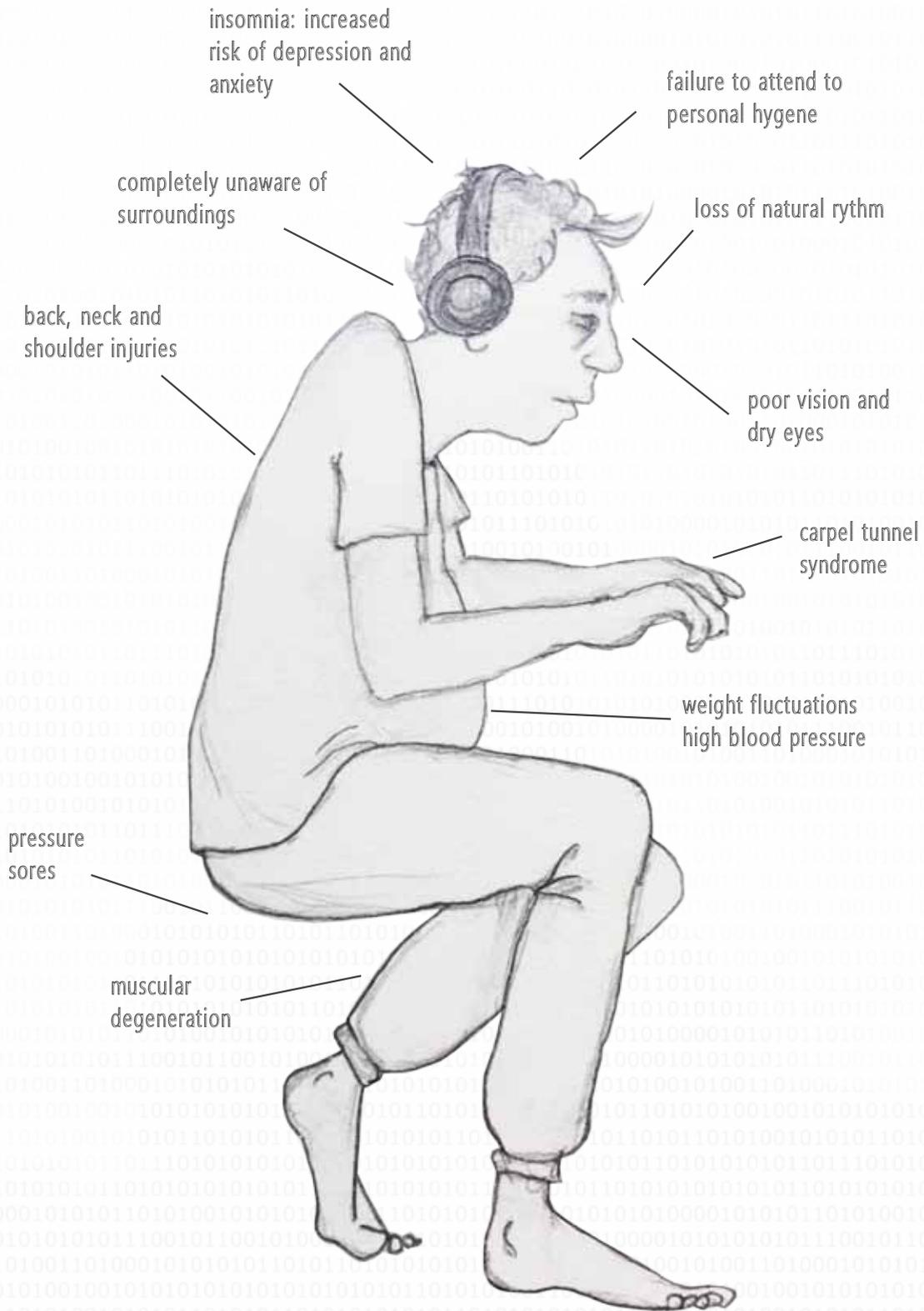


# RE:CONNECT

*A rehabilitation clinic for digital gaming addicts*

*By Marco Gijsen*



*“The opposite of addiction  
is connection.”  
Johann Hari*

Graduationproject Marco Gijsen

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Academie van Bouwkunst, Amsterdam

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# Contents

## PART I - RESEARCH

1. Origins of the assignment
2. Introduction to digital gaming addicts
3. The program: Gaming Addiction Clinic
4. The site: City park Emmen

## 5. Startingpoints

## PART II - DESIGN

6. Family of pavilions
7. Community Building
8. Physical Therapy
9. Creative Therapy
10. Yoga Therapy



# PART I - RESEARCH

# 1

## Origins of the assignment

During my study I have been interested in the social function of architecture and how architecture shapes our relation with nature. I wanted to find an assignment in which both aspects were important.

I found my assignment when I was visiting a recently abandoned zoo in the center of Emmen. The animals were moved to a different site in the city. What was left behind was a beautiful park. With some fantasy you could imagine the animals still being there. Yet, many other visitors were not paying attention to this wonderful environment at all. They were looking for different kinds of animals: Pokemons. I found it a pity that around half of the people had their heads in the virtual world. But, at least they were together, having fun and outside.

But what about actual gaming addicts? Gaming addicts for who it is no longer just a game, but their whole life. Maybe a space that encourages them to connect to other people and the natural world can be most beneficial for them? The object of study became a gaming addiction clinic. Where the addicts would be treated to lose their virtual gaming addiction and return to the physical world instead.



*Pokemon hunters in the park.*



*A gaming addict in his natural habitat.*

## Virtual world



## Architectural antidote

Placeless

Architecture that responds to its place and enhances its experience of being there.  
(Sense of place)

Timeless

Architecture that elegantly shows the influence of time on its materials.  
(Sense of time)

Rhythmless

Architecture that enhances the experience of natural rhythms.  
(Sense of rhythm)

Wheatherless

Architecture that shows the effects of weather and season.  
(Sense of place, time, rhythm)

Textureless

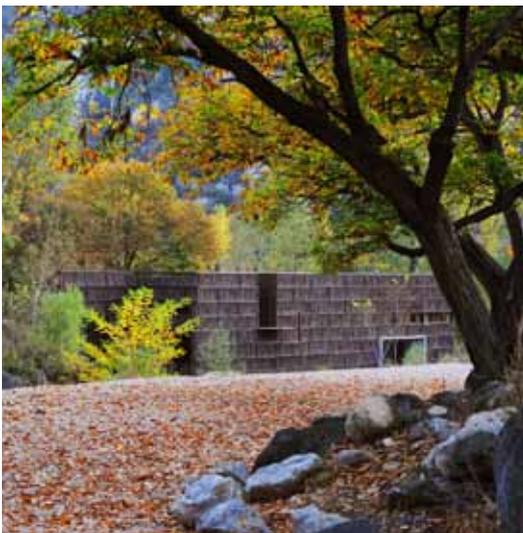
Architecture made from materials that invite to touch.  
(Sense of touch)

Motionless

Architecture that invites to move.  
(Sense of movement)

Bodyless

Architecture that enhances physical experience of space and thereby makes one aware of ones own existence and wellbeing.  
(Sense of life)



*Examples of designs that strongly enhance the feeling of being in the physical world. They offer a sense of place and time through the use of natural phenomena such as weather and celestial events, the use of local, natural materials that root the building in its place and age gracefully by the specific influences of its exact location.*

# 2

## Introduction to gaming addicts

### Scope of the problem in the Netherlands

There are 550 requests for admission into clinics a year for gaming addicts, 92% of them is male and 82% is younger than 25. Yet there is evidence that the group of addicts is considerably bigger than the amount of admissions. Researchers from Utrecht University found that around 10% of boys and 1% of girls between the ages of 12 and 15 match the criteria for being addicted. The boys spend on average 16 hours a week on gaming, girls 4,5 hours. Yet boys who match addiction criteria game an average of 29 hours a week.

Research has indicated that gaming addicts often have underlying psycho-social problems (depression, anxiety, trauma's) and lower social competences that can be the cause for their addiction. The addiction also tends to increase the psycho-social problems. Other underlying factors include impulsivity, concentrationproblems and being unsatisfied with their own life.



### Why start gaming?

- Have a clear and important purpose
- Are called for challenging missions
- Are regularly given little rewards
- Connect with countless companions
- Have unlimited learning opportunities
- Can develop character and traits
- Get recognition for success

### What makes certain games addictive?

- Unlimited gameplay and access
- Peer group pressure
- Short reward cycles
- Fantasy world (escapism)
- Immersive graphics and sounds

### When are you considered addicted?

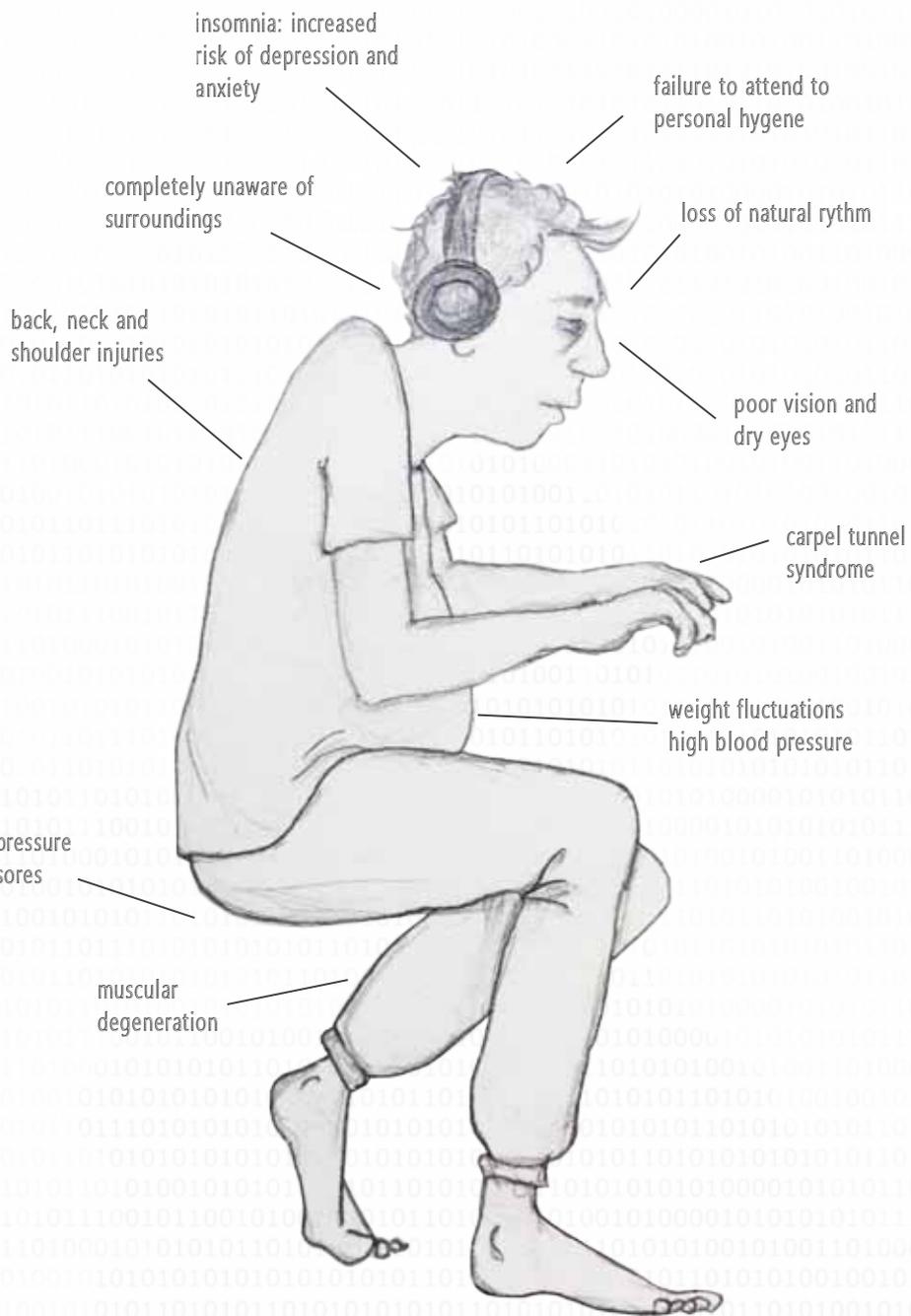
When at least five out of nine apply:

- Think constantly about gaming
- Get emotional when game is taken away
- Need to play increasingly longer
- Had unsuccessful attempts to quit
- Have decreased interest in other activity
- Continue in excess while knowing better
- Lie about the time spent on gaming
- Game to escape negative emotions
- Jeopardized your job, education, career or an important relation.

