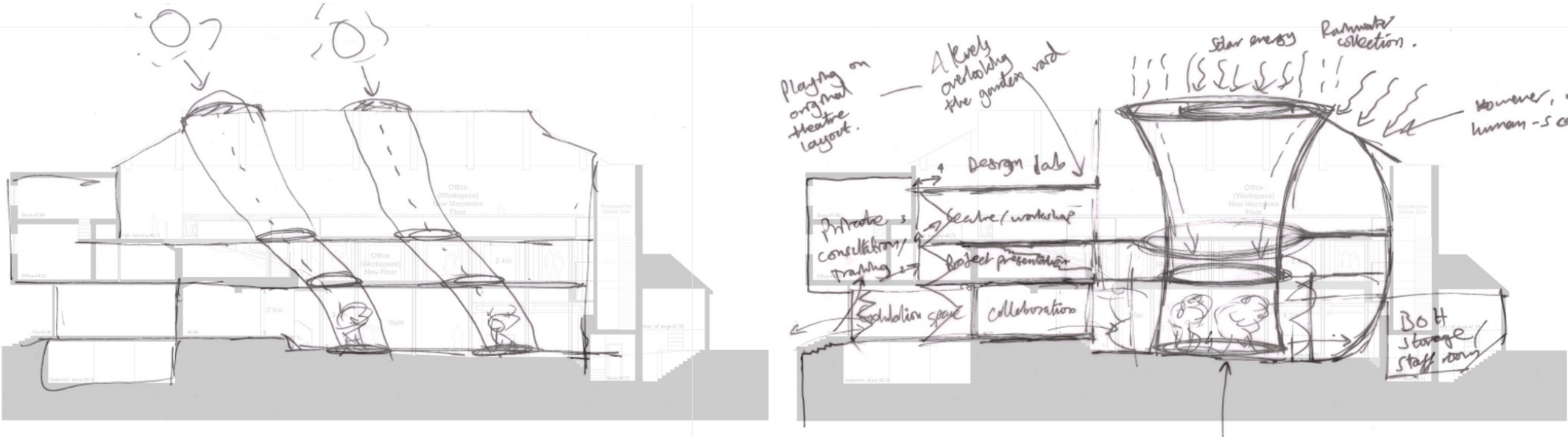
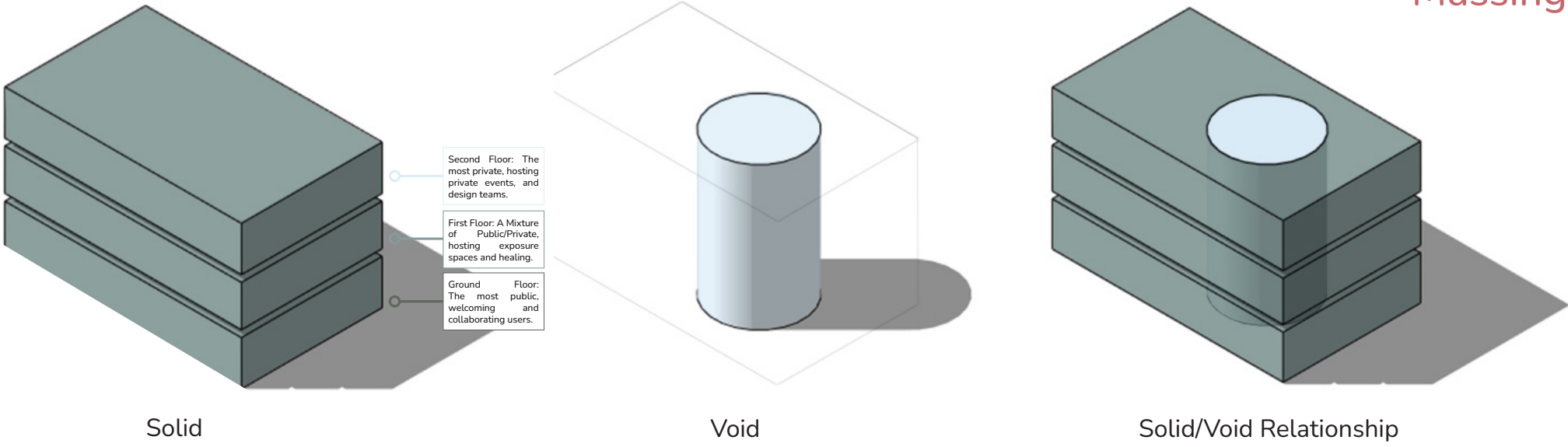


Facilities

Zoning was used to create a clear spatial hierarchy that supports comfort and autonomy. Public areas invite engagement, while semi-private and private zones offer retreat, control, and safety, key for those with agoraphobia.



