



*SAFE SPACE*  
*An emergency shelter for LGBTQ+ youth*

*Diploma fall '21*  
*Anders Krogh*



# Introduction

My diploma will look into the issue of homeless LGBTQ+ youth in the US. This is a pressing problem that needs to be addressed and discussed. I will try to give insight into the topic and try to give an answer to how one can resolve a small part of it. A study shows that 50% of families responded in a negative way when their kids revealed their LGBTQ+ status, and another 26% was reported being kicked out of their home for the same reason.<sup>1</sup> Although there are many services for homeless youth in general, there are an extreme lack of services to this specific group of people. LGBTQ+ youth who find them selves in a shelter where cisgender and straight youth stay are often the subject of physical and mental violence, which can lead to further trauma in an already traumatizing situation.



## Definitions

A homeless person as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is anyone who lacks permanent or fixed housing who lives in a place not meant for habitation or in shelters.

Youth is defined as a person between ages 14 and 25.

LGBTQ+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Transgender, Queer/Questioning and Self identified under the umbrella `not straight`.

Cisgender is defined as someone who identifies as the gender they were assigned with at birth.

# Current situation

Youth in the US today experience homelessness in many different ways. Although their stories are different, there are some similarities. A report from 2019 states that family causes are the most common cause for LGBTQ+ youth homelessness, or societal and familial stigmas surrounding their “non-normative” identity.<sup>2</sup> Other causes mentioned are aging out of foster care systems, other conflicts in the home and poverty. Normally it is not only one of these, but a combination of many.

Although straight, cisgender homeless youth also suffers from high numbers of mental health issues, depression and a larger risk of suicide are their LGBTQ+ peers more likely to experience a worse outcome. The cycle of rejection often leads to more mental health issues, higher risk of survival sex, more likely to start using drugs to cope with their situation and more likely to become HIV positive. It is also known that black LGBTQ+ youth and transgender youth are higher represented on these statistics. LGBTQ+ homeless youth face two formidable barriers: they must work to overcome their homelessness and simultaneously deal with stigma, discrimination, and mistreatment due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

<sup>3</sup>

About 60% of current shelters are run by religious groups, that fail to give LGBTQ+ youth the services and safety they need. Instead of providing the help and care they should get they are often denied services when their LGBTQ+ status is revealed. It is also reported that roughly 50% of LGBTQ+ homeless youth have experienced being physically assaulted because of their identity. This often results in an evil circle that follows the individuals into adulthood.<sup>4</sup>

While less than 10% of the United States youth population identifies as LGBTQ+, this percentage more than doubles in the nationwide youth population currently experiencing homelessness. Although there is not an accurate nationwide count of homeless youth, it is estimated that between 1.3 and 1.7 million young people experience one night of homelessness a year and 550,000 young people are homeless for a week or longer. This means that, even by conservative estimates, there are at least 260,000 LGBTQ+ youth who will experience a night of homelessness this year, 110,000 of whom will experience longer-term homelessness.<sup>5</sup>

# Idea

My goal for the project is to create a place where one focuses on quality of living and the spaces, hoping that this will lead to a better environment for the LGBTQ+ youth to get the help they need and deserve. Through my diploma work I want to investigate how a smaller facility in an established residential area can provide a better and more dignified offer, with a more homey and inviting living situation, than the existing solutions today. Although their situation is temporary, the place to seek help should feel permanent.

This part of society are often left with a lack of funding and having to re-use space that is not meant for living in. I believe that helping fewer people, but helping them better is a solid solution. This is not the case today as this part of society are often left with a lack of funding and having to re-use space that is not meant for living in.

There are many different ways one can approach a task of designing for a marginalized group. The main question I have asked myself is do I try to help as many as possible, or do I try to create a space that focuses on quality over quantity. I've experienced myself that if one takes the time and energy to really help someone properly the results are much better.



*A former church converted into a homeless shelter in Hartford, CT<sup>7</sup>*



*One of the rooms for residents at New Haven Inn, San José.<sup>8</sup>*

Today the shelters dedicated to LGBTQ+ youth are often put up in places not ment for living. The space is crammed and overfilled, due to lack in resources and space. How can one create a place that is private and protected, yet open and inclusive?

# Site

New York City is chosen as a site because it attracts many LGBTQ+ people in general. It is also popular to many LGBTQ+ youth exactly because of the strong presence of gay and queer culture and liberal mindset. An estimated 1,600 young people who identify as LGBTQ+ are currently experiencing homelessness in New York City, yet only 143 emergency shelter beds are dedicated to this population. (5) The percentage of youth who identify as LGBTQ+ as opposed to heterosexual doubles again for New York City – 40% of homeless youth in NYC are LGBTQ+.

Although NYC is a liberal and accepting city, one will find the housing market as very rough and inaccessible for this group. The combination of lack of education, poor mental health, small to non-existing network and an often biased job market often lead to LGBTQ+ youth ending on the streets.

For my diploma I researched different sites in NYC, trying to find a suitable place for my program. I looked into re-use, transformation and empty lots. In the end I wanted to create a new place, trying to visualize how one can focus on quality in helping homeless youth.

I also wanted to avoid the main «gay area» located in West Village on lower Manhattan as this often is followed by partying, drugs and sex, that is not suitable for a homeless youth. Through a website called Living Lots<sup>6</sup> I managed to locate an empty lot on Manhattans Upper West Side. It is close to Central Park and The American Museum of Natural History.

The site is squeezed in between two residential buildings with free facades to north and south. Today the site is overgrown and with no visual signs of use.



*Site as it is today.*

# Organization

I've placed the most public program (in relation to the day-center) on the lower floors and the most private (bedrooms) to the upper floors. This way you will get a gradient from public to private the higher one goes in the building.

My building is taking into consideration the height of the neighbor to the west with six floors, and then rising one floor above the neighbor towards the east. The area

in general is spanning from three to seven floors, with an increase towards central park. Behind the site there is a one story restaurant where I'm utilizing the roof for extra space. It is to be used as a private garden where the kitchen can grow vegetables and the residents and users can eat and be outside without having to be on the street level. One can access it from both the kitchen and dining room, and also from the lounge on the first floor via a staircase.

In the middle of the building one will find an elevator and a staircase. They help divide the building in half to create more intimate spaces while at the same time be easily accessible. The stair and elevator-shaft also helps stabilizing the building by being a constructive core spanning through all floors.

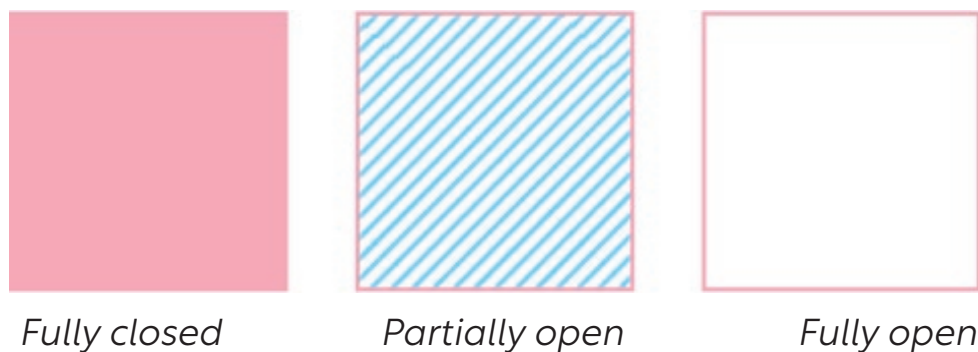
The entrance is set back from the street creating a shielded space. From the street level one can access the elevator that is hidden behind one of the brick walls. The stairs leading up to the single door entrance are made to resemble a residential building and not something public or clinical. There are two fields of glass so potential users and residents can stand outside a look into the reception area seeing both who is at work or if it is crowded. The curved brick ceiling is hugging the entrance creating a welcoming and inviting feeling. In the area there are mostly buildings in brown stone, a type of





limestone that was very popular in residential buildings all over Manhattan and Brooklyn. The exterior of my building is made from brick to create a sense of belonging to the neighborhood, while at the same time shields and protects the residents without being cold and harsh.

The facade helps accentuate the curtain between public and private, shielded and exposed. It is a range from fully closed wall to perforated wall to completely open. This way one can decide where to seek shelter and protection and where to be more exposed to the street. For example the common room on the ground floor are hidden behind perforated brick walls to allow light into the space while prevent pedestrians to look right into the room.



The first floor, and the first thing that one meets arriving to the shelter is a reception with staff 24/7. This is important because one can control who enters and leaves and work as security since this group is often targets for violence. They can also check the youth for contrabands, enforce curfews and be the welcoming face creating a home-like feeling. There is also a small office for the employees and a counseling room in relation to the reception. On this floor one will also find a lounge where the youth can meet other peers, hang out or use a computer.

On the second floor one there is a kitchen and dining room. Here all the food is prepared for the people staying in the shelter and visiting the day center. The dining room is set up as a small restaurant where one can decide how to configure the tables - if you want to dine alone or sit in smaller or larger groups. The kitchen has a cooking space to the back of the building and a dishwashing zone to the front. In between is storage and a cooling room. Two bridges leads from both the dining room and the kitchen out to the roof terrace. Here one can use a bbq, grow vegetables and eat if the weather allows it.

The basement has important functions as showers and laundry. There are five rooms for showering in that should serve both visitors to the day-center and the residents in the shelter. There are four small laundry + dryers for use by the youth and a separate room with larger industrial machines to be used by the staff.



*Model 1:50*

The third, fourth and fifth floor is where the bedrooms are located. The bedrooms are the most private area and all of them are facing north. Here one has a small bed, a desk and a toilet. This is important especially for trans and gender-questioning youth as some may suffer from body dysmorphia or use body altering aids such as binders. With a private bathroom one doesn't have to go into the common areas to be able to use the toilets. Each room also has two windows, one as a bay window and one behind a perforated brick wall. This way the youth staying here can choose if they want to expose themselves and look out to the backyard or feel sheltered by the bricks. The bay window helps extend the room and bring light in, while at the same time be deep enough to prevent insight from one of the buildings in the backyard. Storage is found underneath the bed.