### The effects of gaming addiction

The following effects are common under gaming addicts:

- Loss of connection to friends and family
- Loss of education or job opportunities
- Loss of daily rhythm
- Poor physical condition
- Loss of connection to self
- Increased anxiety and depression
- Underdeveloped social skills
- Suicidal thoughts



### The physical world of gaming addicts

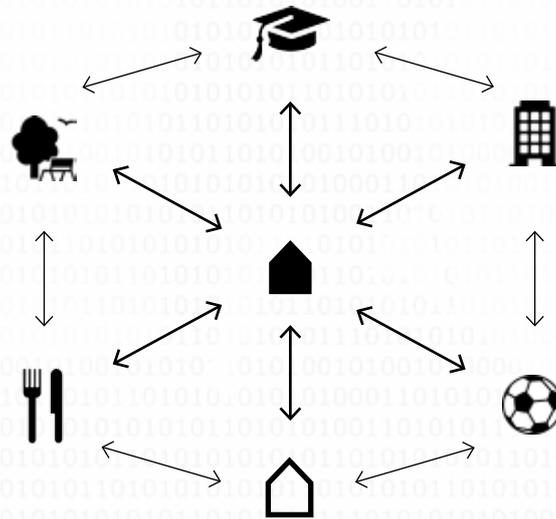
The physical world gaming addicts experience is often increasingly limited to their own room. With the best gaming performance in mind, they tend to block out any outside influence: daylight, sun, weather, sounds and people, especially parents, are not welcome. The only sounds and lights are virtual, the only touch is on the keyboard and mouse. They are in fact, numbing themselves.

They are in need of a physical environment that;

- Helps them to get out of their room
- Offers safe spaces to talk
- Slowly expose them to public life again
- Recover their daily rhythms
- Offer alternative leisure activities



*Physical network of gaming addict*



*Goal: breaking out of isolation and reintegrating into society*

# 3

## The program: Gaming Addiction Clinic

To define my program spatially, I looked for modern examples of addiction clinics in which the environment itself has become part of the treatment.

### The city as a learning environment

In the addiction clinic Victas in the center of Utrecht the city itself becomes part of the treatment. Most of the treatment happens behind closed doors, but addicts regularly go out into the city together or under guidance. On the streets and in the shops they learn to cope with their fears and all the temptations that they encounter in their life after treatment. This could also be particularly helpful to gaming addicts who are mostly reduced to the confines of their room and who suffer from anxiety in public spaces.

The architecture of the clinic expresses this idea of integration into the city. With its materials it blends into the environment. The different building masses with courtyards and alleys in between give a sense of openness and integration into the city without actually being open. From the room of addicts they look out onto the street so they don't feel isolated.



*In Victas in the center of Utrecht.*

*Principles:*

- *integrate part of the treatment into the public park;*
- *give suggestions of openness to surroundings;*
- *blend the building into its surroundings;*
- *give views from bedrooms to public space.*

### Nature as a learning environment

In the youth addiction clinic called Yes We Can in Hilvarenbeek, the natural surroundings become part of the treatment itself. The clinic opens up to green outside spaces and a big part of the treatment is outdoors. Addicts go for a run in the morning and have challenging sports and survival trainings outdoors. In these activities addicts learn to cooperate, trust, respect boundaries, be responsible, have discipline and persevere. With an emphasis on teambuilding and fun, an atmosphere of positivity and possibility for recovery is created. It is a form of playful learning during treatment which could speak to the intrinsic motivation of gaming addicts.

### Playing as a way of learning

Playing is actually a powerful tool for human development. Consider the way kids learn while playing. In situations without rules kids learn to play fair and establish their own rules and ways of treating each other. A kid that doesn't play fair will soon have no one to play with. It is a way to learn social skills, which many of gaming addicts lack. It is also a way to learn to release energy properly and has been proven to reduce symptoms of ADHD. Especially when that play occurs in natural settings, their emotions tend to be more stable.



*Yes We Can Clinic, Hilvarenbeek*

*Principles:*

- *integrate sports into the program;*
- *offer outside playing areas.*

The program of my assignment

For my assignment I decided to focus on young gaming addicts, since the addiction is most common under the age of 25.

I use the program that the Yes We Can Clinic offers, because it is a youth clinic as well and their focus on outdoor activities would be beneficial for gaming addicts.

The program consists of 12 weeks inpatient care on site, in the first 5 weeks no direct contact with parents is allowed. The patients work through a program based on the 12 step minnesota model (see appendix). There is a strict daily routine which helps them recover a more natural rhythm.

Time	Activity	Spaces
06.45	Getting up	Bedrooms
07.00	Morning run	Park
07.30	Breakfast	Dining hall
08.00	Self-reliance	Shower   Room   others
09.30	Group sessions (7 p.)	Counsel rooms   Workshop   Atelier
12.30	Lunch	Dining hall
14.00	Individual meetings	Meeting rooms
	Sport- and outdoor activities	Sports hall   Yoga space   Park   Forrest
18.00	Dinner	Dining hall
19.30	Psycho education	Lecture room
21.00	Ending of day in group	Lecture room   Firepit
22.30	Bedtime	Bedrooms

Users	Involvement
36 gaming addicts in shifts of 12	Follow program
2 coördinators	Lead the program
12 therapists (part-time)	Dossier holders, privat- and group meetings.
6 counselors (part-time)	Former addict, group meetings, activities.
2 nurses	Health education, lectures.
12 coaches (part-time)	Outside physical activities.
1 secretary	Reception
1 organizer/planner	Reception
2 cooks	Kitchen
2 cooking assistants	Kitchen
2 technical/facility managers	Maintanance
3 cleaners	Maintanance

# 4

## The site: City park Emmen

This park is the perfect environment for rehabilitation because it will offer:

(1) A quiet and relatable city that is not as intense and stressed as most others

(2) A park that is not too crowded and is a social space with lots of opportunities of casual interaction

(3) A park with an abundance of outside playing opportunities

(4) A park with amenities that can serve a therapeutic role such as multiple art ateliers, a technical workshop called 'Toolbox' and a petting zoo.

(5) A former zoo where natural boundaries were used instead of fences. These boundaries can be used to make the clinic feel open and safe at the same time.

These natural boundaries of the zoo have been designed according to the design principles of the German zoo keeper Carl Hagenbeck. Who opened the first zoo in the world without fences. Instead, natural elevations, ha-ha's, ponds and dry moats were used to separate the visitors from the animals. Vegetation was used to control sightlines. The effect is that the animals don't appear to be enclosed, but share a natural park with the visitor.

(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)



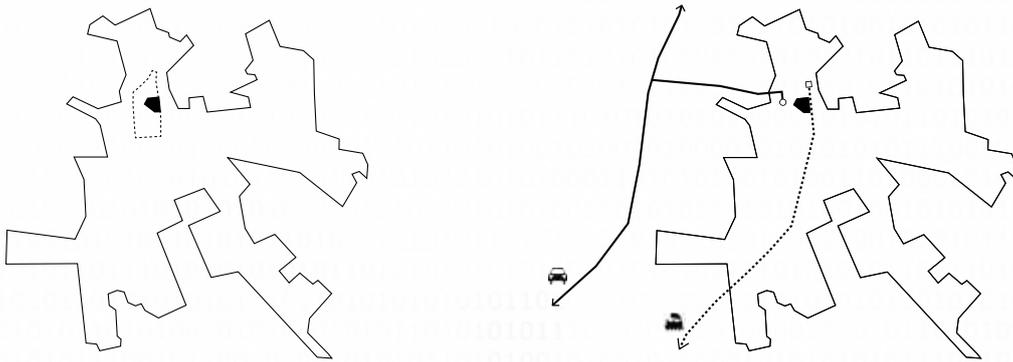
(5)



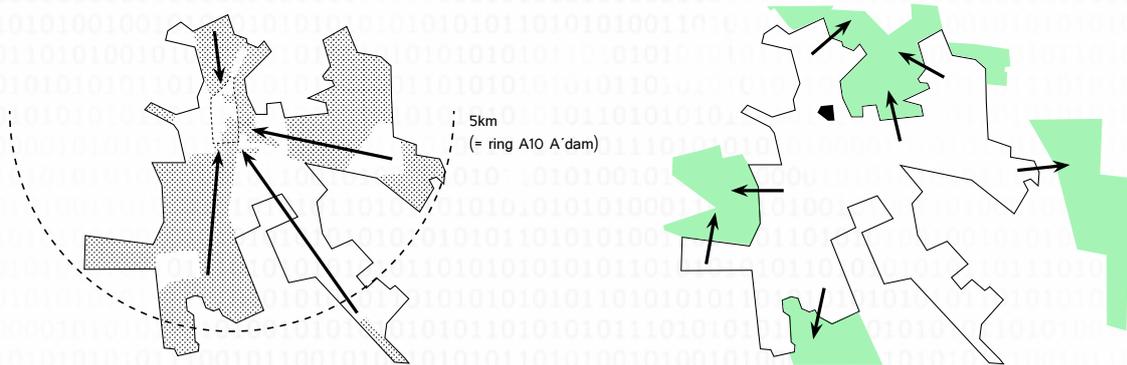
### The park in relation to its city

The former zoo is located in the center of Emmen, which has 57.000 inhabitants. The city may be best described by its former mayor Karel Hendrik Gaarlandt: "Let Emmen become a city, but remain a village. Let Emmen be an open green city." Emmen is a typical Dutch town, a place that any Dutch person can relate to. Its zoo called Dierenpark Emmen, is known nationwide and had 1,5 million visitors a year in its prime time. It was a park which constantly innovated itself. With its changing exhibitions and an emphasis on education, people kept returning. The zoo has become part of the identity of Emmen and something the city is proud of. But by now, the zoo has moved out and the original site is to become a city park.

Yet, Emmen surely doesn't have a lack of parks and green spaces already. Most people live much closer to other natural parks than to the new park in the center. So the former zoo has to become more than just another park.



*Location of zoo in center of Emmen, accessible within 2 hours from Utrecht by train or car.*



*Distance from housing to the center (left) versus distance to natural surroundings (right).*

### The plans of the municipality

The ambition for the park is to simultaneously show the collective memory of the site and think innovatively towards the future. Certain was, that it has to remain, in part, a natural park. But in order to attract visitors, new functions have to be added to make the place lively. Those include functions related to art, technology, sustainability and sports. Housing will also be integrated around the edges to keep the park safe, especially in the evenings.

At this moment the park is transforming already and many (temporary) art, exhibition, theater, atelier, workshop and sports spaces have opened in some of the old buildings of the park.



*Development framework by the municipality.*



*The savannah will be kept as central picknick and event field.*



*The park will be public and accessible from all sides.*



*Cultural program makes the transition from park to central city square.*



*Initiatives will bring life to the park.*



*New buildings mostly around the edges with fronts towards the park.*

Why a gaming clinic in the park?

There are a couple of reasons why this is a very good idea;

(1) The park is looking for program to attract visitors, the clinic could offer creative or sportive program to share with the park.

(2) The clinic would provide a daily number of users to bring live to the park and make use of its ammenities.

(3) An addiction care clinic fits in the ambition to make it a socially sustainable park.

(4) It is an innovative function, it would be one of the first gaming addiction clinics in the world and thereby put Emmen on the map again.



*Reference images from the development framework.*

# 5

## Startingpoints

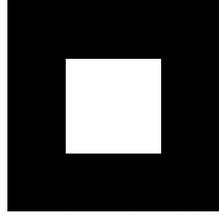
1. The surroundings are used as a learning environment. The clinic shares external amenities with the park that have therapeutic value such as sports, yoga, creative ateliers and technical workshops.

2. The privat program is organised together to create a safe campus with enclosed outside space for gathering and play that gently transitions into the park.

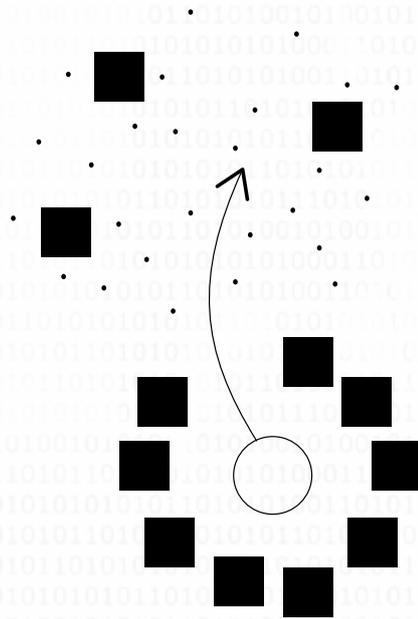
3. Making use of the natural borders of the zoo to subtly differentiate privat and public area's.