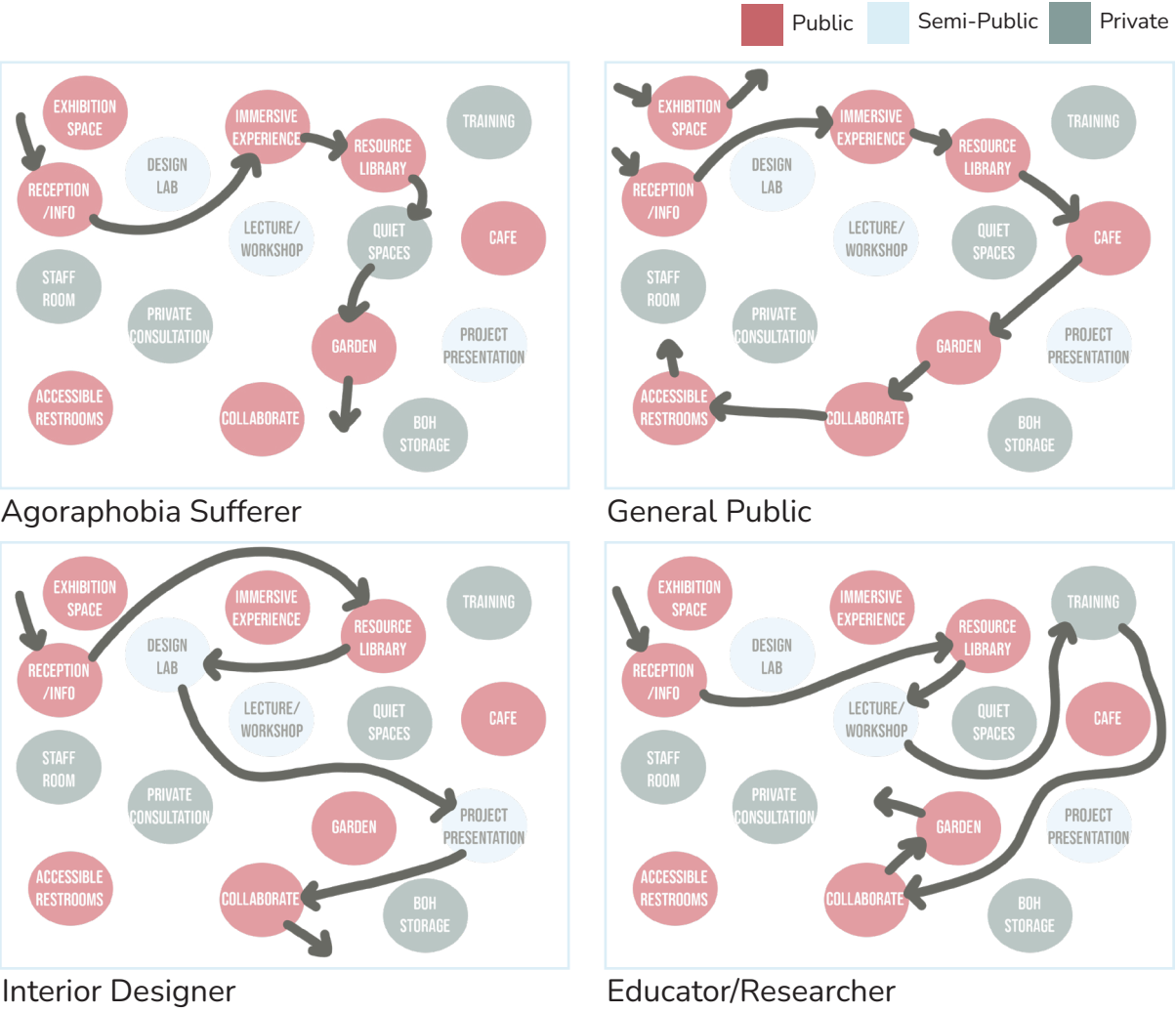
Massing



Hand-drawn sketches helped refine ideas intuitively and iteratively, allowing me to quickly test layouts, thresholds, and transitions. This tactile process kept user empathy and atmosphere central throughout.

User Journey

The project prioritises a flexible and considered journey, giving visitors choice, clarity, and control from arrival to exit. This approach turns the space into an experience of empowerment, not just education.