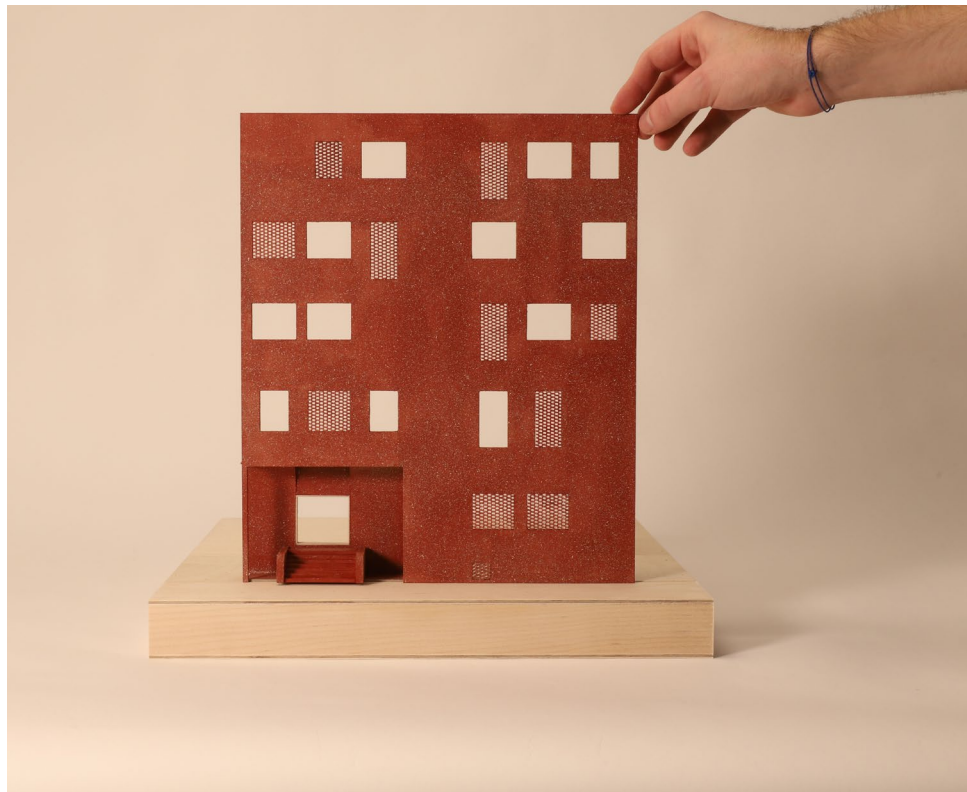
Towards the street-side of the building one will find a common hallway with small nooks to allow casual meetings between the users and to be a space in-between the fully private bedroom and the public lounge on the first floor. There are also small loggias facing the street where one can get some fresh air or enjoy the sun on bright days. These also works as an extra fire escape that one can stand on and wait to be rescued.

# Materials + Construction

The two main materials is brick, preferably used, and cross laminated timber. Both of them are warm and tactile and while the brick creates a sense of protection, the timber will soften the atmosphere.

The building is supported by a double brick wall where the inner is the constructive and load bearing. CLT-slabs are spanning 6 meters in between the north and south wall resting on the inner brick wall. This is an environmentally sustainable way to build, since one can reuse brick and there is almost no need for concrete or steel. Double brick walls and wood spanning in between is a traditional way of building, not often used today. I wanted to try to bring this method in to this century by showing it is still a valid way to build. The brick and wood is also very fire resistant which is important as this group of people who are supposed to stay here is more exposed to risk of attacks.

The walls are supported by internal columns built in the inner brick wall. The elevator shaft and staircase is also helping stiffening the building. In addition one will make columns of brick inside the inner wall to strengthen it.



*Facade 1:50*



# References

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<https://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/national/20070307HomelessYouth.pdf>

2: QSAPP (Queer Students of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation), «Housing LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness», 2019.

<https://www.arch.columbia.edu/books/reader/432-safe-space-housing-lgbtq-youth-experiencing-homelessness>

3: Mary Cunningham, Michael Pergamit, Nan Astone, Jessica Luna, "Homeless LGBTQ Youth," Urban Instit:ute, 2014.

<https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/22876/413209-Homeless-LGBTQ-Youth.PDF>

4: Leah Przybylski, «From Cast-out to Community: Identifying Barriers in Design that Keep LGBTQ+ Youth from Accessing Homeless Shelters», 2019

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5: QSAPP (Queer Students of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation), «Housing LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness», 2019.

<https://www.arch.columbia.edu/books/reader/432-safe-space-housing-lgbtq-youth-experiencing-homelessness>

6: Living Lots NYC.

<https://livinglotsnyc.org/lot/1012130128/>

7: NBC News, "Shelter for LGBTQ Young Adults Opening in the Bronx".

<https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/shelter-lgbtq-young-adults-opening-bronx-n690326>

8: The Mercury News, "Bay Area's second LGBT homeless shelter offers safe haven from life's storm".

<https://www.mercurynews.com/2019/06/23/bay-areas-second-lgbt-homeless-shelter-offers-safe-haven-from-lifes-storm/>



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# Program

I intend to design a shelter specifically aimed for homeless LGBTQ+ youth to take care of their needs in a difficult time of their lives.

The space should function in the intersection between day center and emergency shelter, providing both fundamental needs for the users. The day center is a place where homeless LGBTQ+ youth can get a warm meal, receive counseling, do their laundry, take a warm shower, hang out and meet other peers. This is an important part as many homeless youth tend to stay with other family members and friends, but do not receive the help they need. The emergency shelter will use the same facilities as the day center, but in addition there will be a place to sleep.

These are general needs of homeless youth, and to specify them to LGBTQ+ youth one would have to alter them and do some changes. For example would the sleeping areas not be divided into male/female, but single sleeping arrangements to provide privacy and comfort for all genders. This is very important specially for transgender and genderqueer youth who are more likely to have body dysmorphia or are undergoing a transition.

QSAPP (Queers Students of Architecture, Planning and Preservation) at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation has pointed out some different conditions that are ideal and necessary for LGBTQ+ youth.

The conditions are as followed:

*Discreet entry*

*Door Check-In*

*Communal space*

*Private bedroom*

*Gender neutral bathrooms*

*Counseling with private space*

*Access to healthcare*

*Diverse queer staffing*

*Affirmative signage*

## **ENTRANCE**

reception	8m <sup>2</sup>
lobby	9.6m <sup>2</sup>
office	4.5m <sup>2</sup>
counseling	4.5m <sup>2</sup>

## **OPERATIONS**

wc & showers	22.5m <sup>2</sup>
laundry	14.5m <sup>2</sup>

## **SERVICES**

kitchen	36m <sup>2</sup>
dining	36m <sup>2</sup>
outdoor space	100m <sup>2</sup>
lounge	36m <sup>2</sup>