4. The campus is designed from the bedrooms outwards. Inviting the addicts to go out and expose themselves safely, by creating a sense of overview and soft transitions between spaces.

5. The buildings are designed as an antidote to the virtual world by enhancing the feeling of being in the physical world. Giving a sense of place and time, using materials that reference to its place and letting in the effects of natural phenomena.



Traditional closed typology  
*safe environment isolating the addicts*



Proposed Campus typology  
*balance between safety and reintegration*



# PART II - DESIGN

# 6

## A Family of Pavilions

Parts of the treatment are spread out over multiple locations, forming a family of pavilions across the park. Some the pavilions can be used by the public at times the fellows are not using them. While of course still maintaining a feeling of safety and privacy appropriate to each of the treatment spaces.

This means my program consists of a central community building which has the housing, offices, meeting rooms and social spaces. And then I identified three parts of the program that can be shared with the park: a small sportshall for physical therapy, a atelier for creative therapy and a yoga space.

Each of the buildings are placed within existing landscape borders.



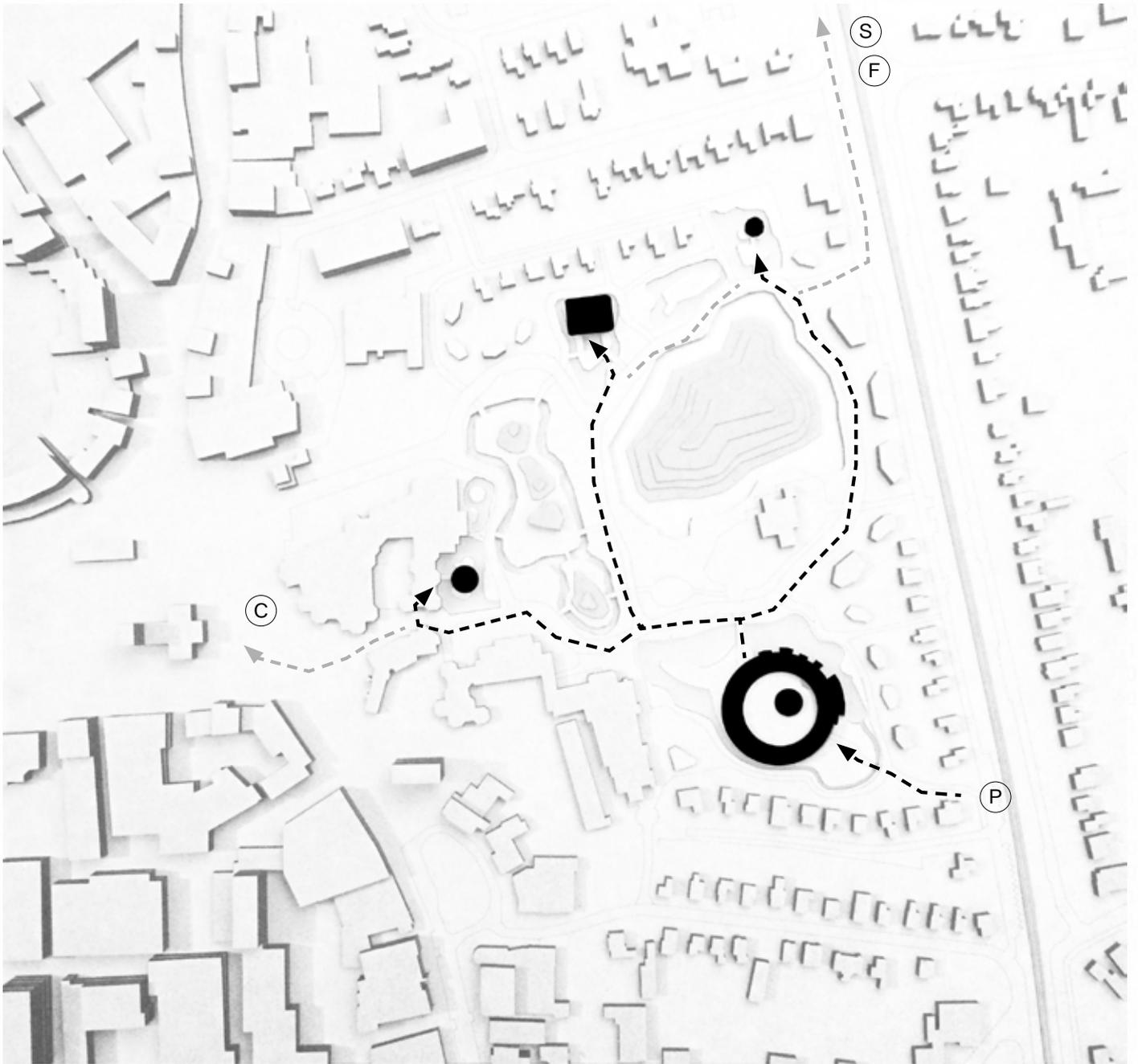
Landscape boundaries

- Ponds and ha-ha's
- Ⓟ Picknick field
- Ⓢ Outdoor sports area
- Ⓚ Park



Family of treatment buildings

- ① *Community Building*
- ② *Creative therapy*
- ③ *Physical therapy*
- ④ *Yoga therapy*

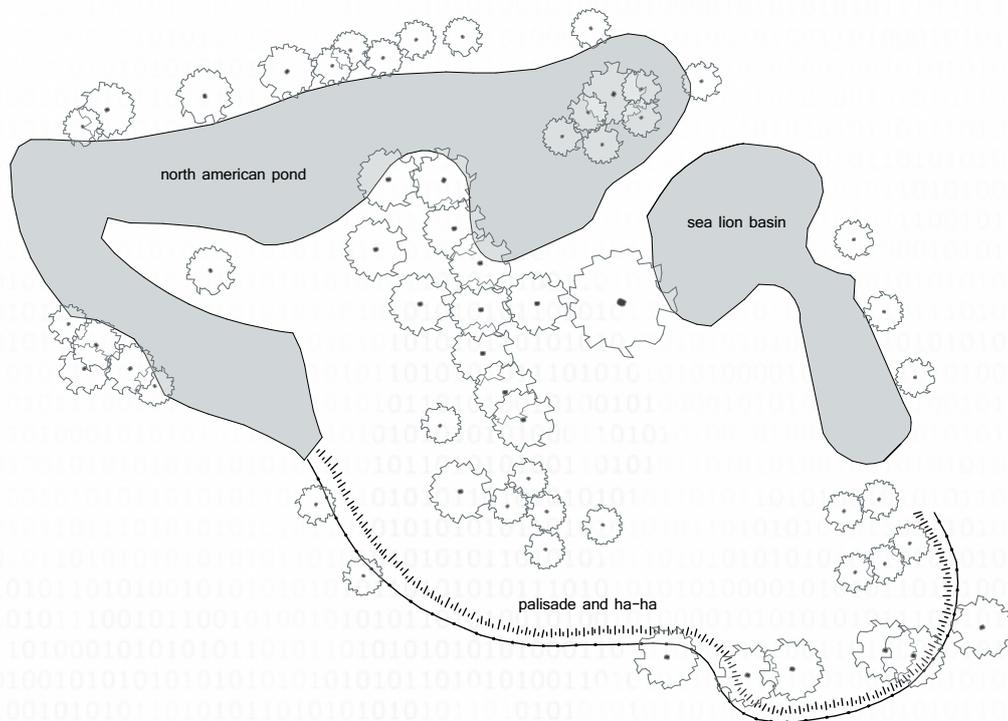


### Routing

- Ⓟ *Parking for clinic*
- Ⓛ *Walk to forrest 300m*
- Ⓢ *Walk to station 200m*
- Ⓒ *City center*

# 7

## Community Building



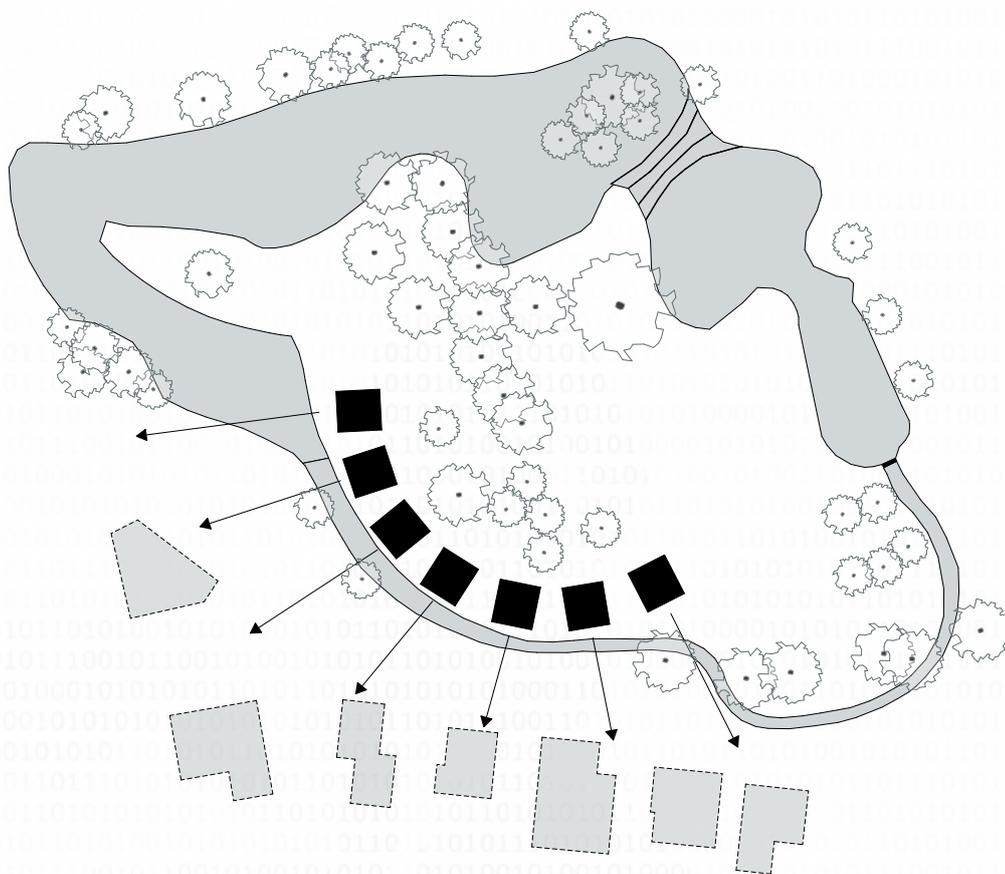
### Existing site

The existing site is a rough landscape surrounded by two ponds and a ha-ha with wooden fence and low vegetation controlling some of the sightlines. But the site feels exposed from the inside.



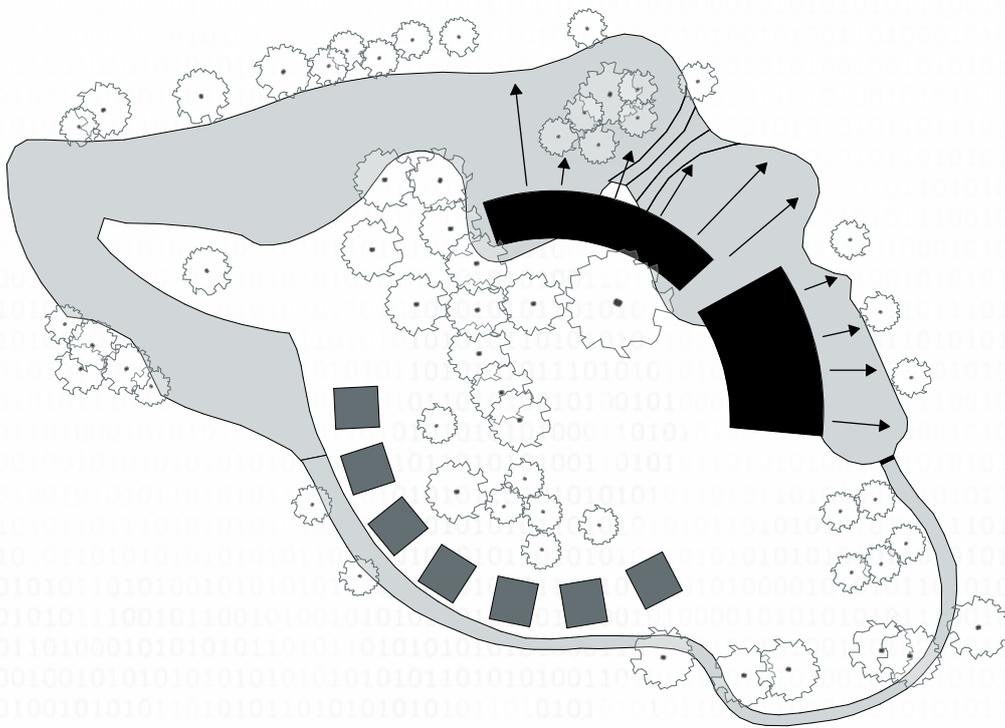
### Reforming the boundaries

To control access to the site, the ponds, which are on different levels, are connected by a waterfall. The wooden fence is removed and the ha-ha (lowered ditch) is transformed into a waterway that connect both ponds and acts as reed filter to filter the water and control views inwards.