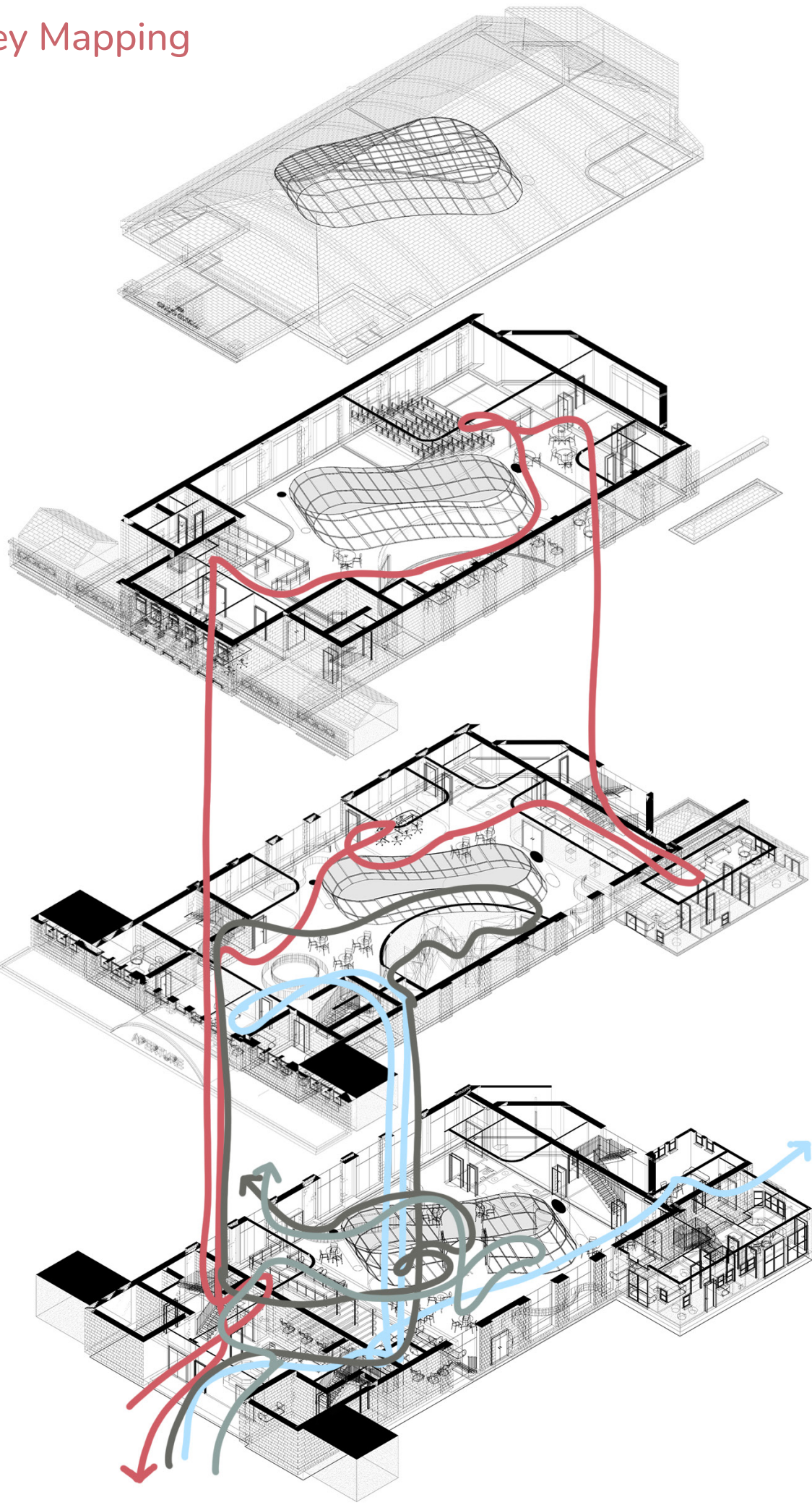
User Journey Mapping

Student or Trainee Designer
Moves between active zones like exhibits and workshops to quiet areas for focused work, with spaces for sharing and presenting projects.

General Public (Drop-in Visitor)
Gently guided through an immersive, legible layout with quiet retreats and a café offering freedom to pause or leave comfortably.

Visitor with Agoraphobia
Welcomed through calm, clearly defined spaces, with options for controlled movement, quiet relief, and flexible exit points like the café.

Mental Health Professional / Guest Speaker
Uses direct, discreet routes to access private zones for talks or sessions, with back-of-house areas for quiet breaks and preparation.



Design Requirement Mapping

4. Connection to Nature
The central voids flood the building with natural light and house internal gardens, offering a strong connection to nature while reducing feelings of enclosure or claustrophobia.