## **LIVING**

common areas	93m <sup>2</sup>
bedrooms	132m <sup>2</sup>

## **TECHNICAL**

elevator	4m <sup>2</sup>
stairs	6.5m <sup>2</sup>
technical room	5m <sup>2</sup>

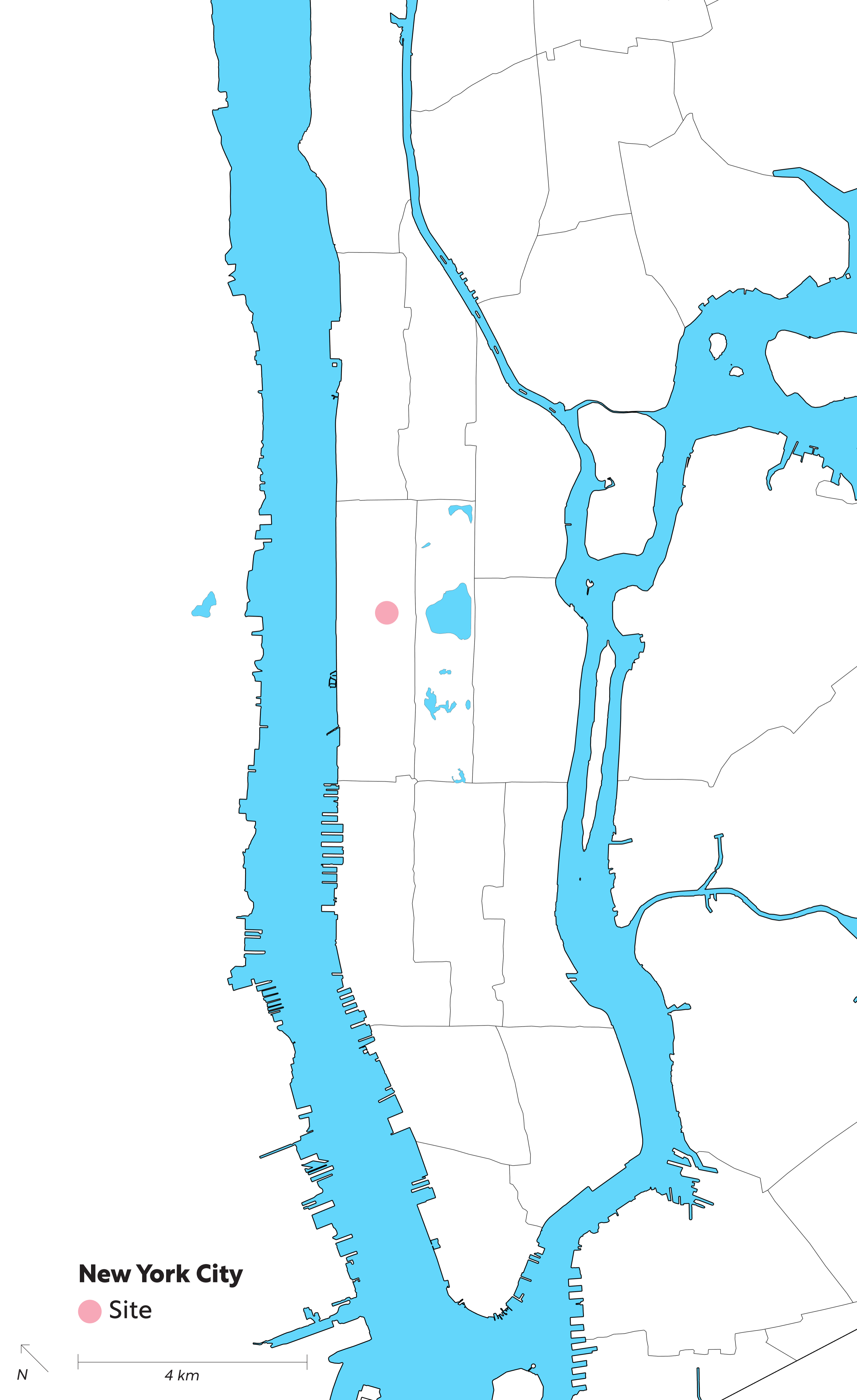
*total aprox.  
600m<sup>2</sup>*

# SAFE SPACE

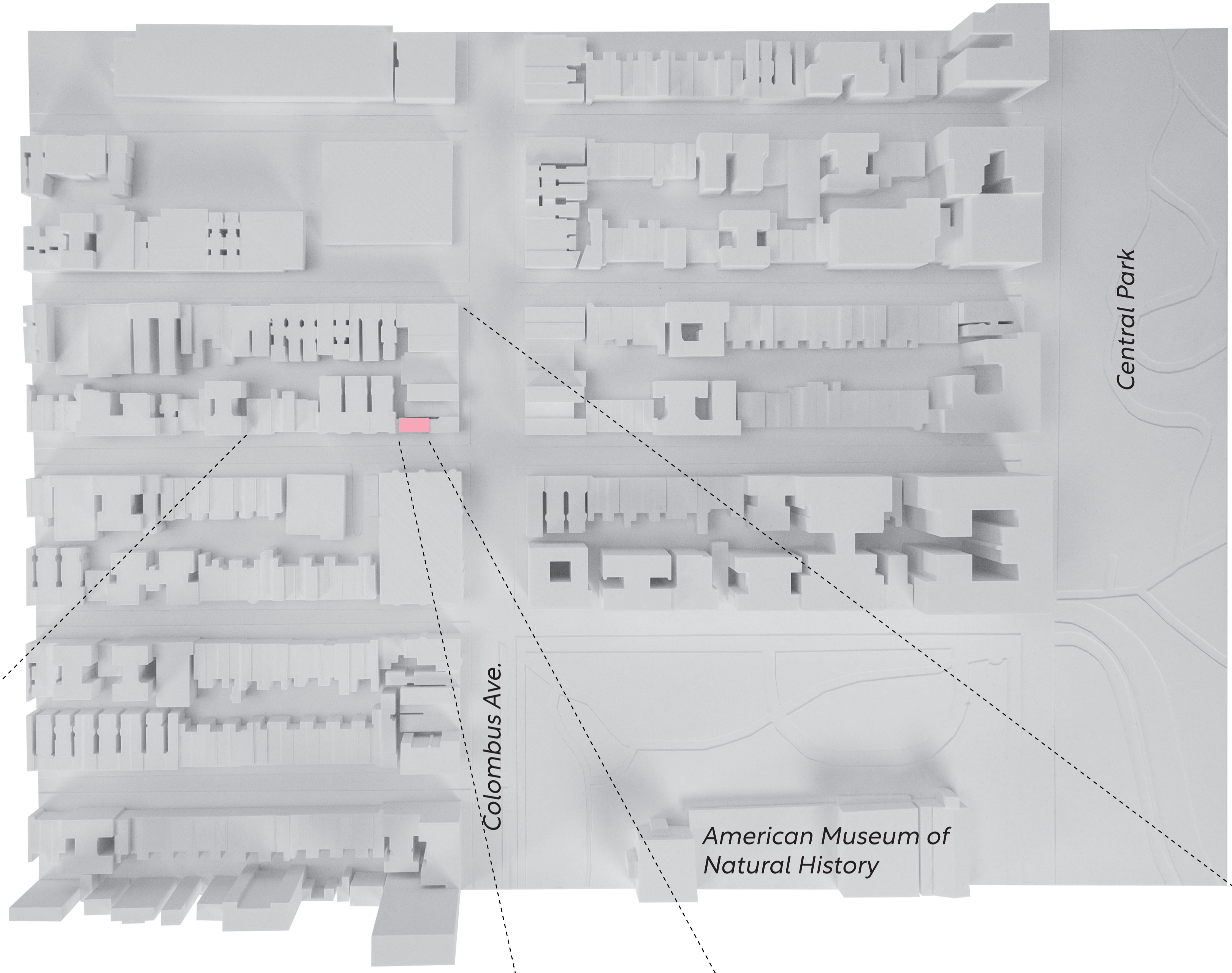
## *an emergency shelter for LGBTQ+ youth*

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**Upper West Side**  
Model 1:1000