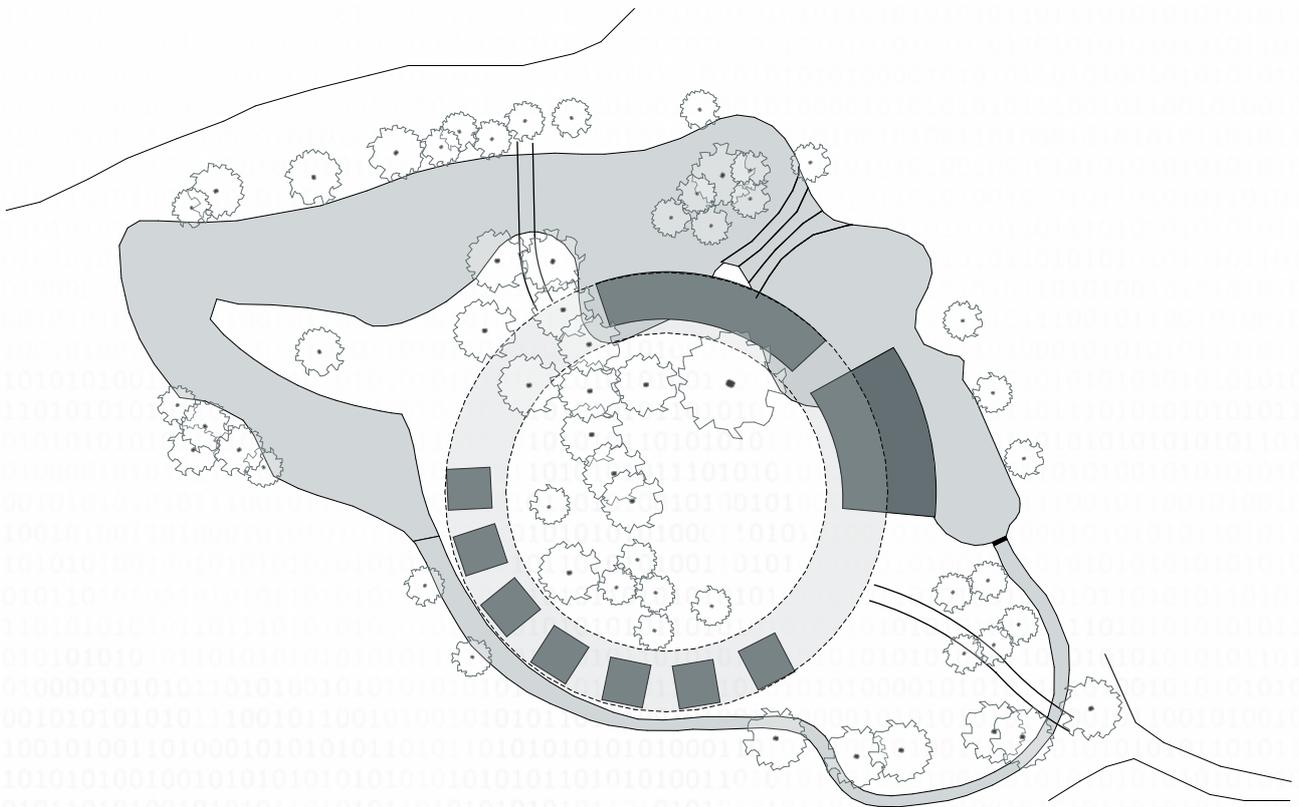
### Enclosing a communal garden step 1:

The 6 'houses' are placed facing the neighbours in the park. This way it almost feels like one is living on a street and negates feelings of being isolated in a clinic.



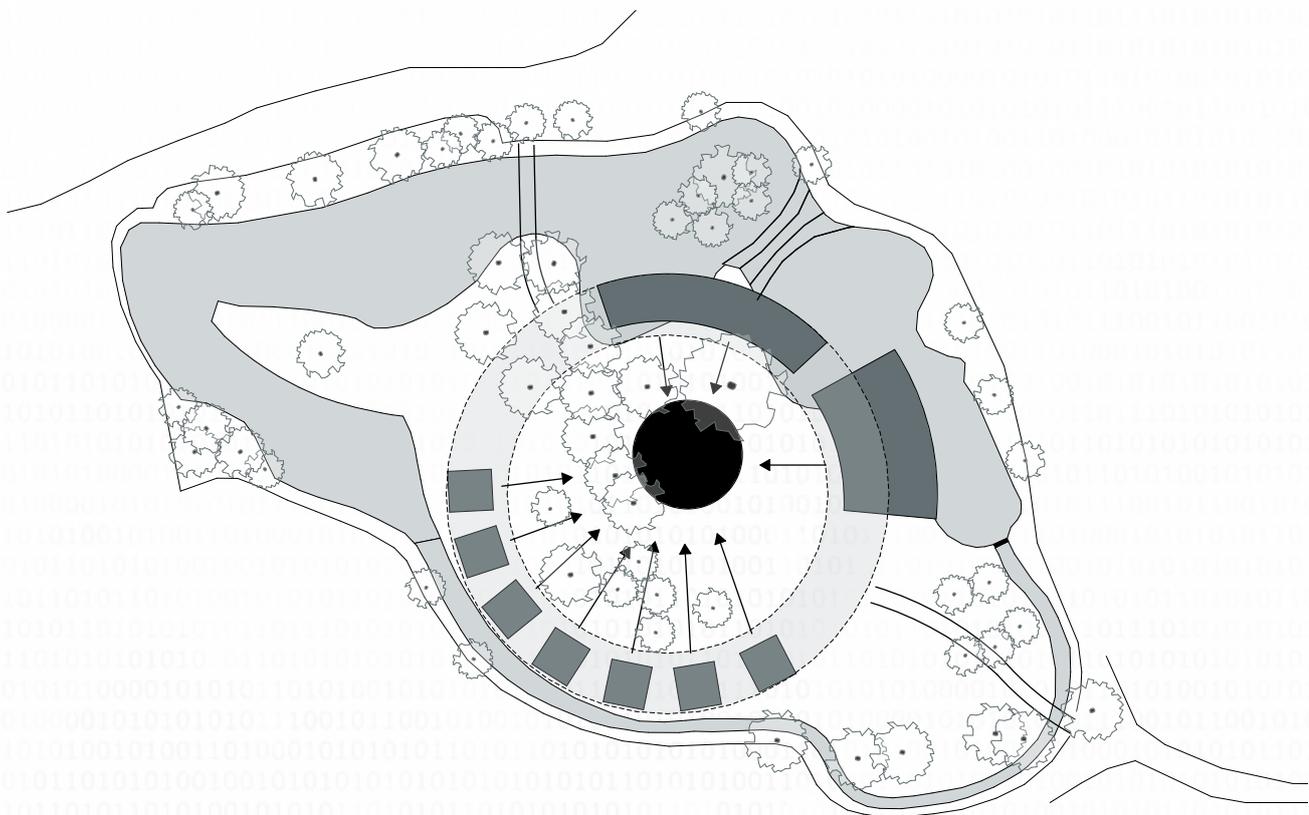
**Enclosing a communal garden step 2:**

The treatment spaces consisting of a reception area, waiting area, two group-therapy rooms, two individual therapy-rooms and a number of more informal sitting areas are directed towards the ponds and waterfall to create a serene and safe atmosphere for difficult conversations. The office spaces directly above them for easy access.



### Connecting the spaces and defining 3 gardens

An institutional atmosphere associated with hallways is avoided by using an open walkway that surrounds the communal garden. This encourages the fellows to go outside routinely and involve themselves in the community. The walkway also defines three gardens on the site and covers an entrance area and a area towards the public park.



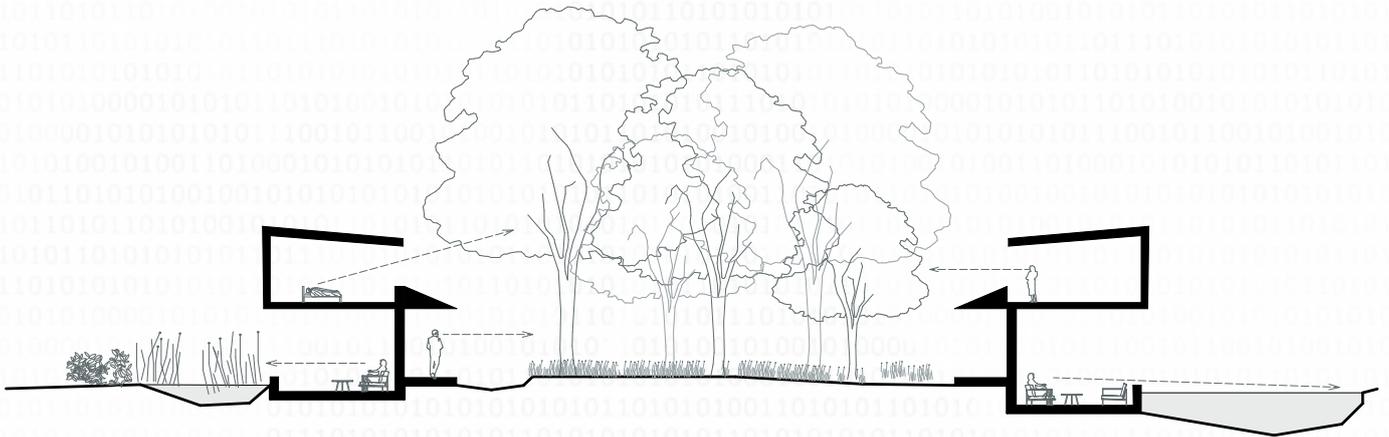
### Creating a social heart(h)

The social heart of the building is situated inbetween the trees of the garden. It is the main meeting point where one shares food and sits by the fireplace, visible from all privat spaces to encourage interaction.



### Bringing in nature

The inclined roof brings in maximum sunlight and rain and space for the trees to grow. Openings on the ground floor bring in the landscape.



### Views to nature

Every space has a different relation to the landscape fitting with the desired atmosphere for the purpose of the space.



*References: to encircle part of the landscape is a powerful way of creating a sense of place, intimacy and clarity. A safe place for playing and experiencing nature. A place from which to orient yourself in the world.*