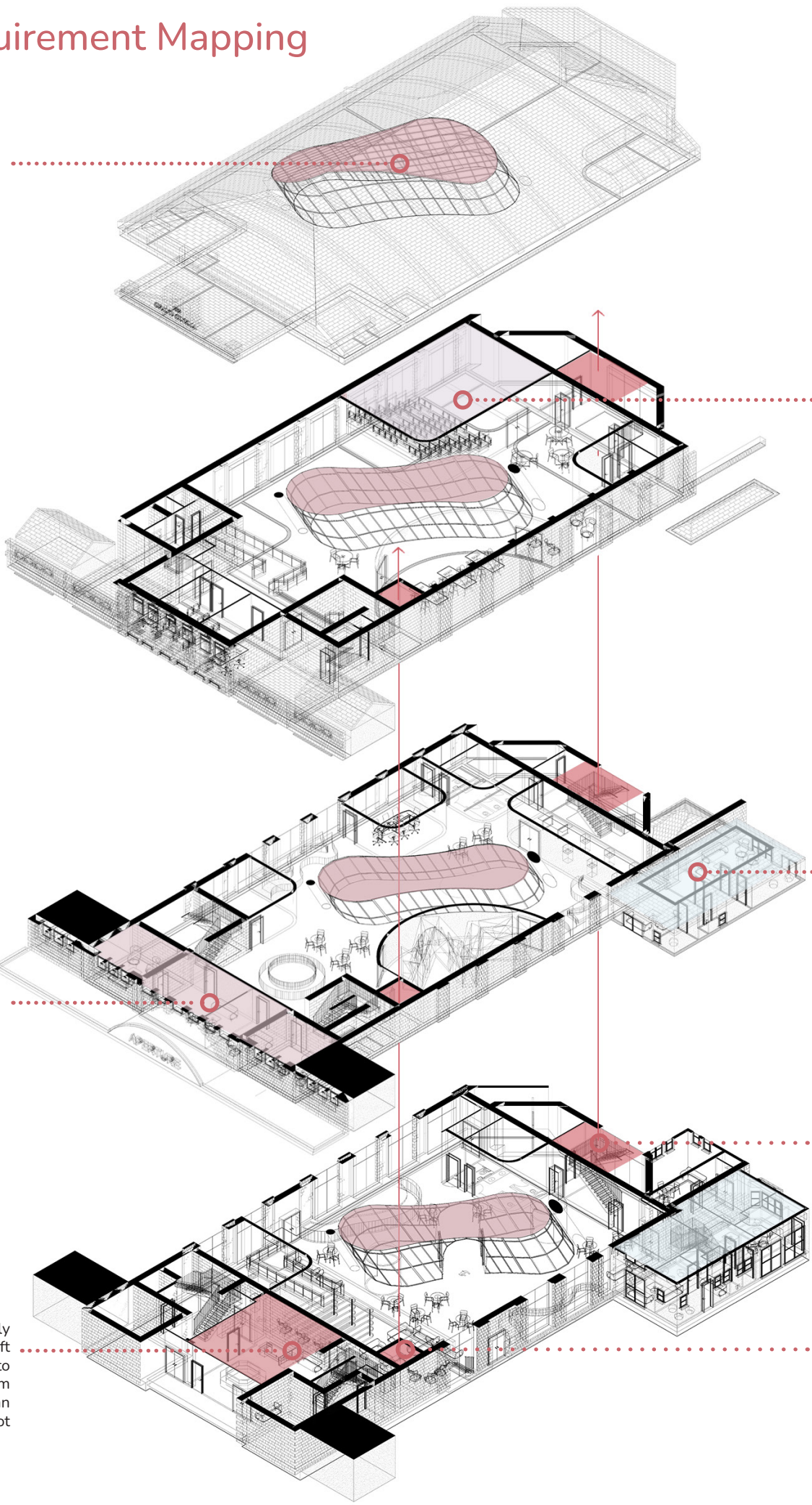
3. Privacy and Personal Space
The private consultation rooms offer enclosed, quiet environments for one-on-one conversations or specialist help, supporting privacy and a sense of personal space.

2. Human-Scaled and Calming Environments
The entrance is intentionally narrow and warm, using soft materials and low lighting to create a gentle transition from the outside world. Its human scale ensures visitors are not overwhelmed upon arrival.

5. Gradual Transitions and Adaptability
Designed for flexibility, the lecture theatre adapts to a range of uses, from group discussions to private workshops, allowing users to shape the space to their comfort and needs.

6. Sensory Comfort
Carefully curated sensory environments offer low-stimulation zones, featuring acoustic treatments, soft textures, and warm lighting, ideal for calming moments or sensory regulation.

1. Accessibility and Ease of Navigation
Vertical circulation is clear, accessible, and intuitively placed, reducing disorientation and stress. Open sightlines across floors enhance wayfinding and provide visual reassurance throughout the building.