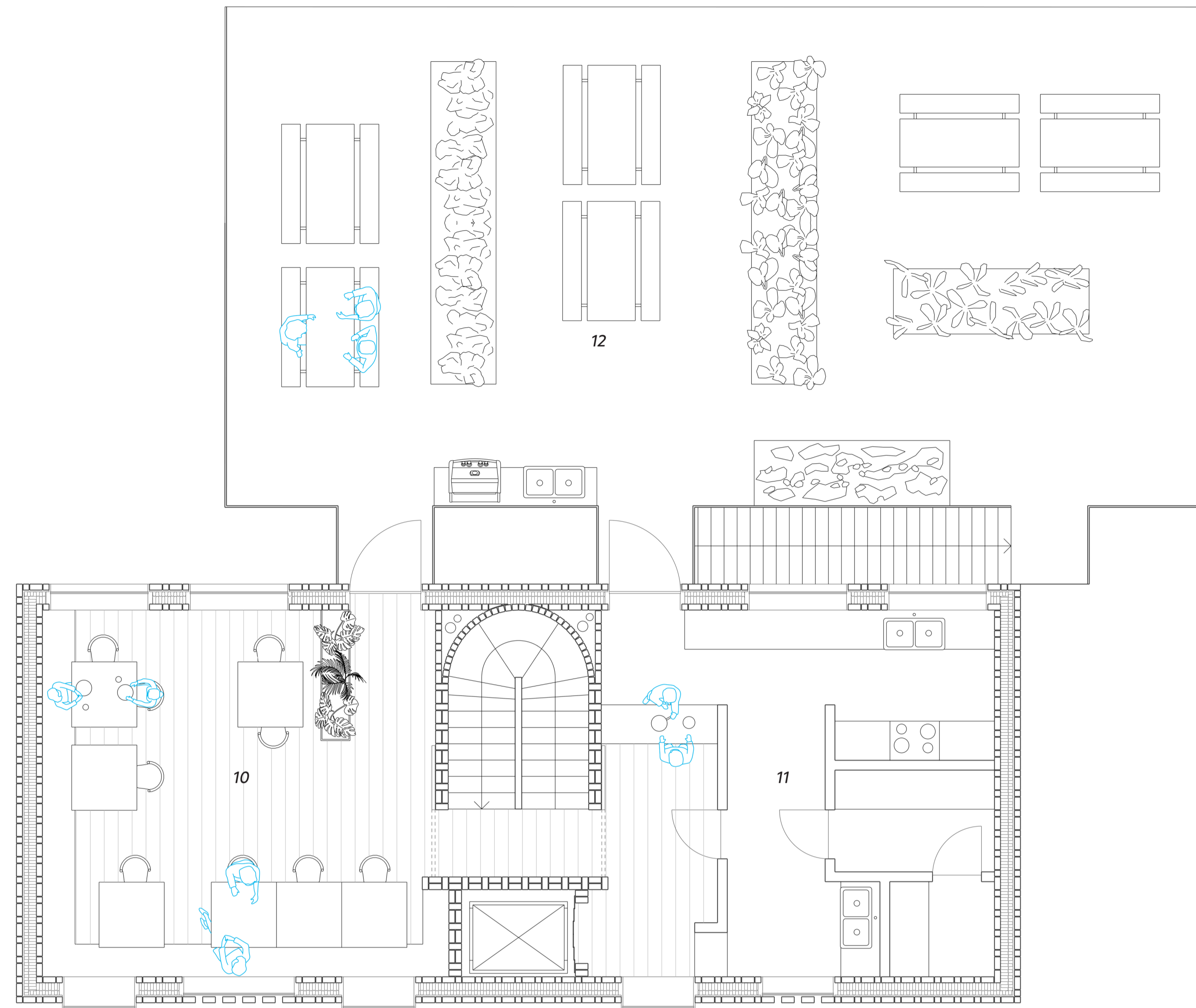
**Site**

**Neighborhood**

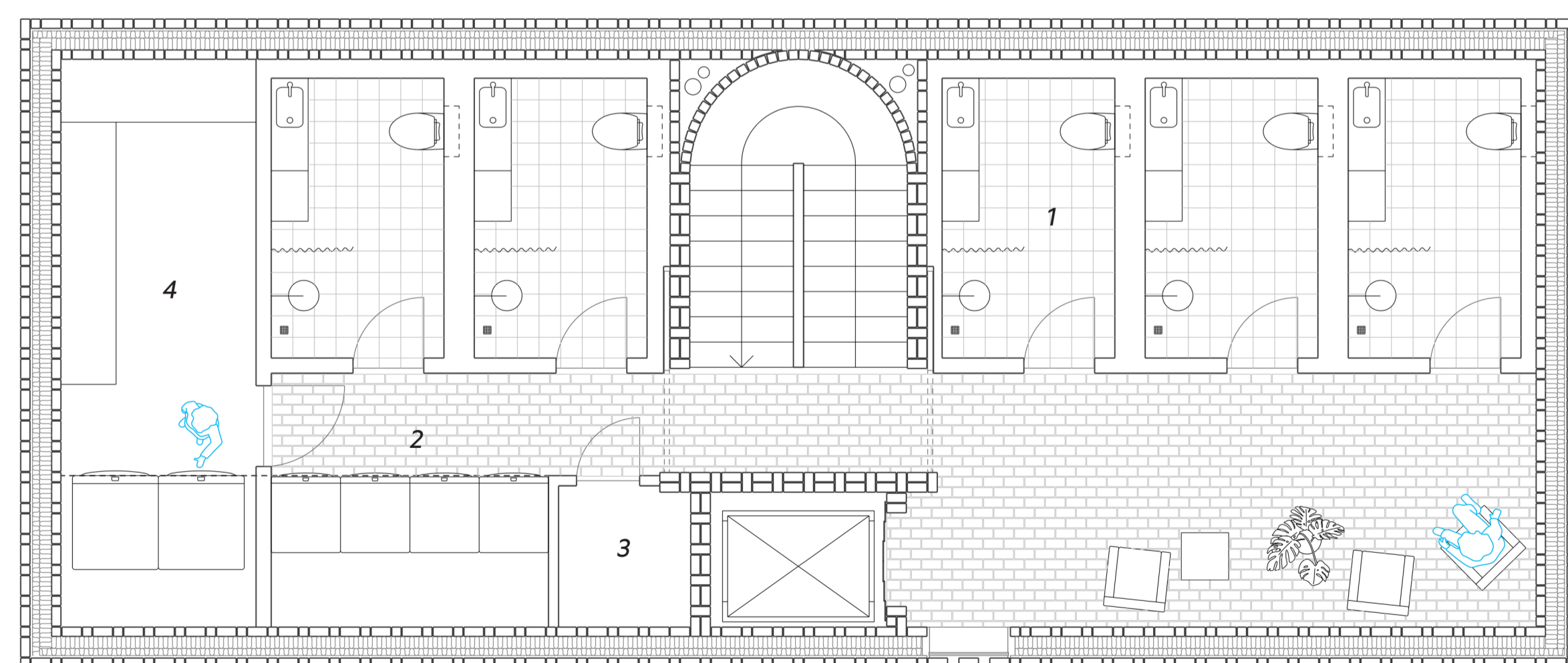




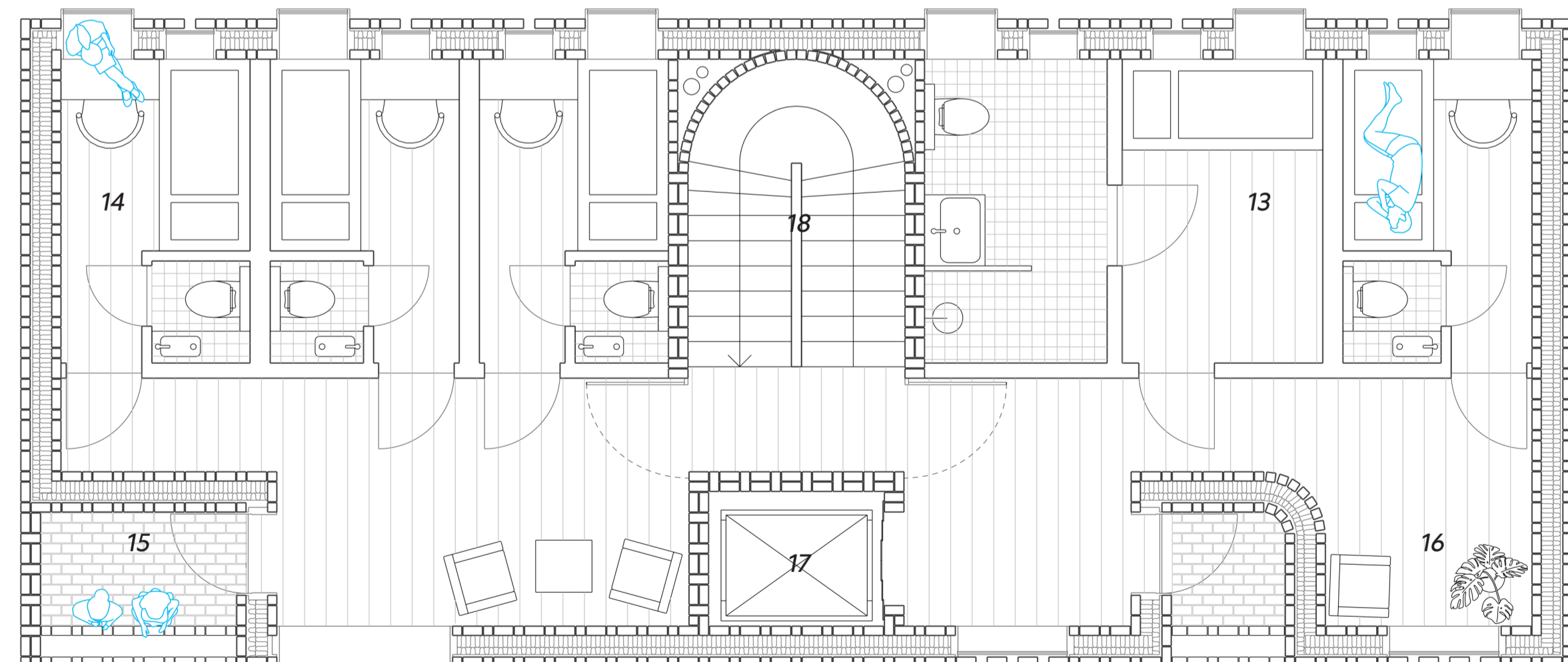
**Floor plan +1**  
1:50



**Floor plan +2**  
1:50

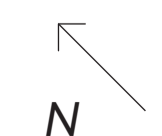


**Floor plan -1**  
1:50

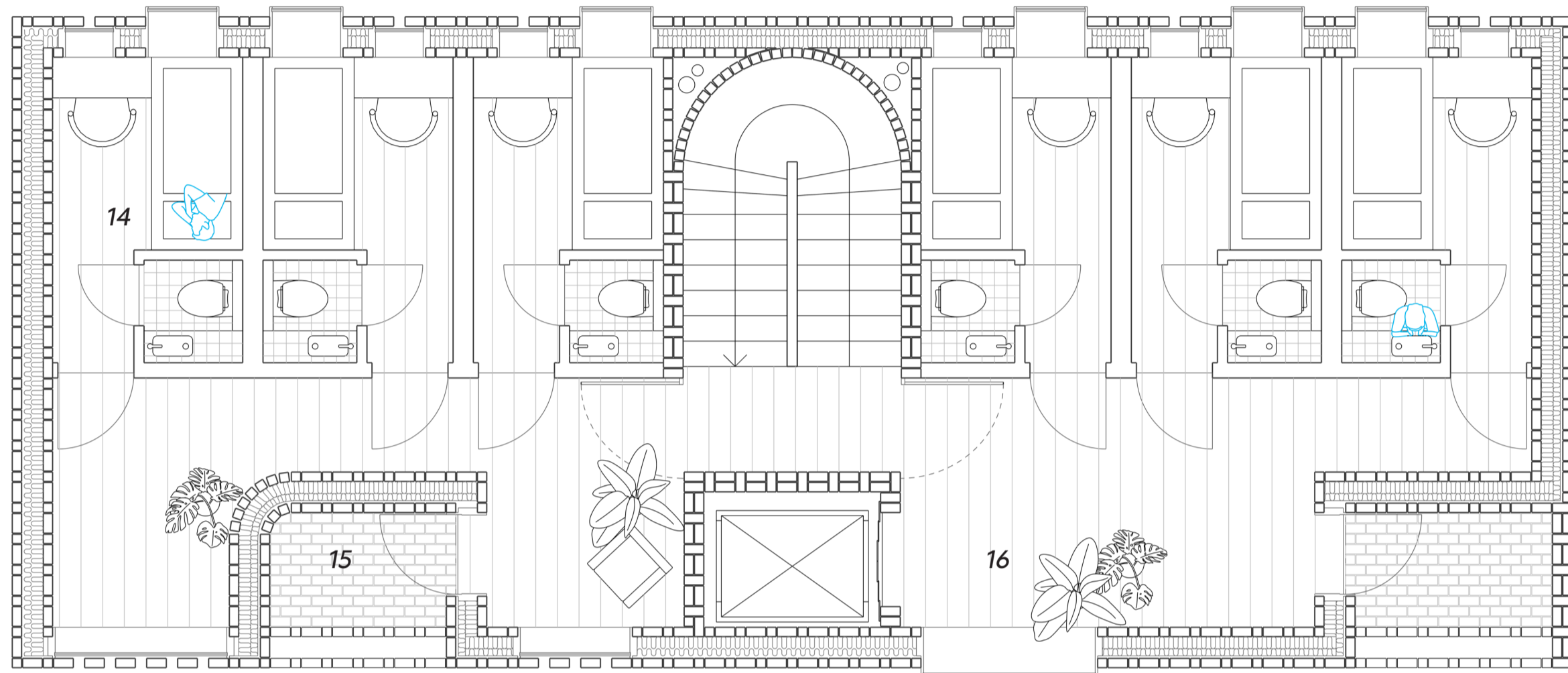


**Floor plan +3**  
1:50

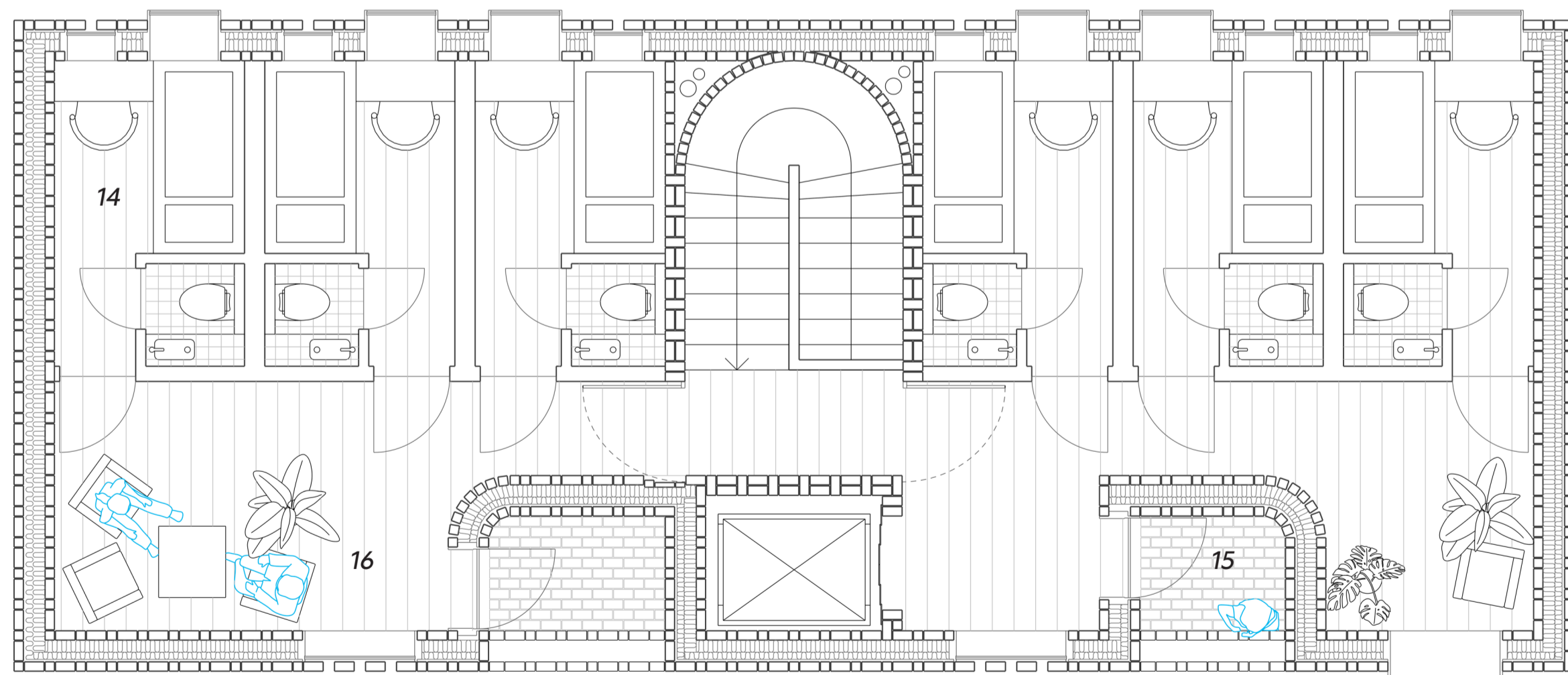
1: shower + toilet 2: small laundry 3: technical 4: large laundry 5: entrance 6: office 7: reception 8: counselling room 9: lounge 10: dining room 11: kitchen 12: outdoor garden 13: accesible room 14: bedroom 15: loggia 16: nook 17: elevator 18: stairs