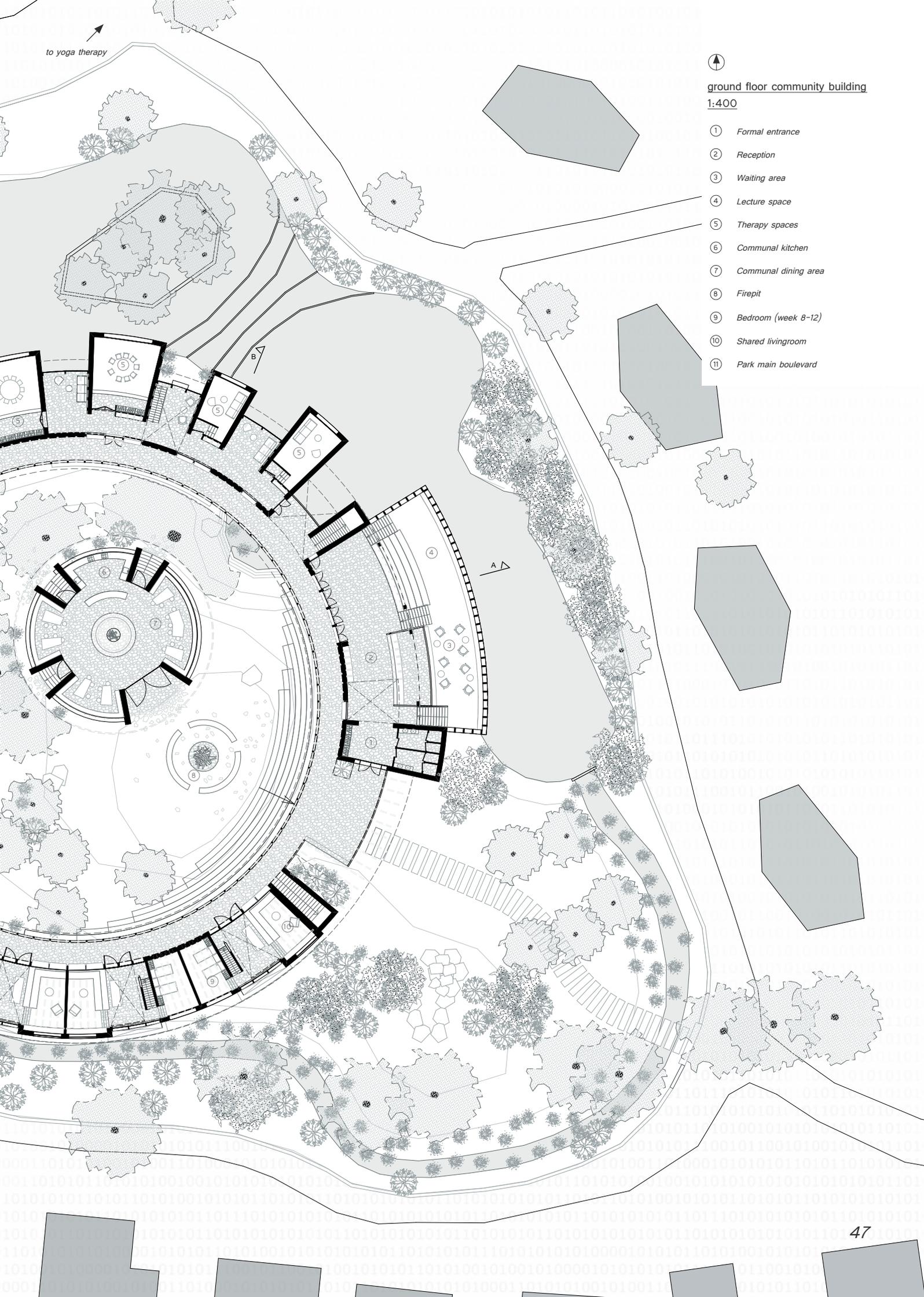


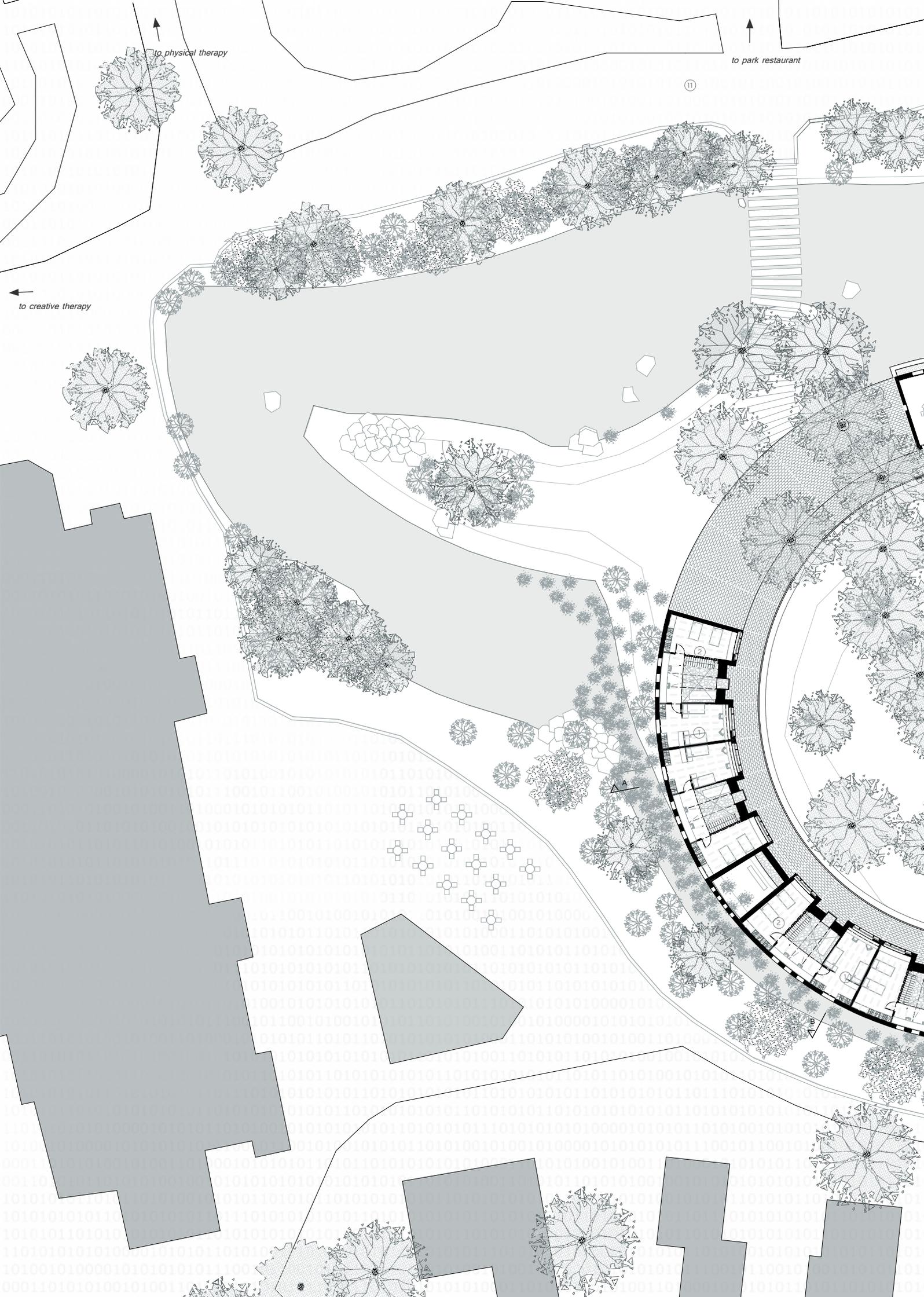
to yoga therapy



**ground floor community building**  
**1:400**

- ① Formal entrance
- ② Reception
- ③ Waiting area
- ④ Lecture space
- ⑤ Therapy spaces
- ⑥ Communal kitchen
- ⑦ Communal dining area
- ⑧ Firepit
- ⑨ Bedroom (week 8-12)
- ⑩ Shared livingroom
- ⑪ Park main boulevard





to physical therapy

to park restaurant

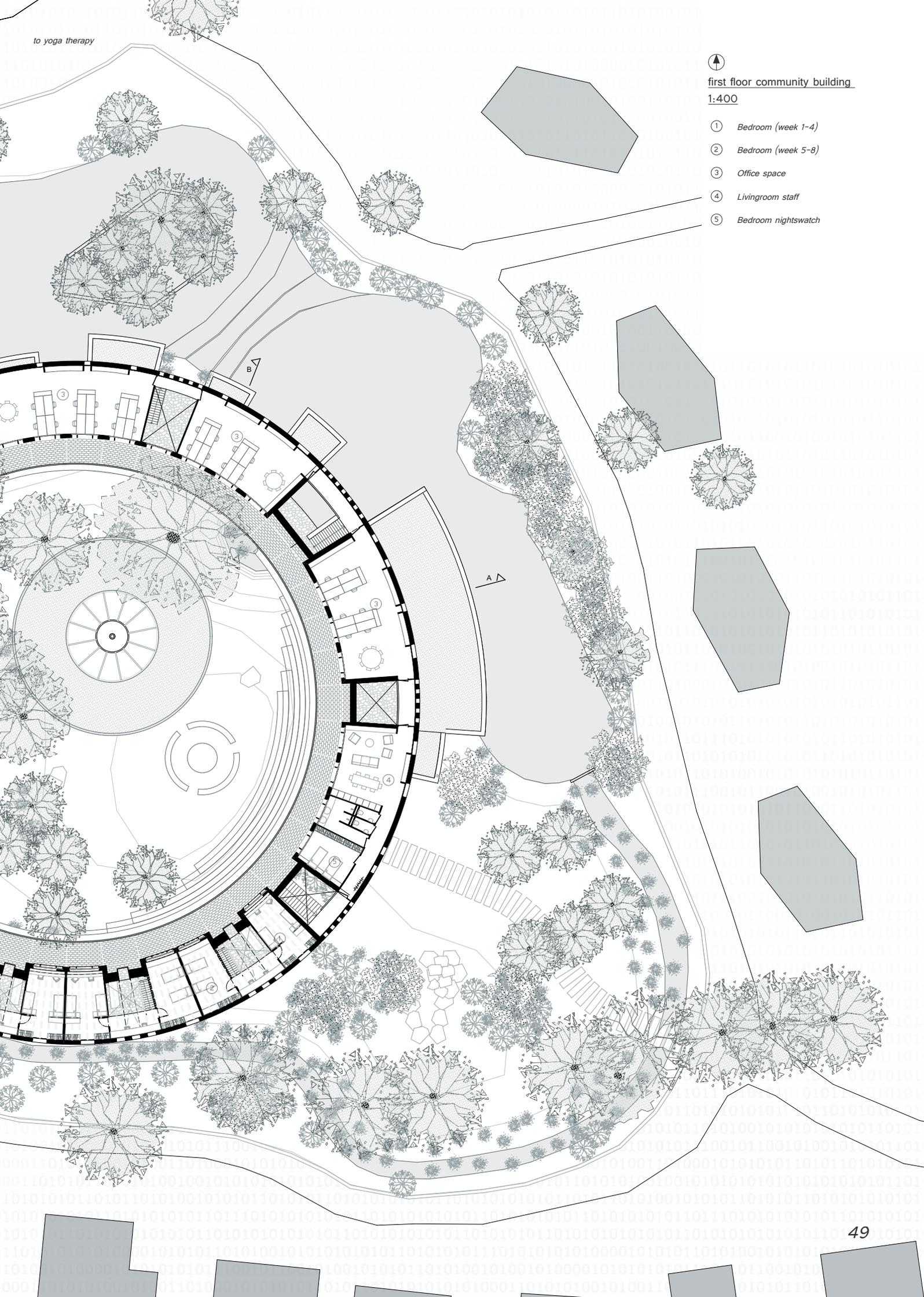
to creative therapy

11

A

B

to yoga therapy



first floor community building  
1:400

- ① Bedroom (week 1-4)
- ② Bedroom (week 5-8)
- ③ Office space
- ④ Livingroom staff
- ⑤ Bedroom nightswatch



section A-A 1:200

- ① Shared livingroom
- ② Bathroom with kachelofen heating
- ③ Bedroom
- ④ Walkway
- ⑤ Firepit
- ⑥ Reception area
- ⑦ Lecture space
- ⑧ Office space



section B-B 1:200

- ① Shared livingroom
- ② Bedroom (week 1-4)
- ③ Walkway
- ④ Communal dining
- ⑤ Therapy space
- ⑥ Office space