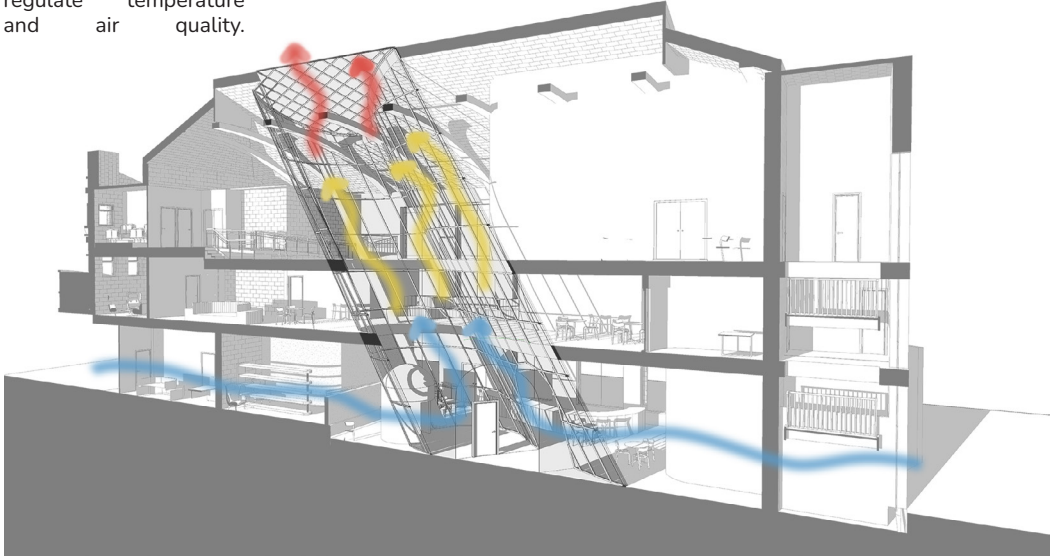


Climate Management

The angled glazed roof maximizes passive solar gain in winter while limiting overheating in summer, creating a comfortable year-round internal climate.

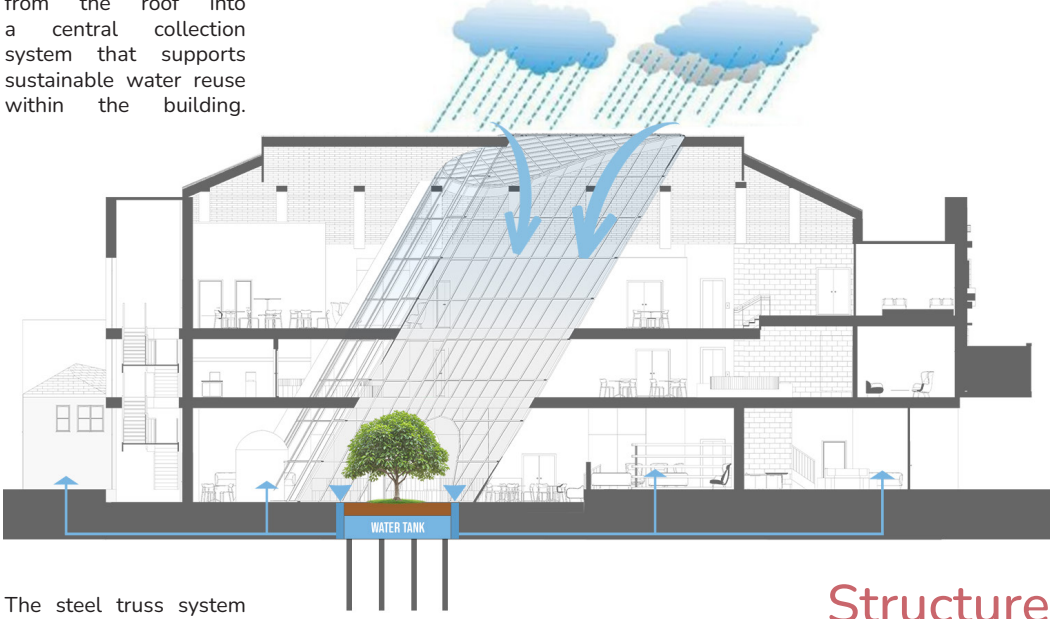
Natural ventilation flows through the central void, using stack effect and cross ventilation to regulate temperature and air quality.