**Floor plan +4**  
1:50

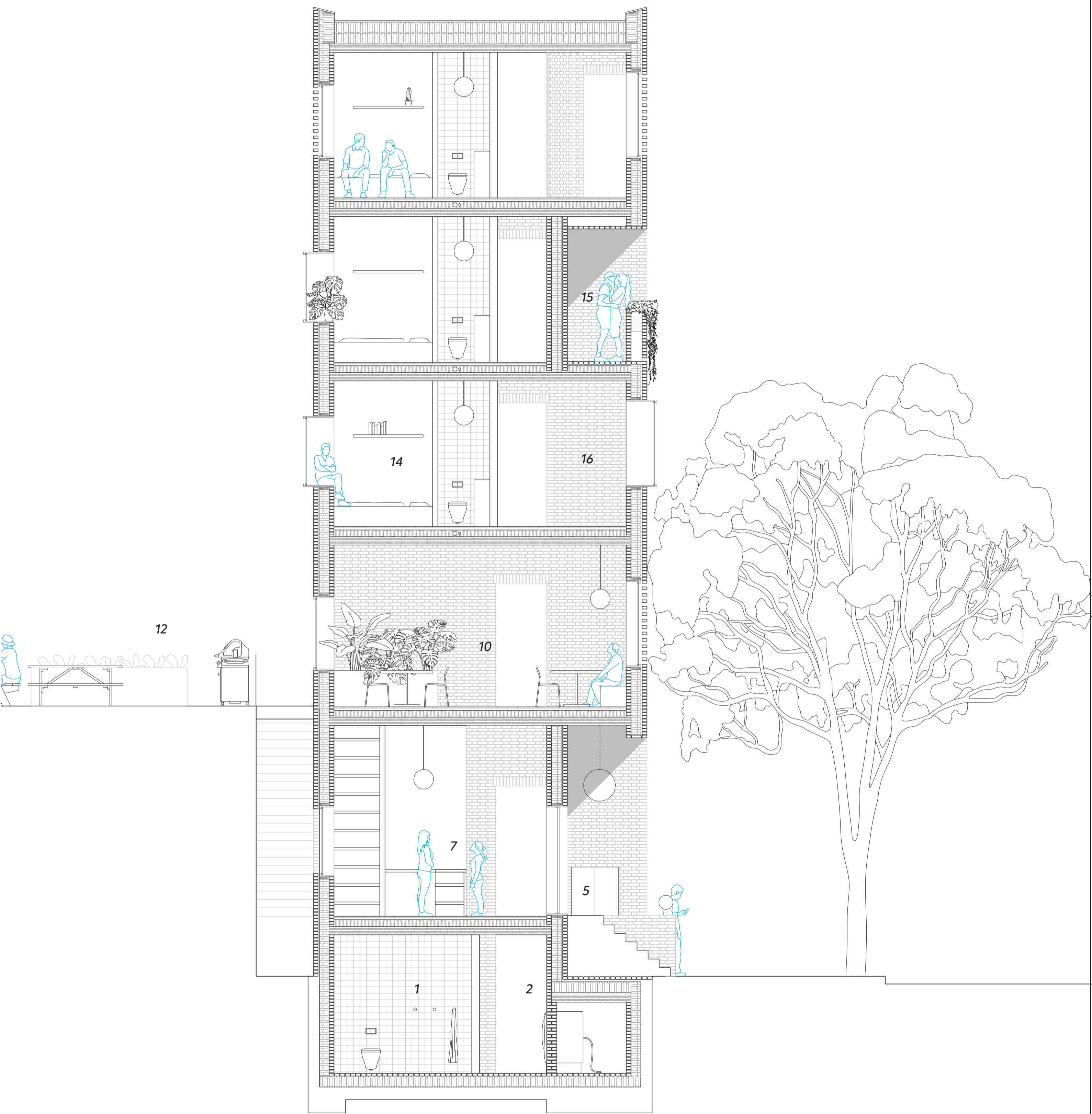


**Floor plan +5**  
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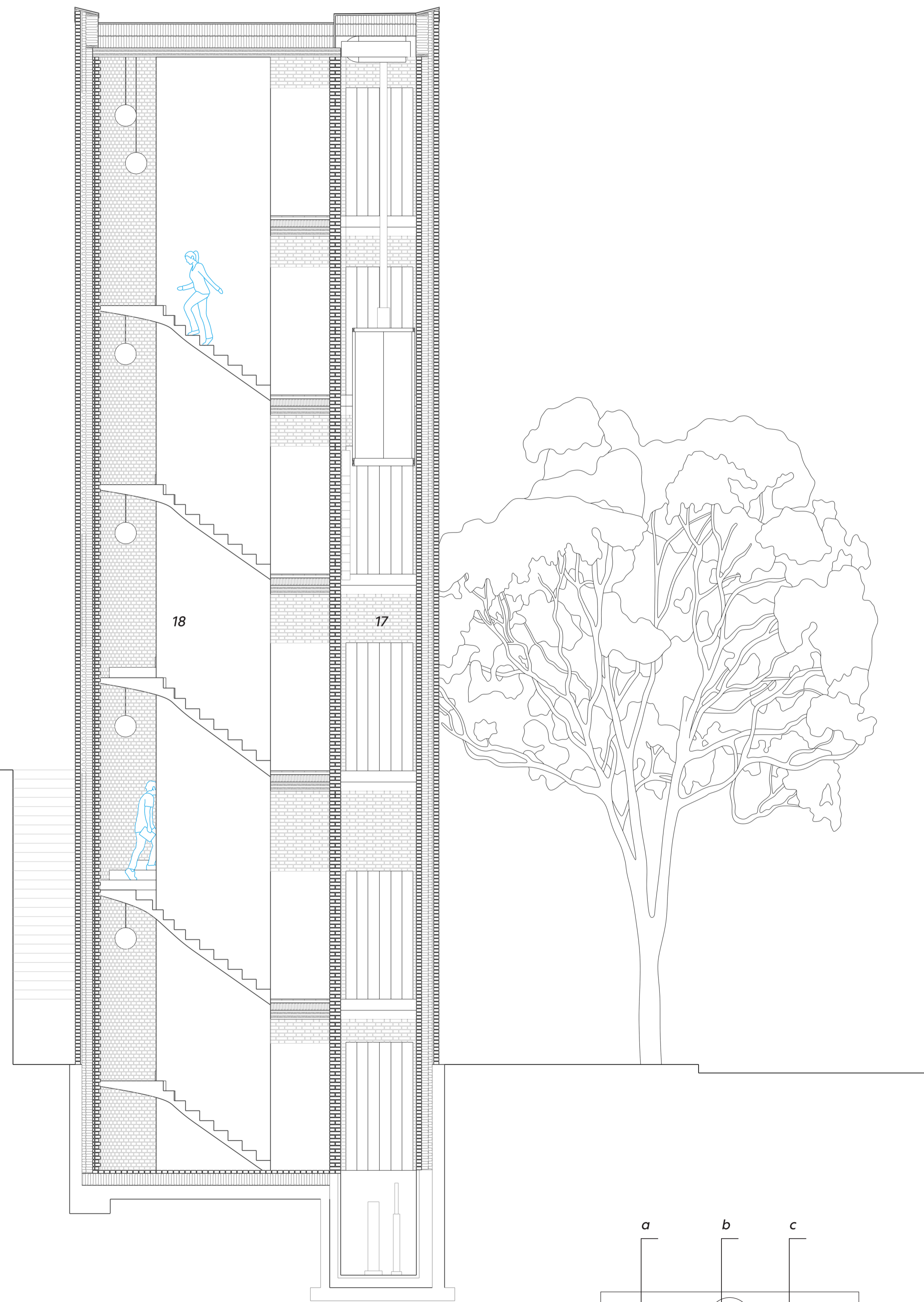


**Bedroom**  
model 1:20

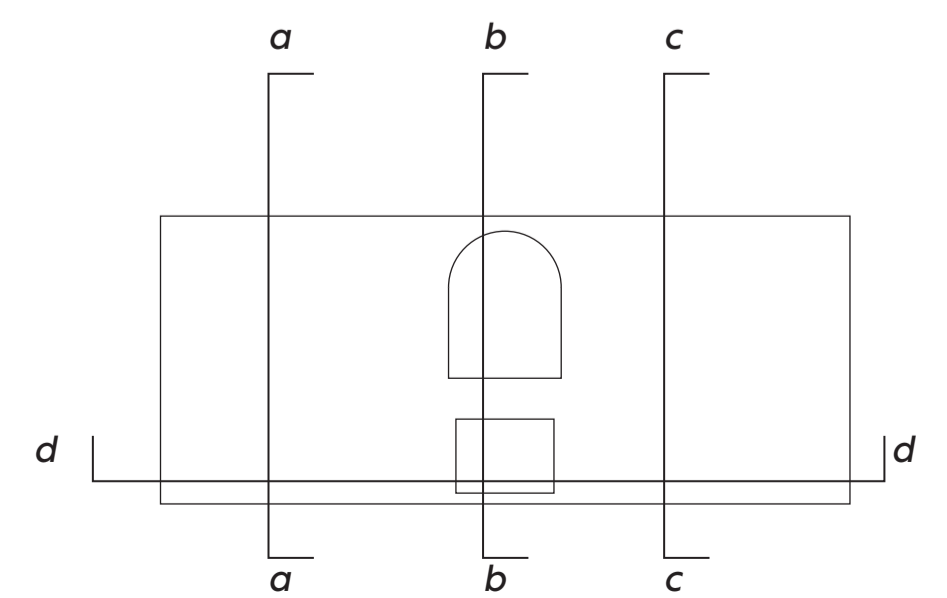




**Section AA**  
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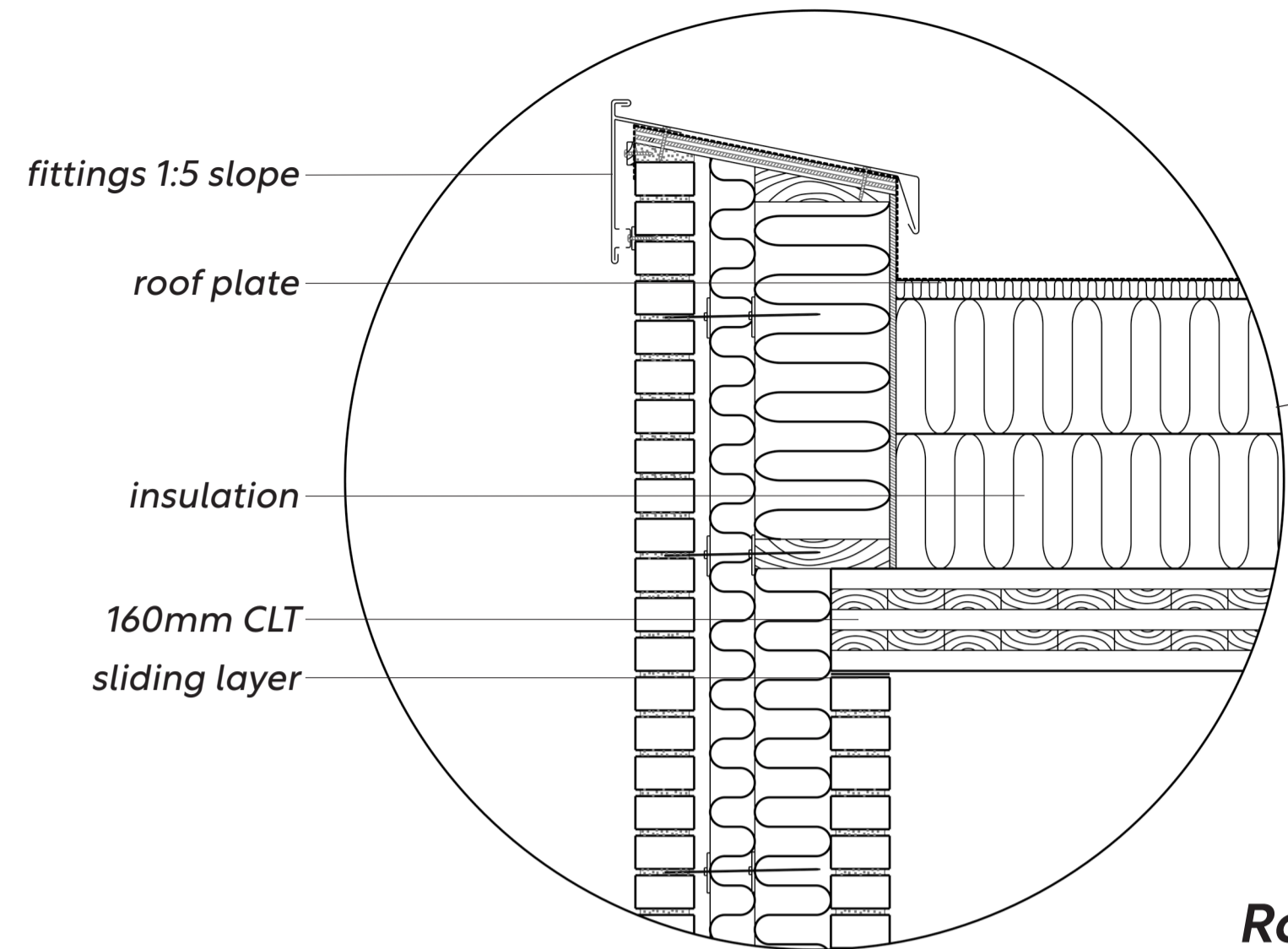
**Section BB**  
1:50