RE:CONNECT  
rehabilitation community  
for gaming addicts

arrival garden







central garden







communal livingrooms

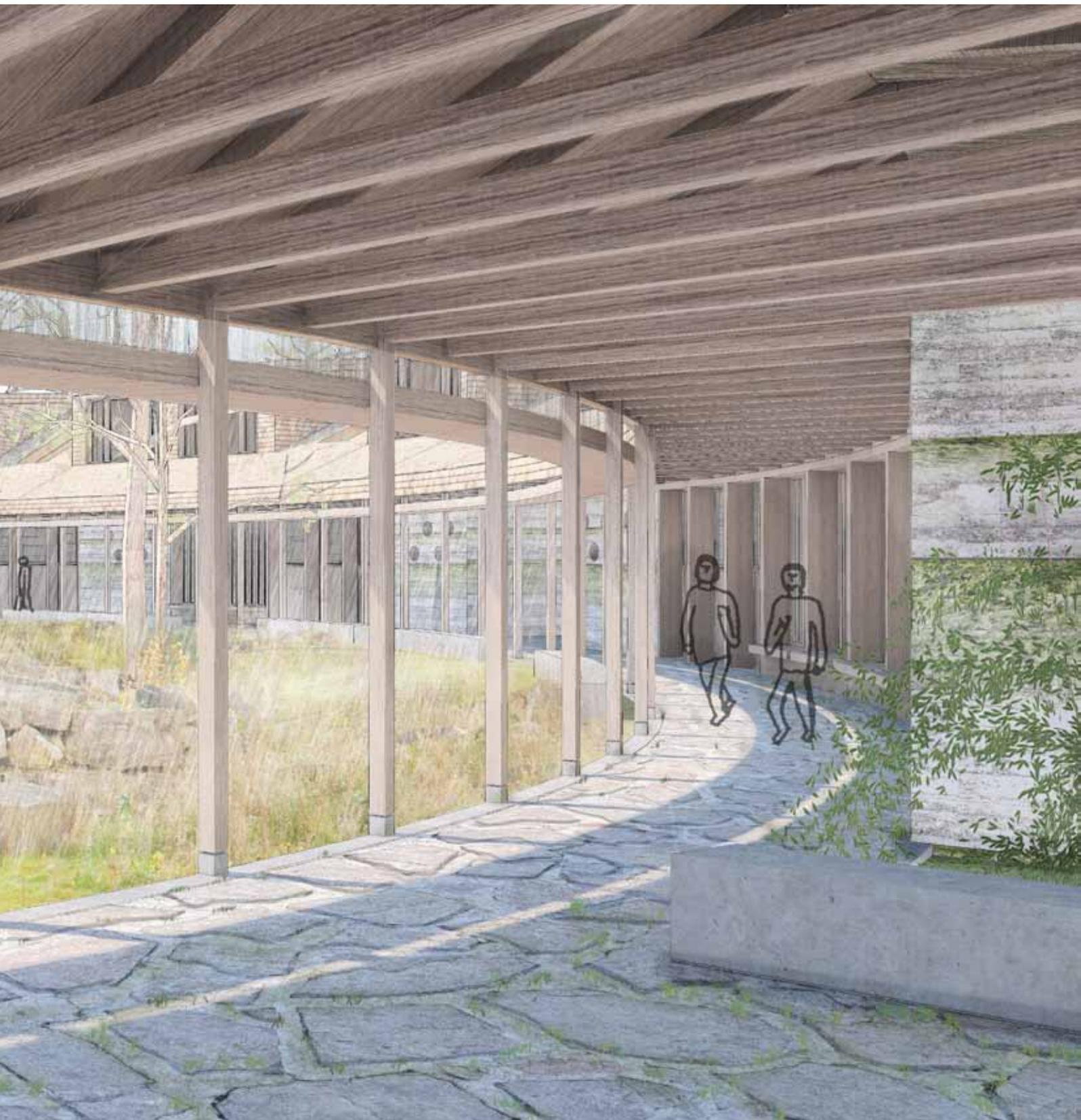






anti-clinical walkway







social heart(h)