Air Management



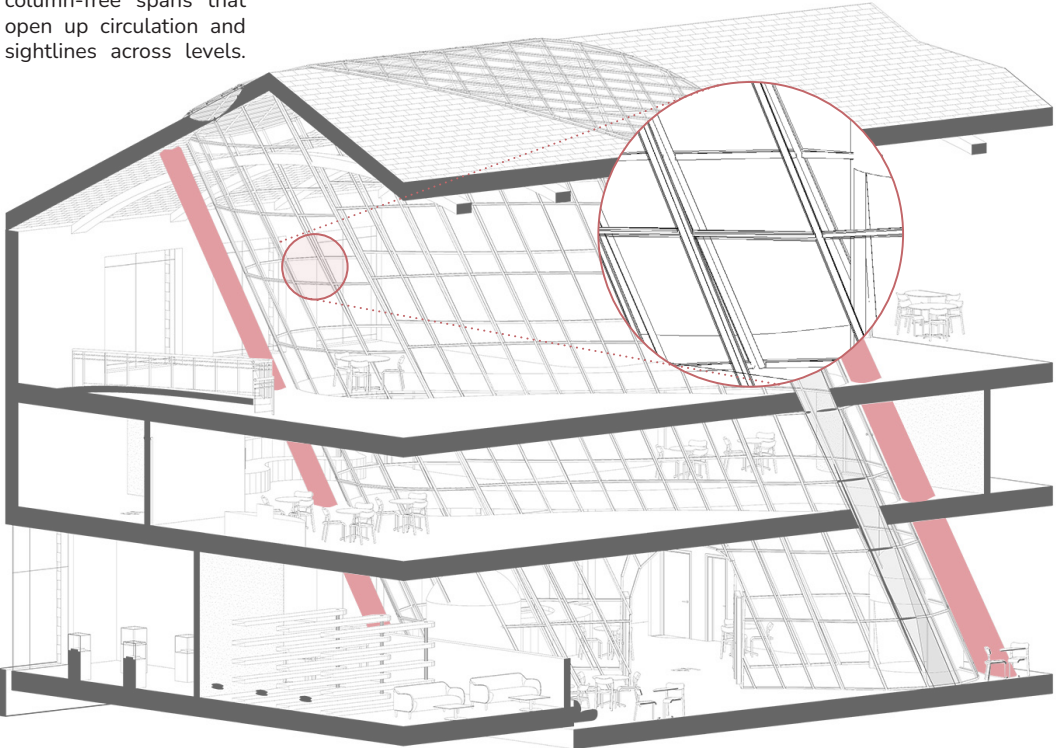
Rainwater Collection

Rainwater is directed from the roof into a central collection system that supports sustainable water reuse within the building.



Structure

The steel truss system supports the large glazed void, allowing column-free spans that open up circulation and sightlines across levels.