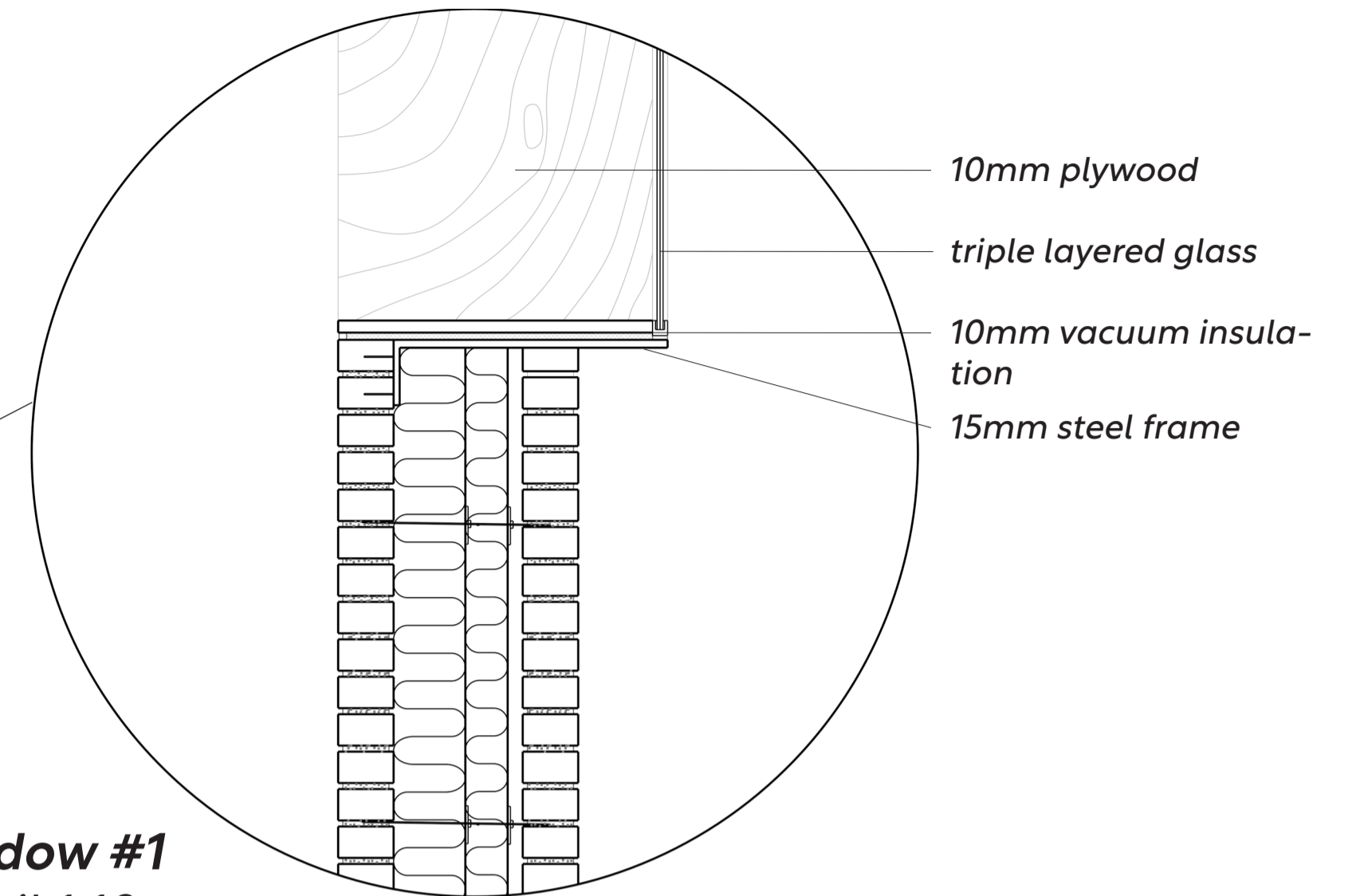




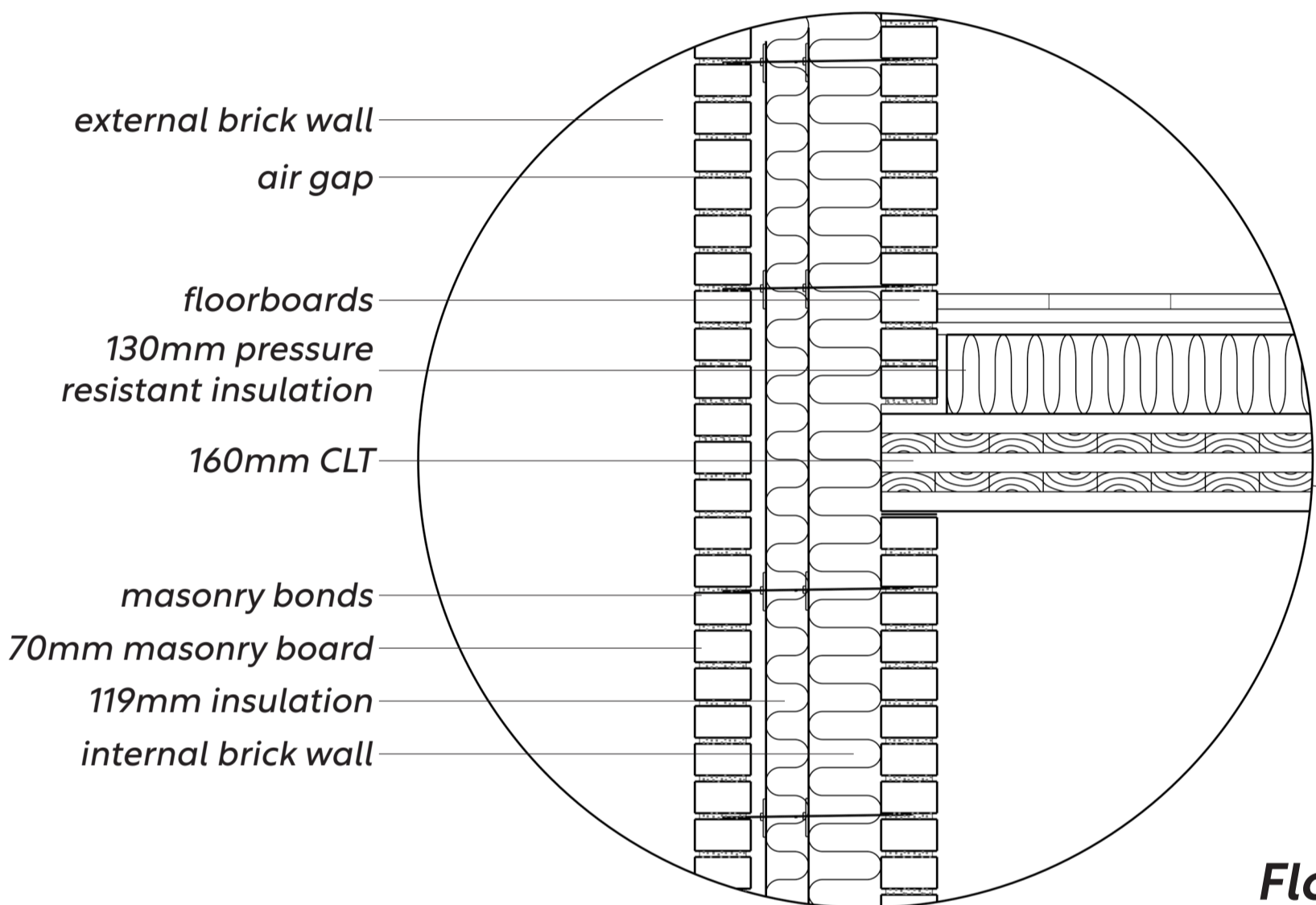




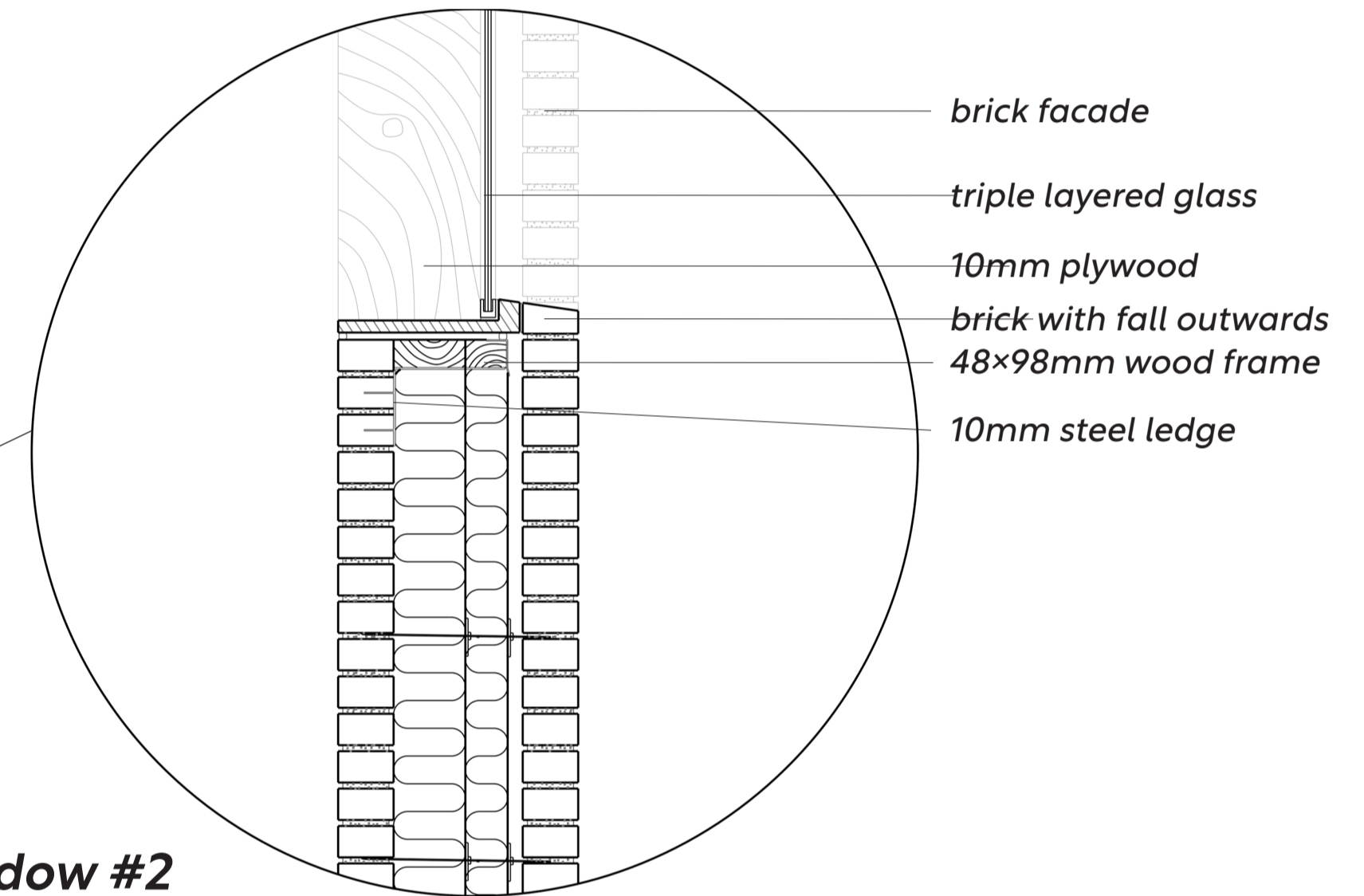
**Roof**  
Detail 1:10



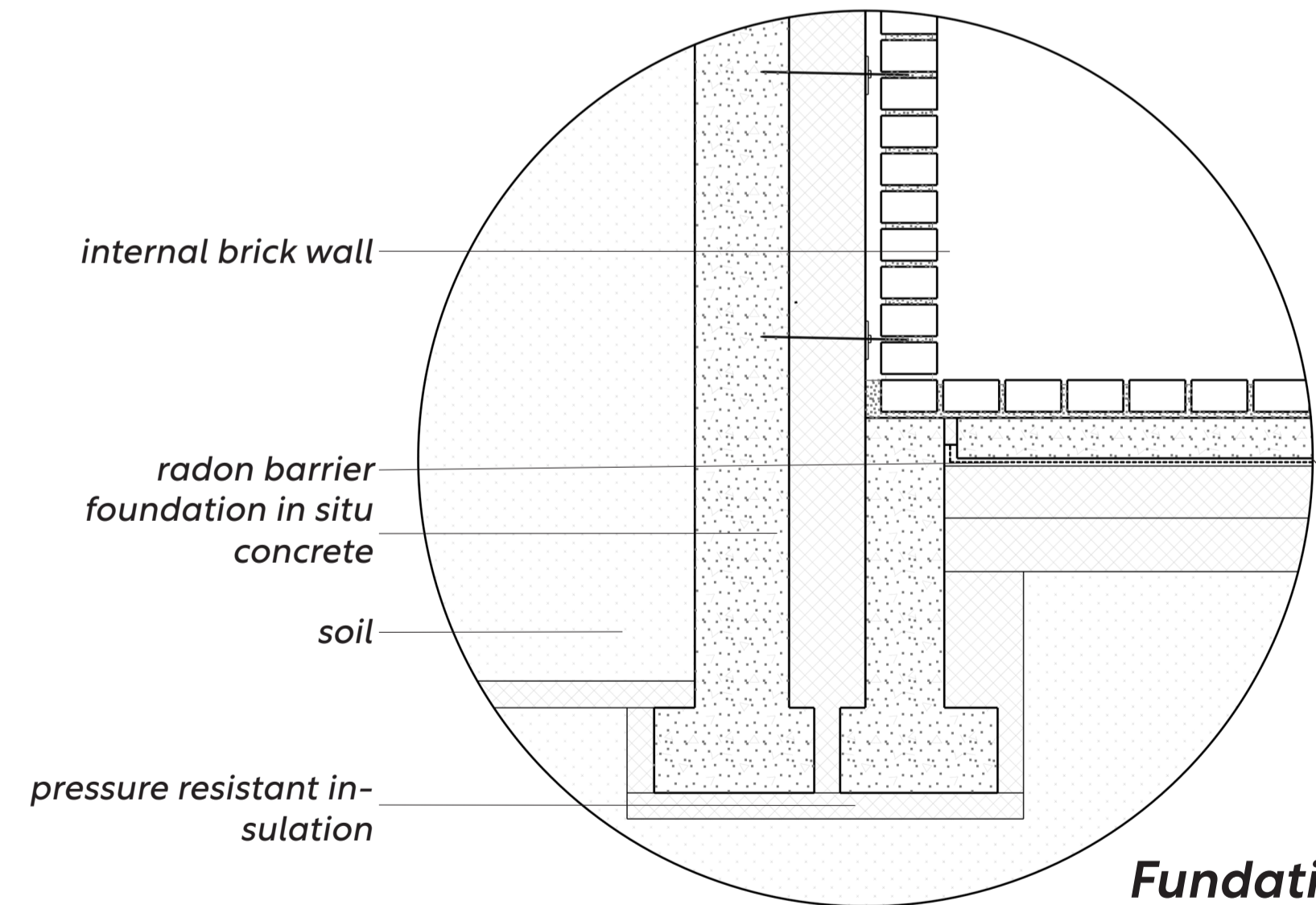
**Window #1**  
Detail 1:10