transition towards the public park



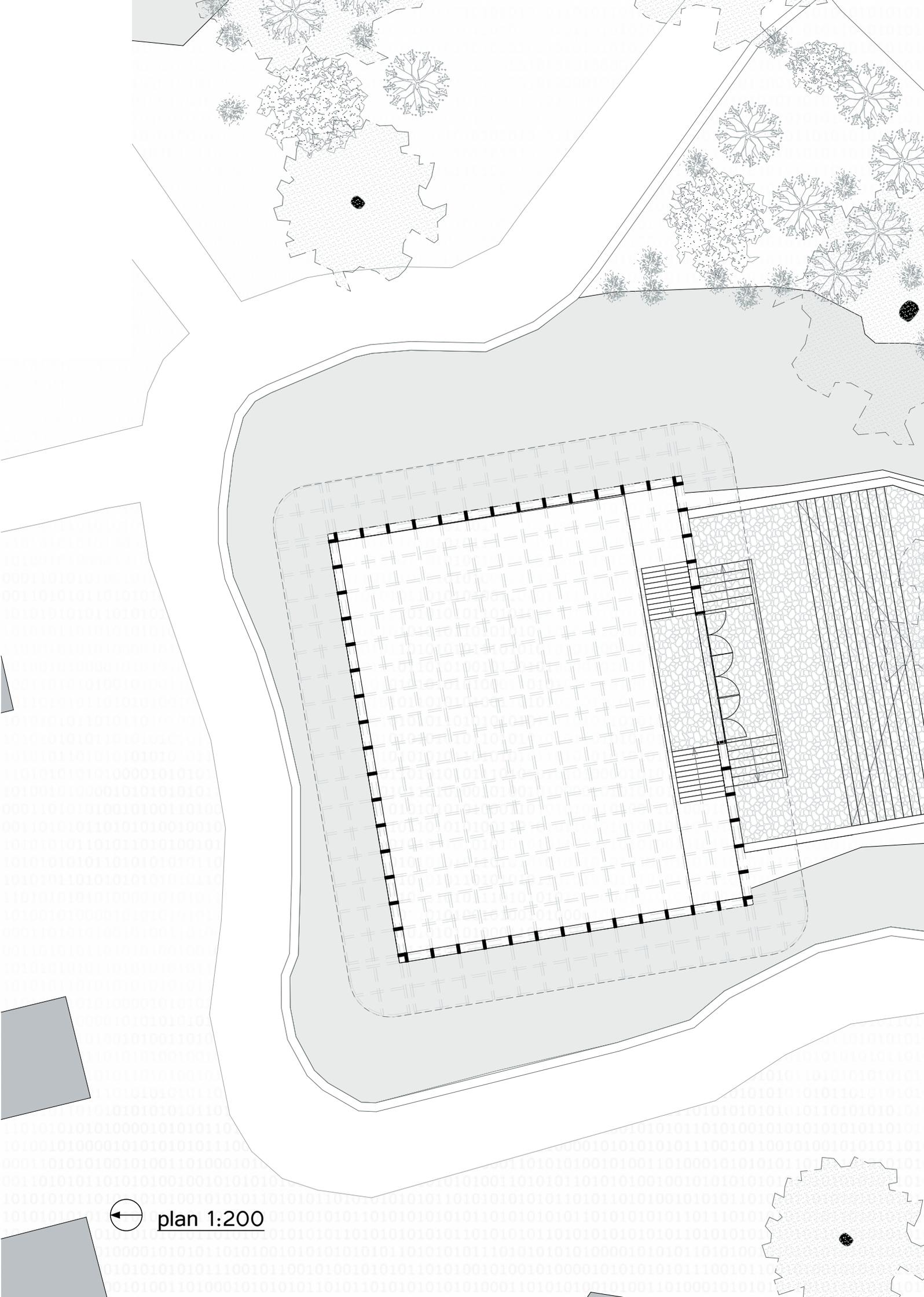












← plan 1:200

*to yoga therapy*



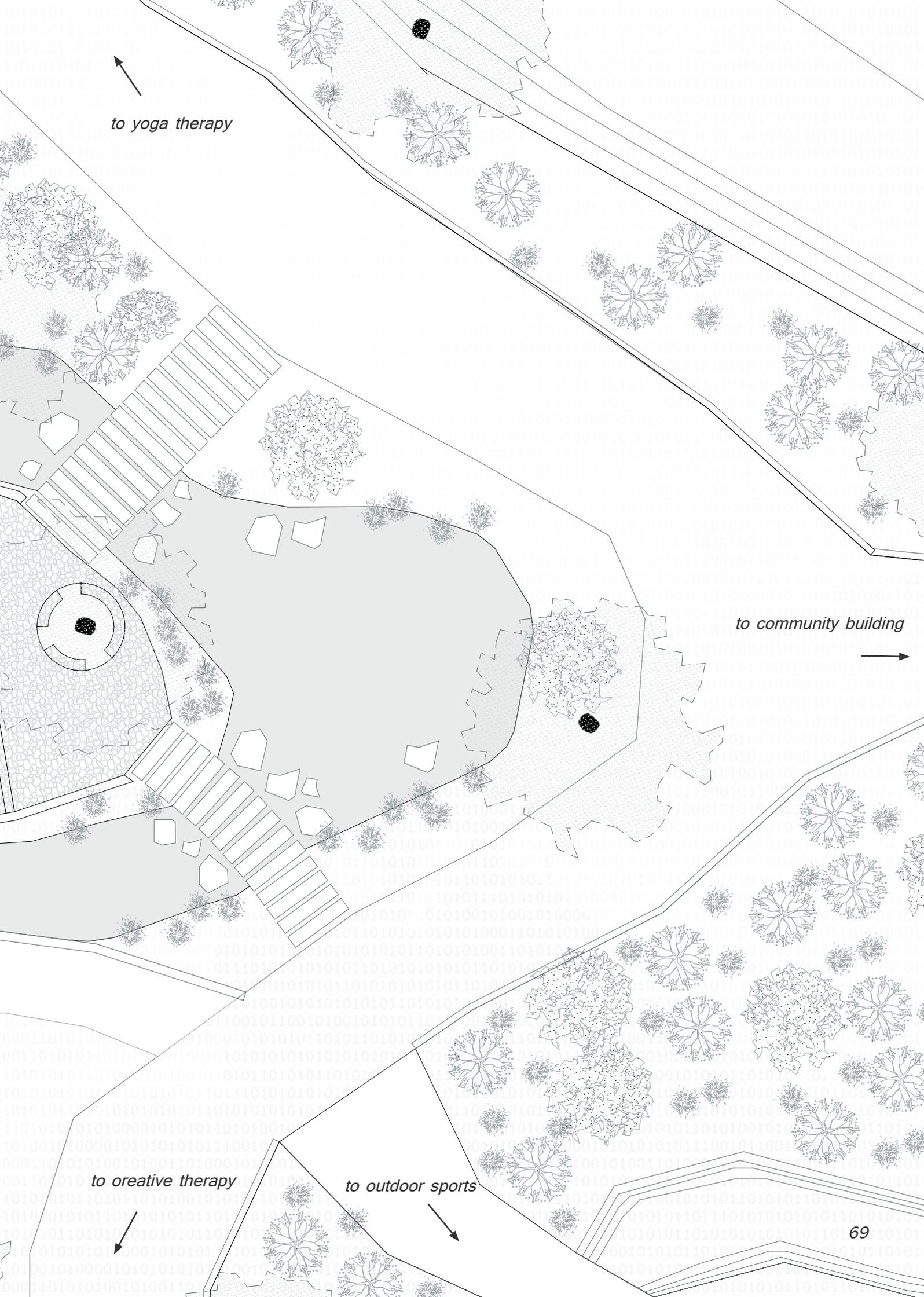
*to community building*



*to oreative therapy*



*to outdoor sports*



# 9

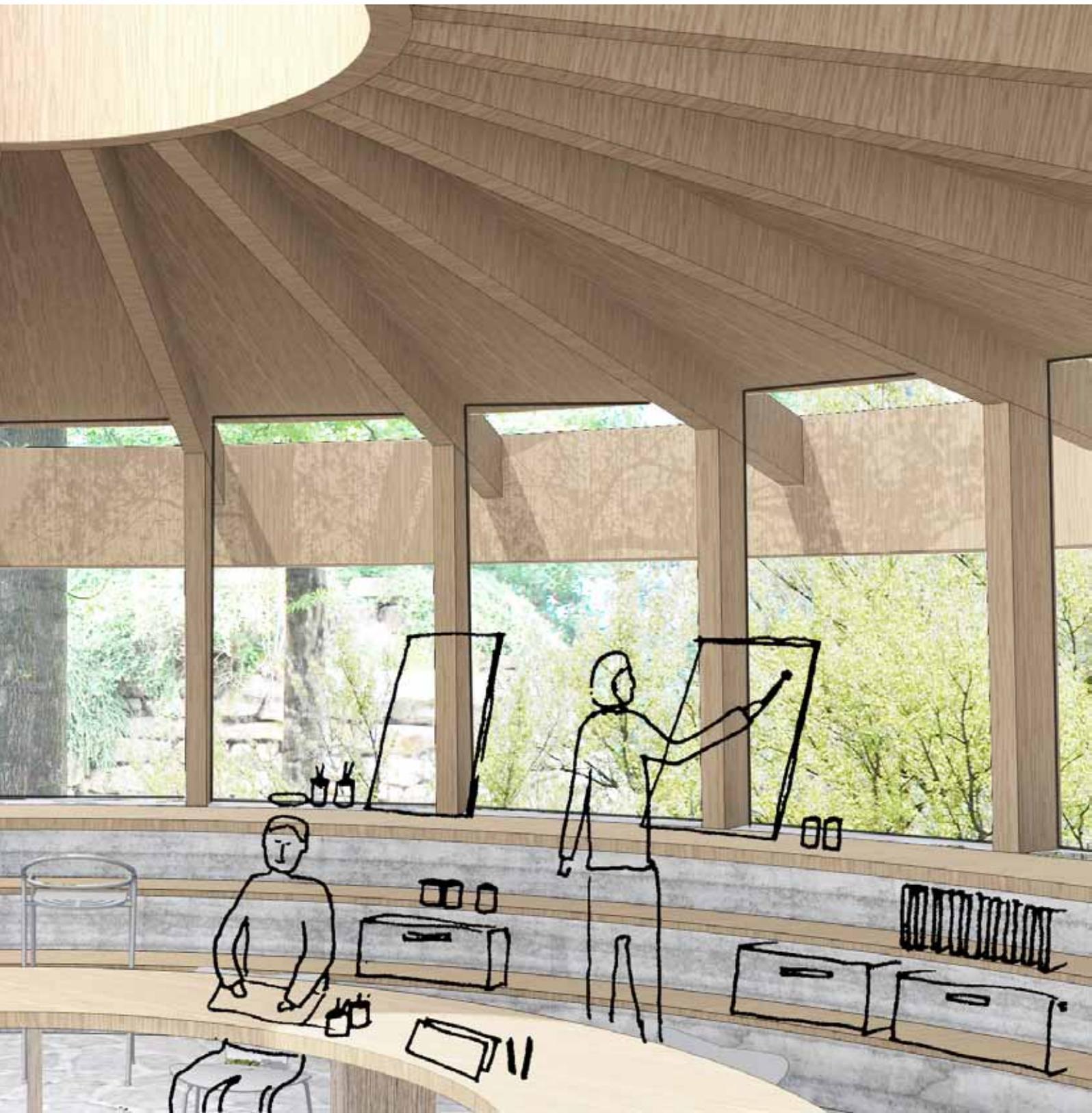
## Creative Therapy

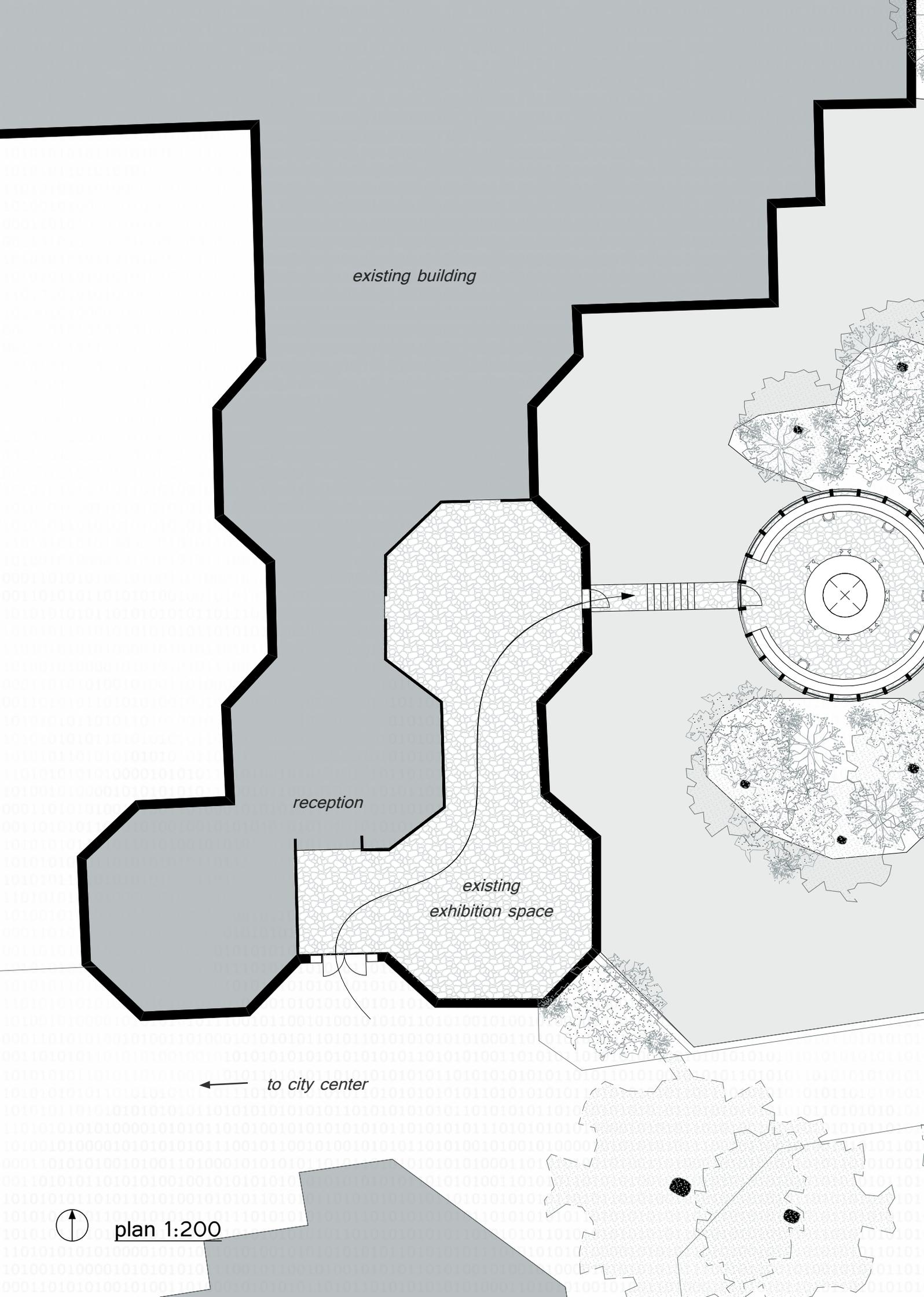
The creative therapy is connected to existing exhibition spaces, one enters through the existing building into the new privat pavilion. The routing allows for chance meetings while maintaining privacy within the therapy space. The new pavillion gives the otherwise closed building a face towards the park. The pavilion is elevated, again using height differences, to create a sense of privacy and ability to look out onto the world. A close-up view of the trees and bushes around and a longer view across the park generates an ever changing spectacle to take inspiration from. Fellows can chose to work individually around the outsides, or collectively and more inwardly on the round table in the middle.