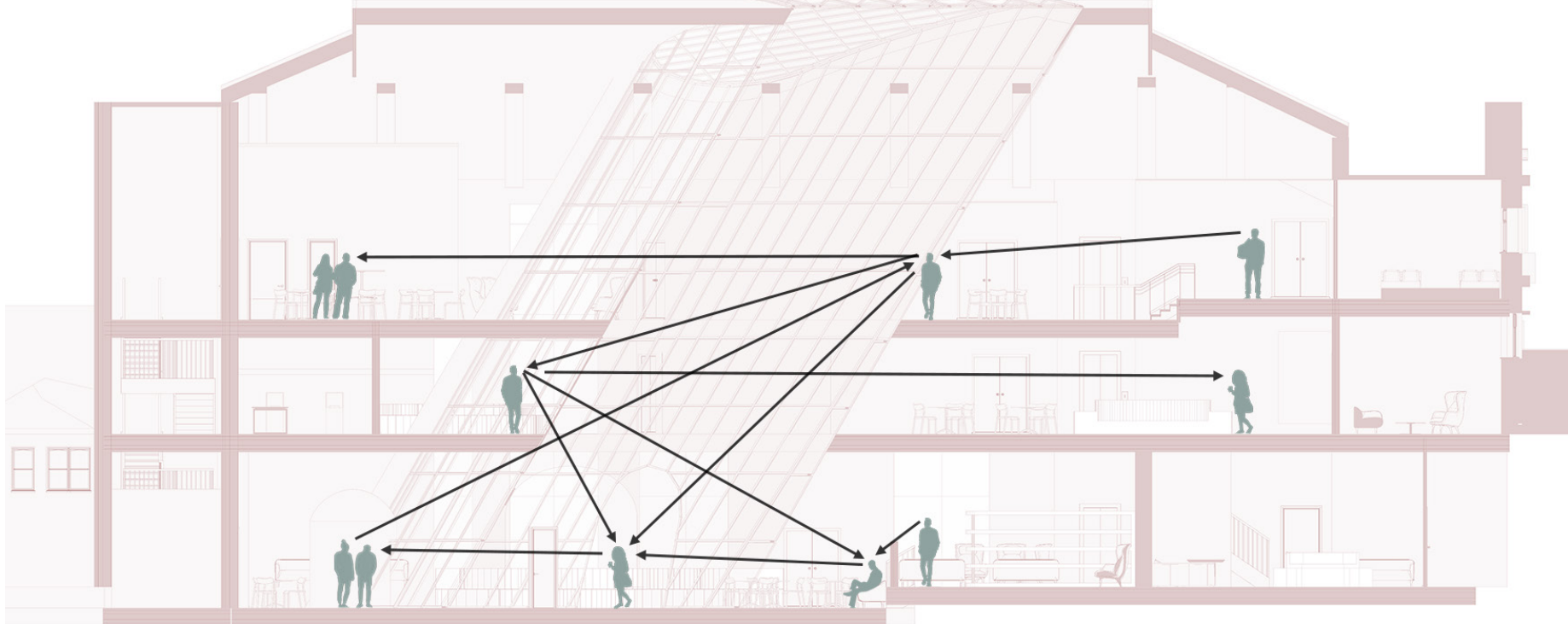
Material Consideration



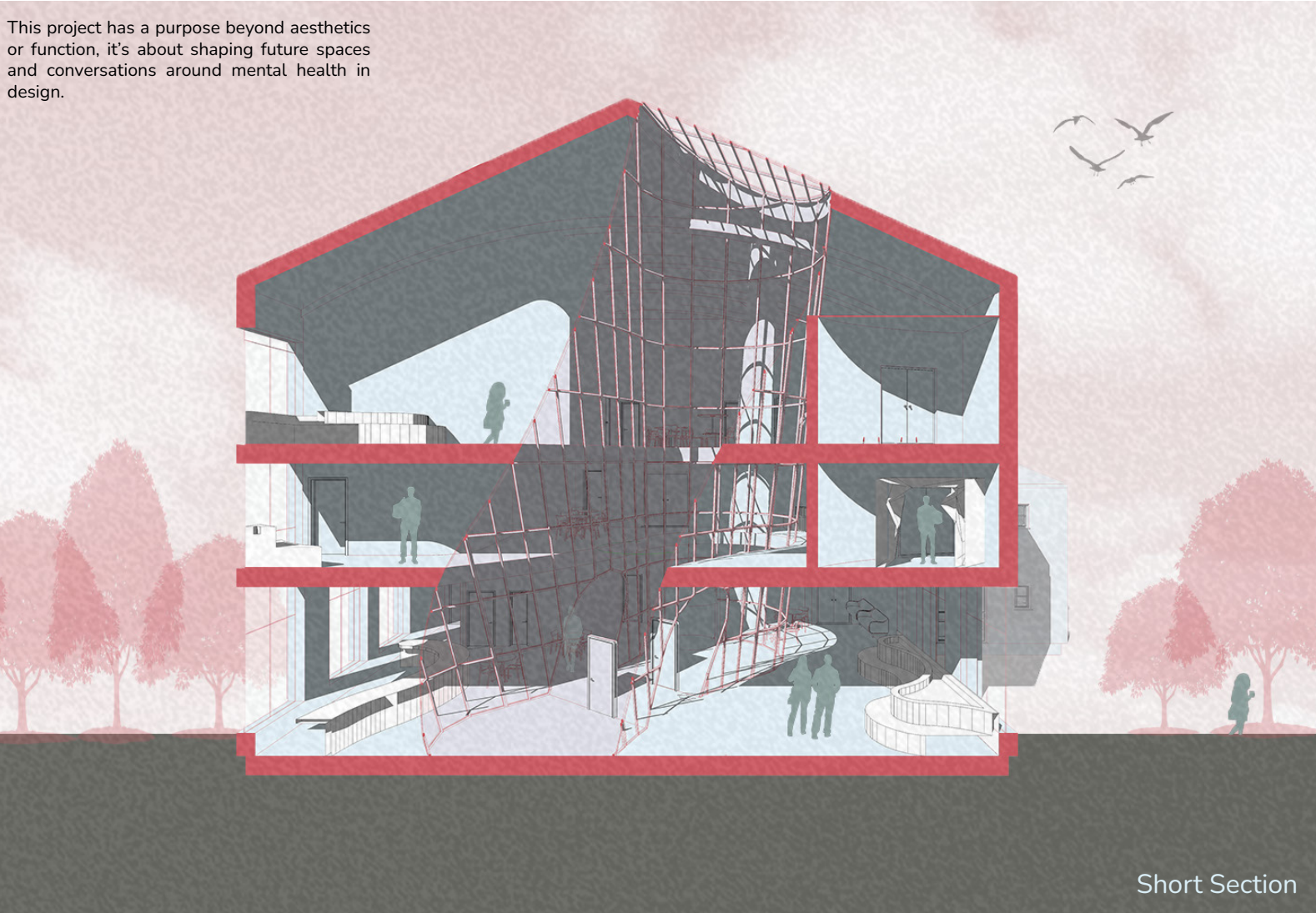
My material palette balances warmth, acoustic comfort, and sustainability, using claytime, eco-terrazzo, and timber to soften the space, while glass and concrete form a strong structural and visual core. Each material was chosen to support sensory comfort, durability, and user wellbeing without compromising on aesthetic clarity.

Sightlines

The central void creates visual connections between floors, ensuring openness, passive surveillance, and an immediate sense of spatial orientation.