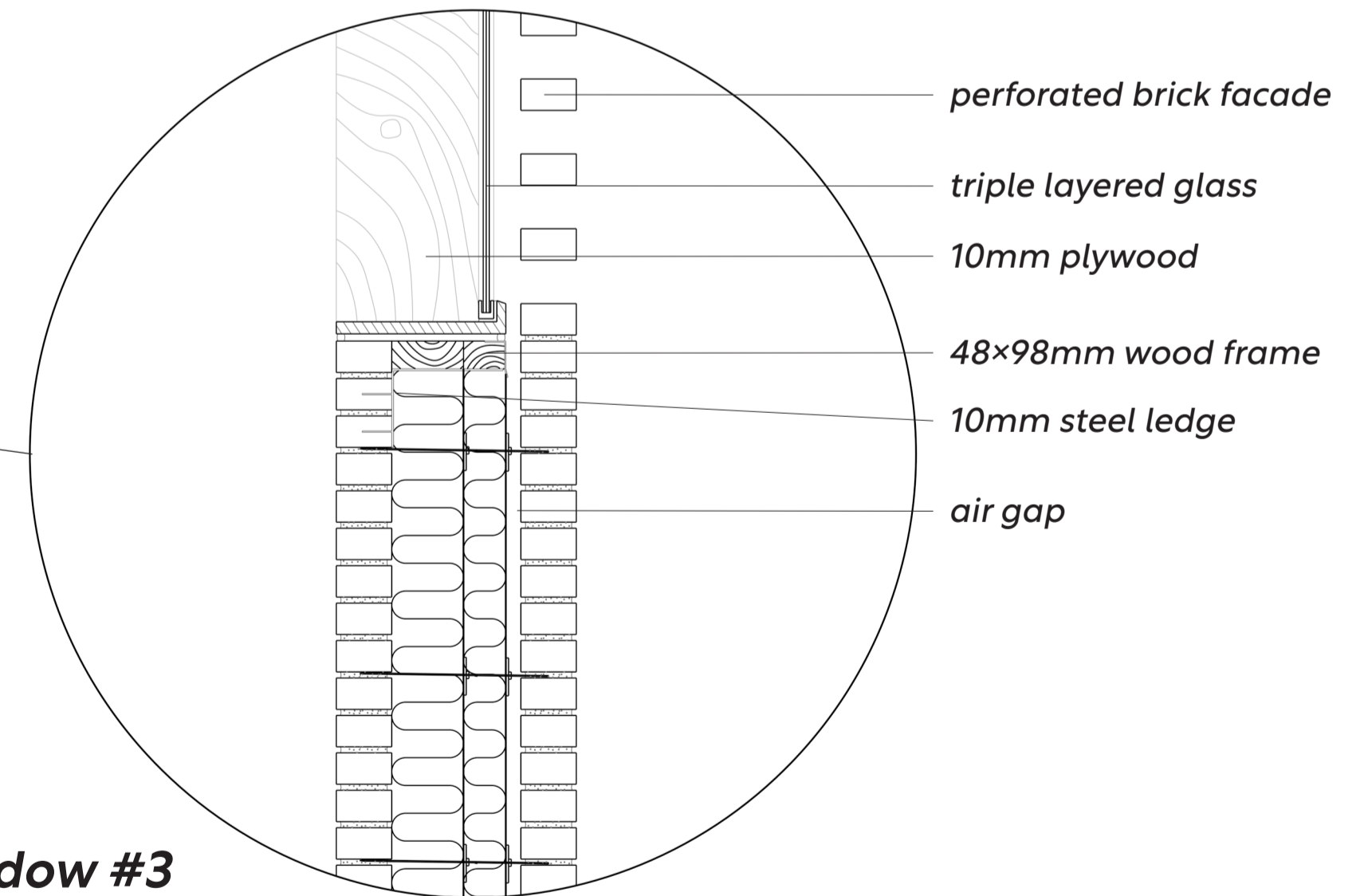
**Floor**  
Detail 1:10



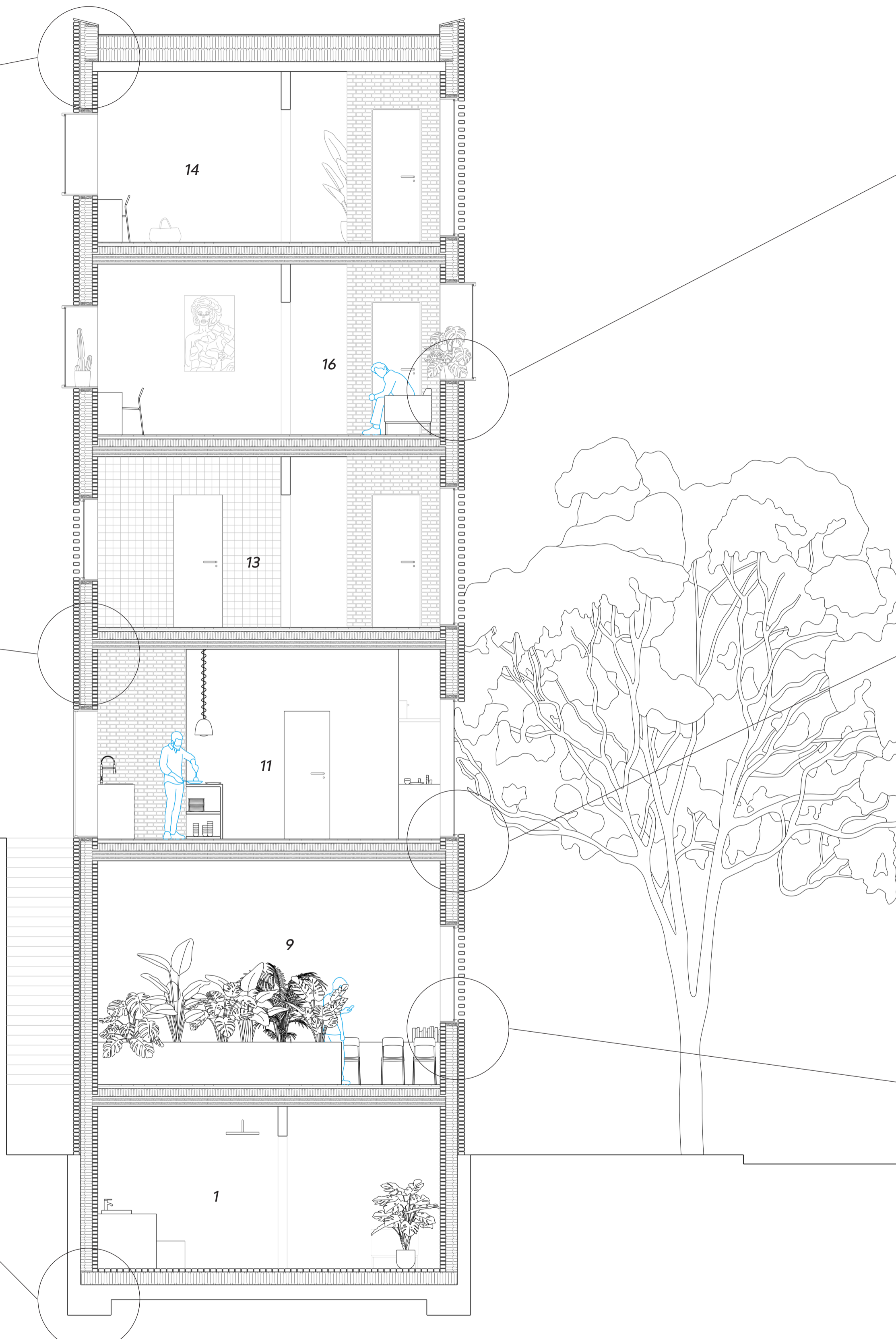
**Window #2**  
Detail 1:10



**Foundation**  
Detail 1:10



**Window #3**  
Detail 1:10