*existing building*

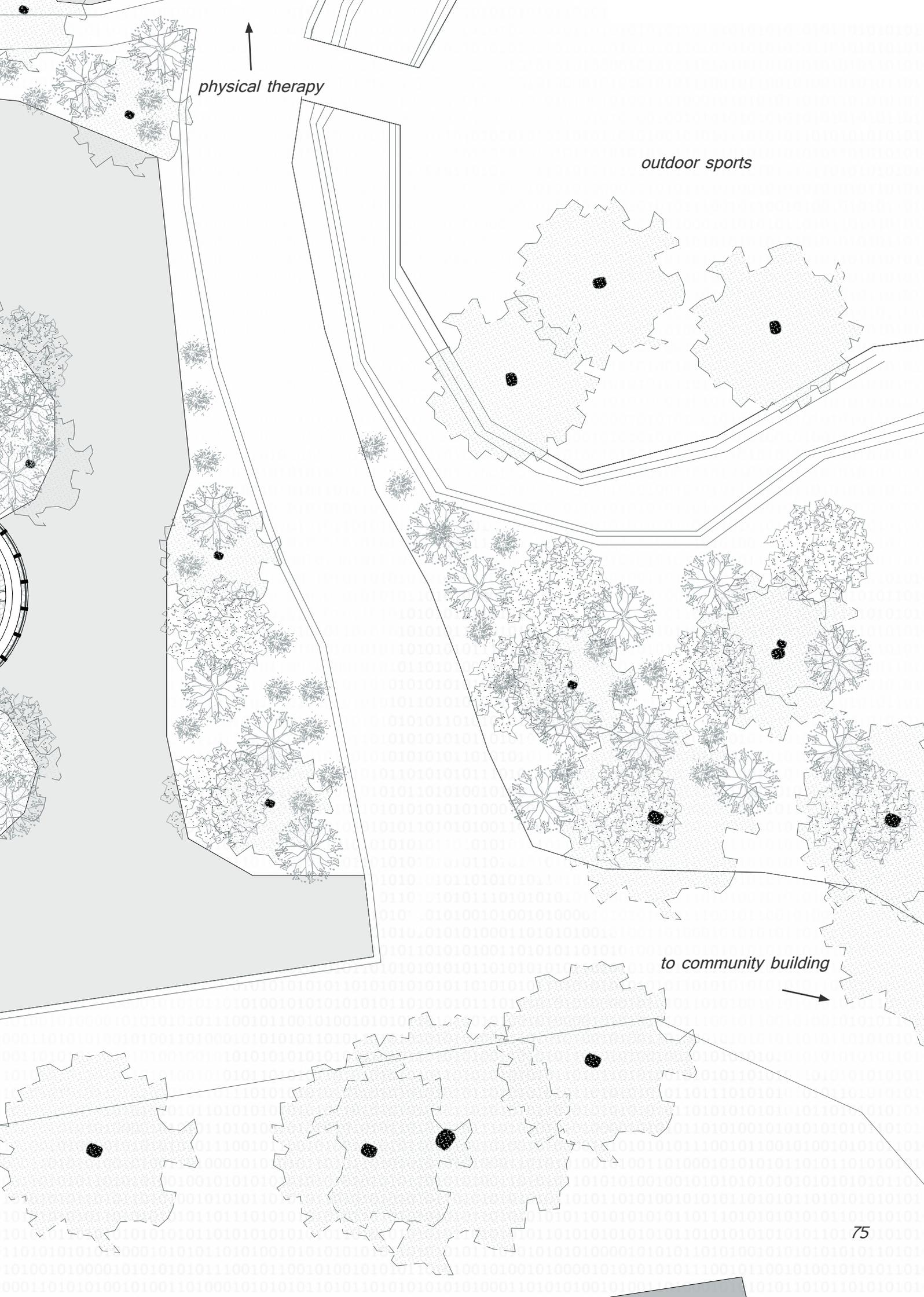
*reception*

*existing  
exhibition space*

*to city center*



plan 1:200



*physical therapy*

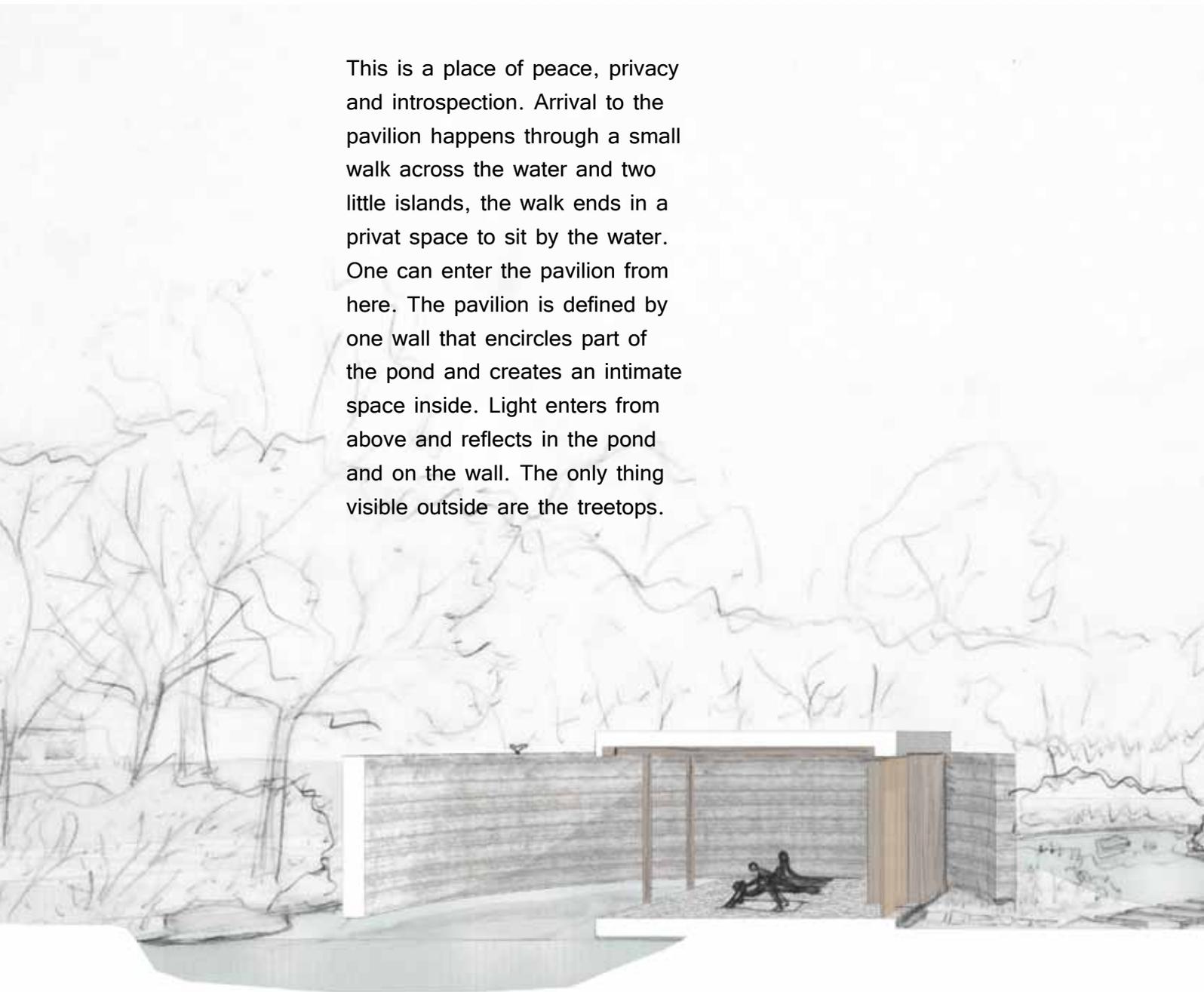
*outdoor sports*

*to community building*

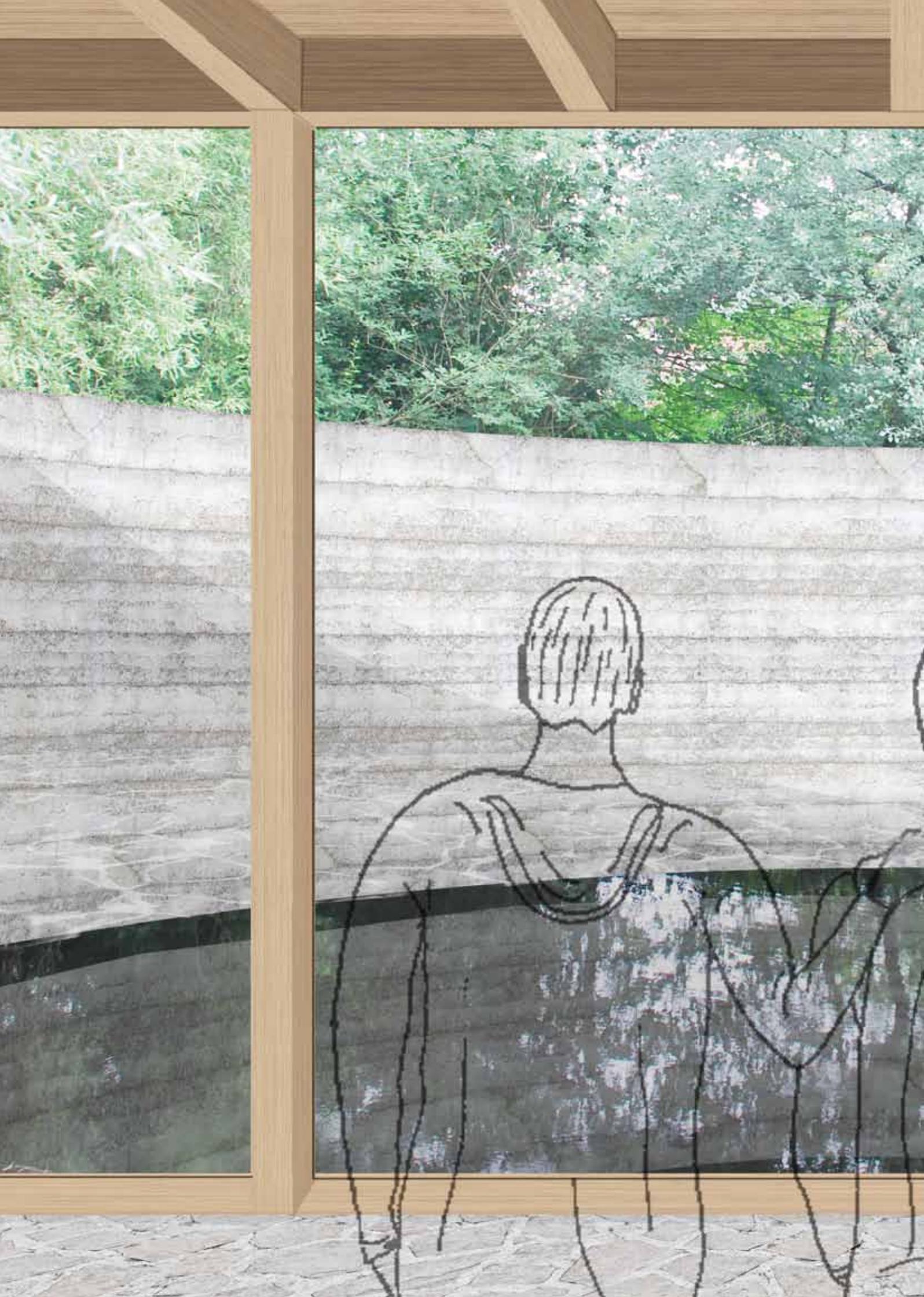
# 10

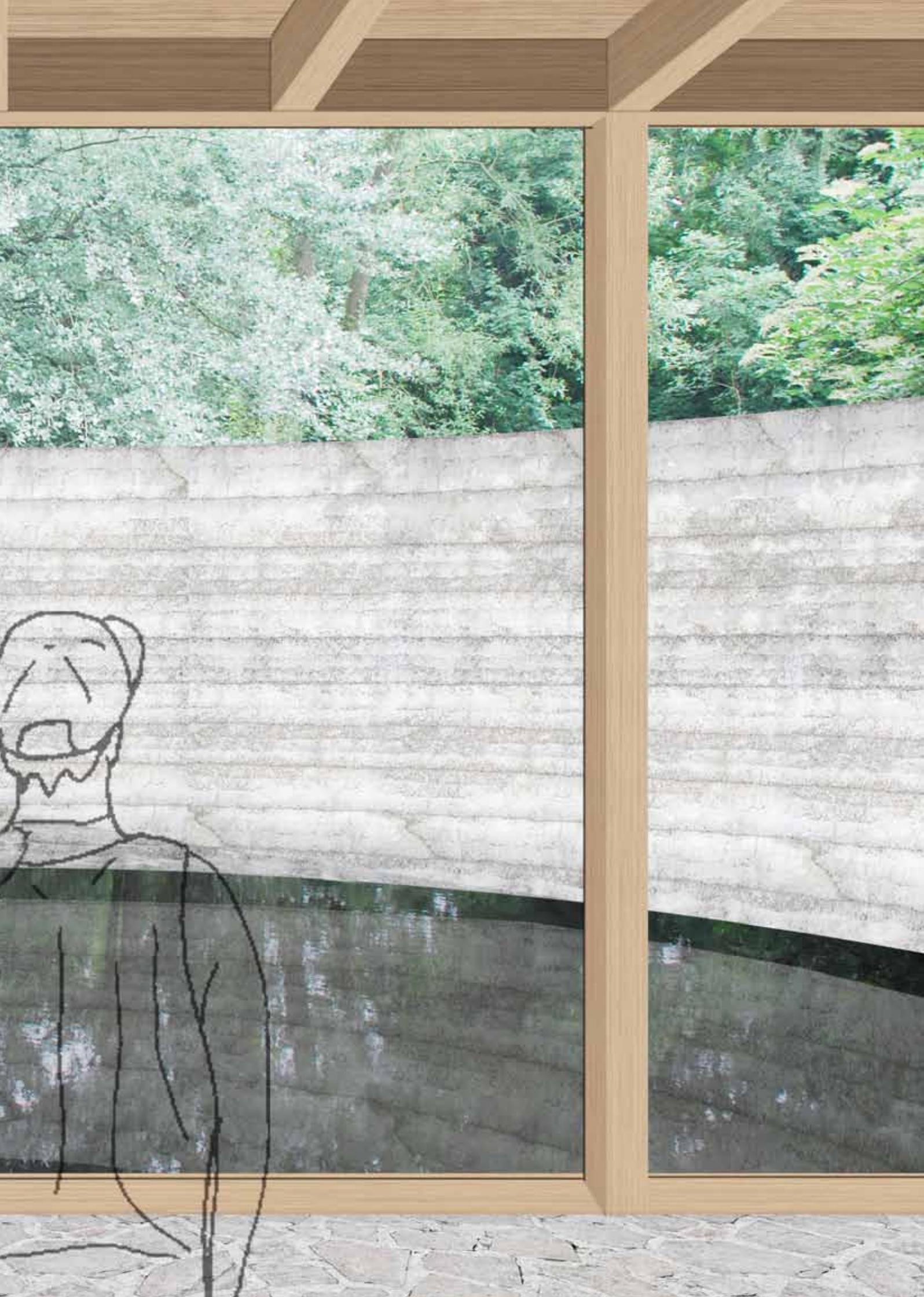
## Yoga Therapy

This is a place of peace, privacy and introspection. Arrival to the pavilion happens through a small walk across the water and two little islands, the walk ends in a private space to sit by the water. One can enter the pavilion from here. The pavilion is defined by one wall that encircles part of the pond and creates an intimate space inside. Light enters from above and reflects in the pond and on the wall. The only thing visible outside are the treetops.





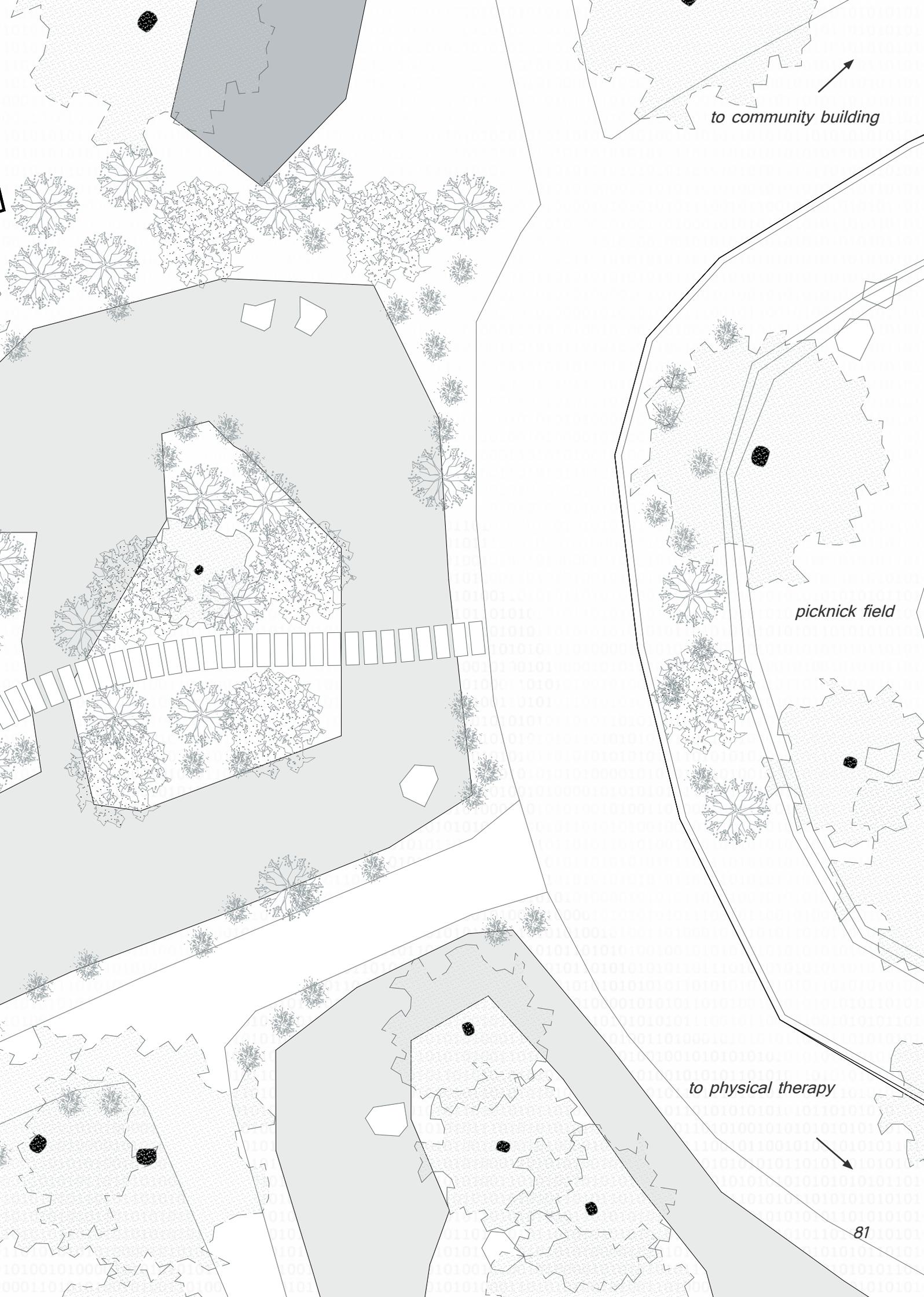






*backgardens*

⬅ plan 1:200



*to community building*

*picknick field*

*to physical therapy*



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