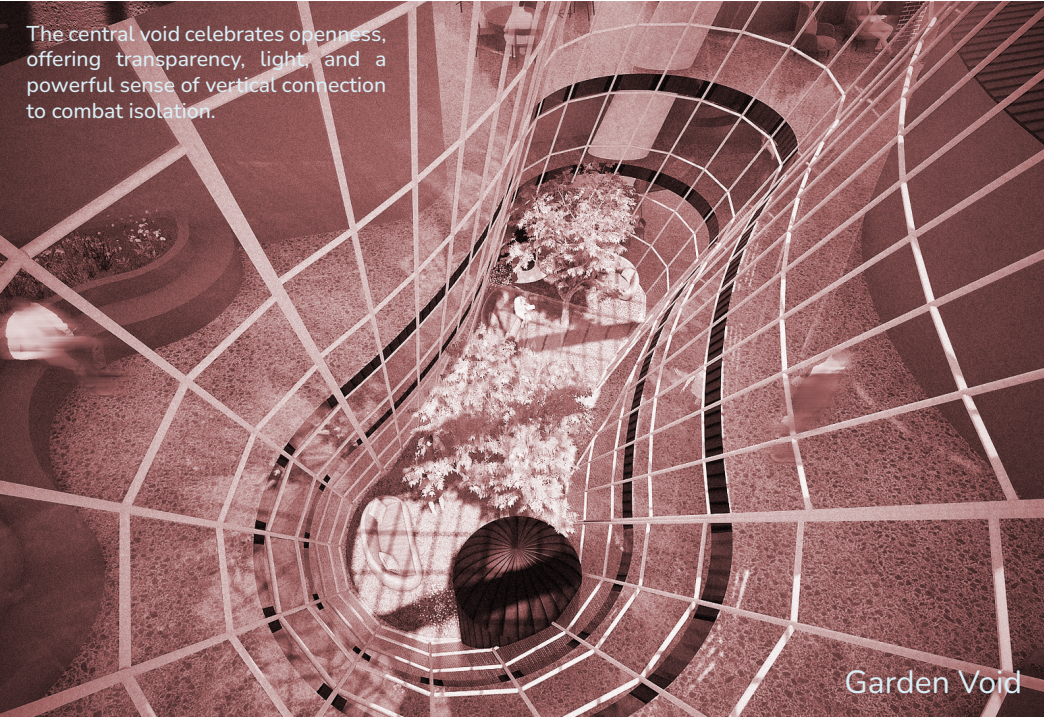


This project has a purpose beyond aesthetics or function, it's about shaping future spaces and conversations around mental health in design.



Short Section

The central void celebrates openness, offering transparency, light and a powerful sense of vertical connection to combat isolation.



Garden Void

Safe, quiet zones offer space for conversation and recovery. Intimate settings for real, meaningful support.



Consultation

This is a place for learning and transformation, where knowledge-sharing becomes part of healing and progress.



Theatre

The garden void merges architecture with nature, designed for decompression, reflection, and quiet reconnection.



Void/Cafe/Collaboration Zones

Strategy

Clarity and structure ease anxiety. This six-step journey helps users engage with the space on their own terms and at their own pace.

2 CLEAR SIGHTLINES AND INTUITIVE LAYOUTS OFFER USERS A SENSE OF CONTROL AND AWARENESS.

3

USERS ENGAGE WITH MULTI-SENSORY DISPLAYS TO BUILD AWARENESS AND EMPATHY AROUND AGORAPHOBIA.

6

VISITORS LEAVE WITH KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING, AND TOOLS

5

FLEXIBLE AREAS SUPPORT COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AND SHARED STORIES BETWEEN VISITORS AND PROFESSIONALS.

4

CALM, SEMI-PRIVATE SPACES ALLOW FOR INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION AND EMOTIONAL PROCESSING.

1

A CALM, WELCOMING APPROACH REDUCES ANXIETY AND ENCOURAGES ENTRY AT THE USER'S OWN PACE.

Morning

8:00 – 9:00 AM

Quiet Hours: Ideal for sensory-sensitive visitors & early researchers

9:00 – 10:30 AM

Guided Tours & Interactive Exhibits: Learn about agoraphobia & inclusive design

10:30 – 12:00 PM

Workshops & Discussions: Architecture, mental health, and urban accessibility

Afternoon

12:00 – 1:30 PM

Reflection & Social Spaces: Sensory gardens, quiet pods, & networking areas

1:30 – 3:00 PM

Industry Sessions: Design critiques, healthcare talks, & corporate wellness

3:00 – 4:00 PM

Experimental Design: AR tools, spatial studies & visitor feedback

Evening

4:00 – 6:00 PM

Community Forums & Networking: Public discussions & cross-industry collaboration

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Special Events: Guest speakers, research presentations & night-time tours