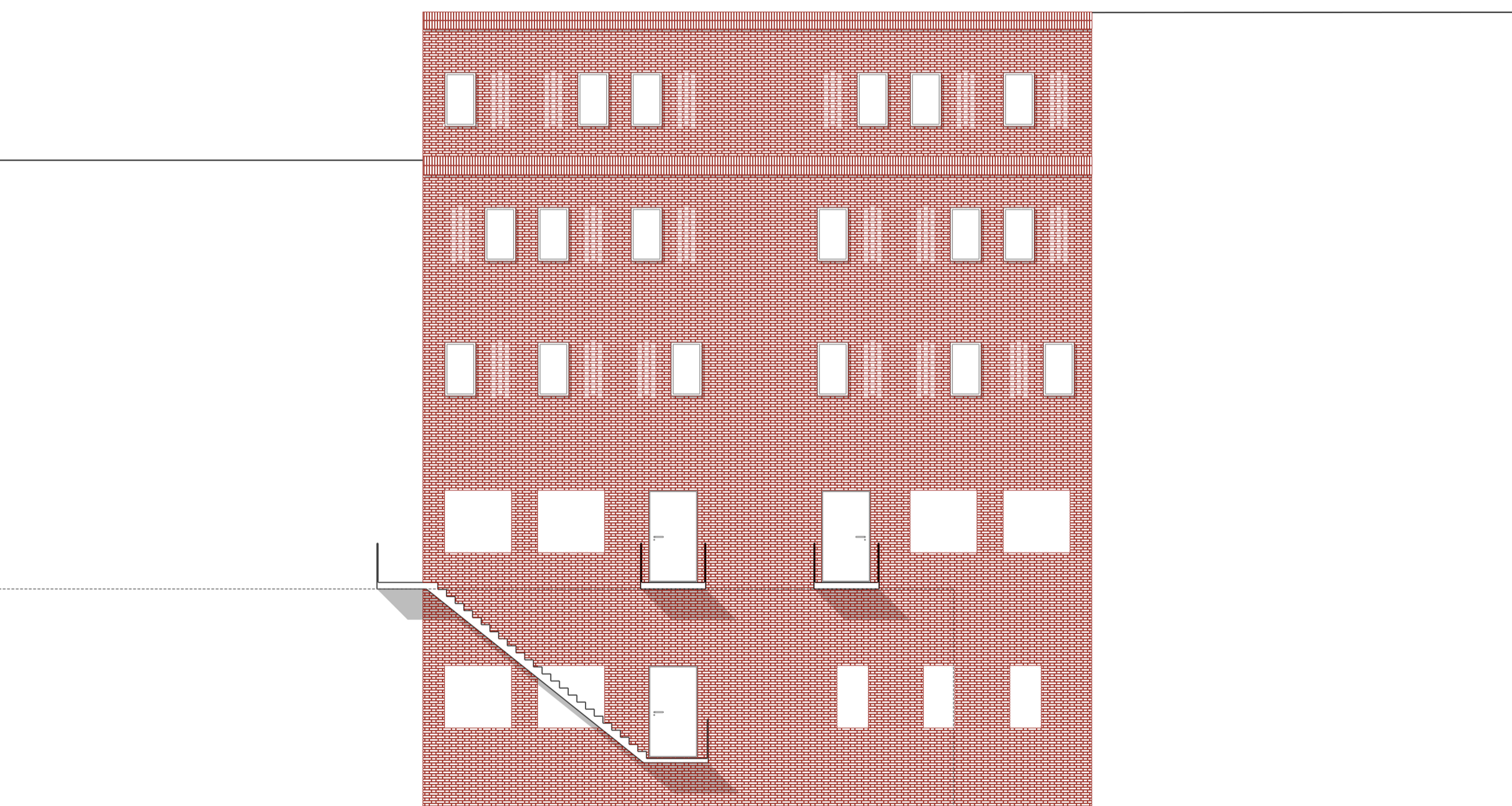


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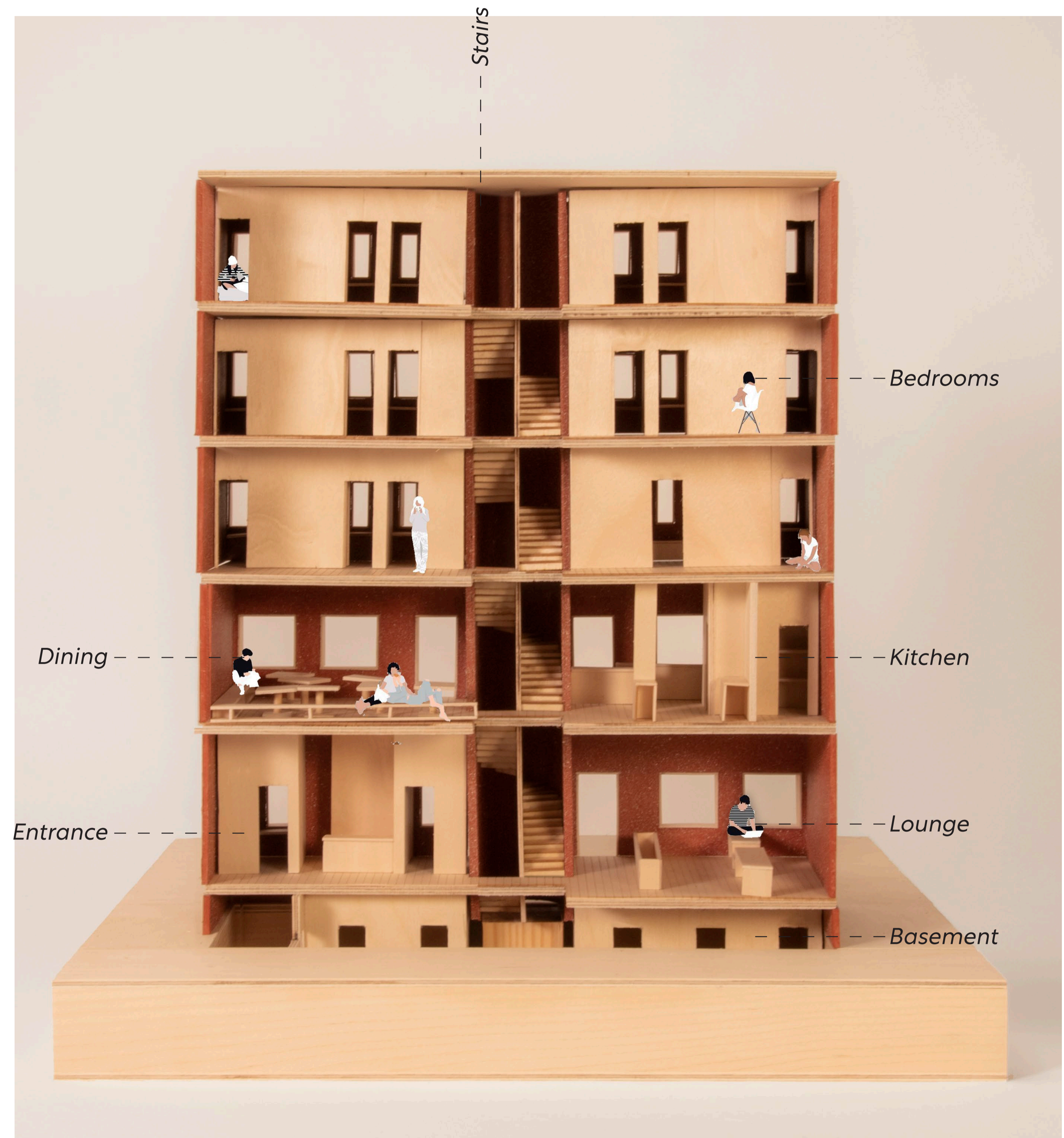




**South Facade**  
1:100



**North Facade**  
1:100



**Section DD**  
model 1:50