

GRÖSSLING BATHS & LIBRARY

Since its construction in 1896 and extensions and transformations in the years that followed, the Grössling baths has been an important institution in Bratislava and one of the rare examples of a successful public recreational facility. Architecturally it dealt uniquely with the constraints of an inner-city location to bring natural light and a privacy for such a function which made it a successful social catalyst in the rapidly changing environment.

The ambition of the future restoration and functional expansion should be in working with the same pioneering spirit of the designers of the original building and respectfully transforming the baths into a contemporary social hub that serves the public good. Hence our proposal focuses on restoring as much as possible the intent of functional distribution within the building as well as carefully complementing it with new functions and structures.

In order to incorporate the various functions in respect to their intended operability, we have clearly allocated all library spaces with its own 24h entrance towards medlena Street and are using a new slightly elevated plaza in front as an outdoor extension for activities of the library as well as to provide a level entry for visitors with disabilities. The cafe and its seating areas are situated on the North East corner on level 0 but within an open space connecting to the interactive library. The intention is to blur the strict boundaries between both space whilst enabling separate operational spaces with varying opening times and access.

The baths consist of two separately operable areas, the interactive comprising the old pools and a new sauna and steam bath, and the spa baths with a newly build salt-water pool situated at the place of the 1896 first Grössling pool. For this pool we intended a moveable roof that can open in the summer months. Both baths are accessible separately but are connected in order for visitors to move freely between them. The changing rooms for the spa baths are located on ground floor while the changing rooms for the interactive baths are above on the first floor. Besides the main entry on the corner of kupelna and medlena there is a separate entry for the spa baths on kupelna Street and a separate entry with changing rooms in the functionalist building. A direct access for people with disabilities is at kupelna Street with a changing room and bathrooms designed according to their spatial requirements.

Further we suggest two extensions of the interactive baths; one at the courtyard to the north east providing a semi-temperate space, an Orangerie, for relaxation with connections to both pool spaces as well as the cafe. An outdoor/indoor pool situated in the south west courtyard consisting of an openable roof and facade to adapt to the particular outside weather.

The massage/therapy spaces are located on level 1&2 of the functionalist building accessible separately from other functions. All administrative spaces are placed in the attic of the main building including changing and day rooms for employees. The artist in residence apartments and ateliers are on the 2nd and 3rd floor of the functionalist building with their separate entrance. The basement contains all technical and logistical spaces including the delivery yard that is integrated within the plaza design at medlena Street.

In terms of materiality and formal language of new structures and furniture we intended to interpret existing elements such as the old tile patterns and the prevailing colouration. Due to the many renovations over the past decades the building has developed multiple conflicting styles, we therefore propose to use the classical geometric qualities of the arched windows as an repeating formal elements to bind the various spaces together. This helps to develop formal clarity throughout the project and its extensions.

Within the spirit of the introverted urban bath with its ambiguous connection to the environment we propose the Orangerie to serve as an interior park, creating a unique microclimate that complements the relaxing spaces of the pools as well as serves as an extension of the cafe seating space, and provides a bar with refreshments, operated by the café.

One of the most significant elements in the old design of the baths is the sophisticated use of skylights to illuminate the baths and sauna spaces with natural light. We therefore propose to expand on this by reconstructing the series of skylights according to the new layouts. For the salt water pool we propose a openable glass roof that can be opened during the summer months.

Recommended stages of implementation

For the overall restoration and construction of the building we have the following recommendation of implementation stages. Due to the variety of buildings and functions some of these stages can be implemented simultaneously if necessary.

Stage I - Dismantling and Reconstruction

In order to preserve as much of the existing structure as possible the building hull needs to be reconstructed to be winter-proof. This can be done for parts of the project with temporary structures in case that parts would be implemented in a later stage. Possible pollutant materials need to be removed before a general dismantling of the interior walls, ceilings and floors. Structural elements that need to be rebuilt or reinforced should be constructed for the whole building in this stage. Building elements of historical value should be reconstructed and in case of nearby later works protected from possible damage.

Stage IIa - restoration of old baths as the interactive baths

In parallel to stage IIb we recommend to begin with the restoration of the existing bath pools and the construction of the saunas, changing rooms and other facilities for operating them. This includes the reconstruction of the openable roof above the long pool as well as the construction of all skylights above the sitting pools and saunas. The changing rooms can be constructed on both floors including the elevator next to the entrance. The attic can be renovated to house all administrative spaces. The implementation of stage IIa allows for the operation of the interactive baths while having in parallel the construction of the spa baths of stage IIa.

Stage IIb - construction library and cafe

The construction and restoration of the North-Wing of the building along medlena Street into the library and cafe can be implemented in parallel to stage IIa or at a later time as the functional spaces of the baths and the library are independent of each other. It is nevertheless important to implement the redesign of the public square along medlena street as the plaza provides a smooth level entry for visitors with disabilities.

Stage IIIa - Spa baths

The spa baths including a new salt-water pool in place of the old 1896 original bath as well as saunas and showers can be implemented after the completion of the interactive baths. The changing rooms situated on the ground floor of the east wing would be completed before in stage IIa. This stage includes a newly openable roof above the saltwater pool.

Stage IIIb - functionalist building

Parallel to the spa baths works can be done to renovate the respective floors D-3 of the functionalist building with the 2nd bath entry on the ground floor, therapy and massage rooms on level 1&2 and two apartments with ateliers on level 2&3.

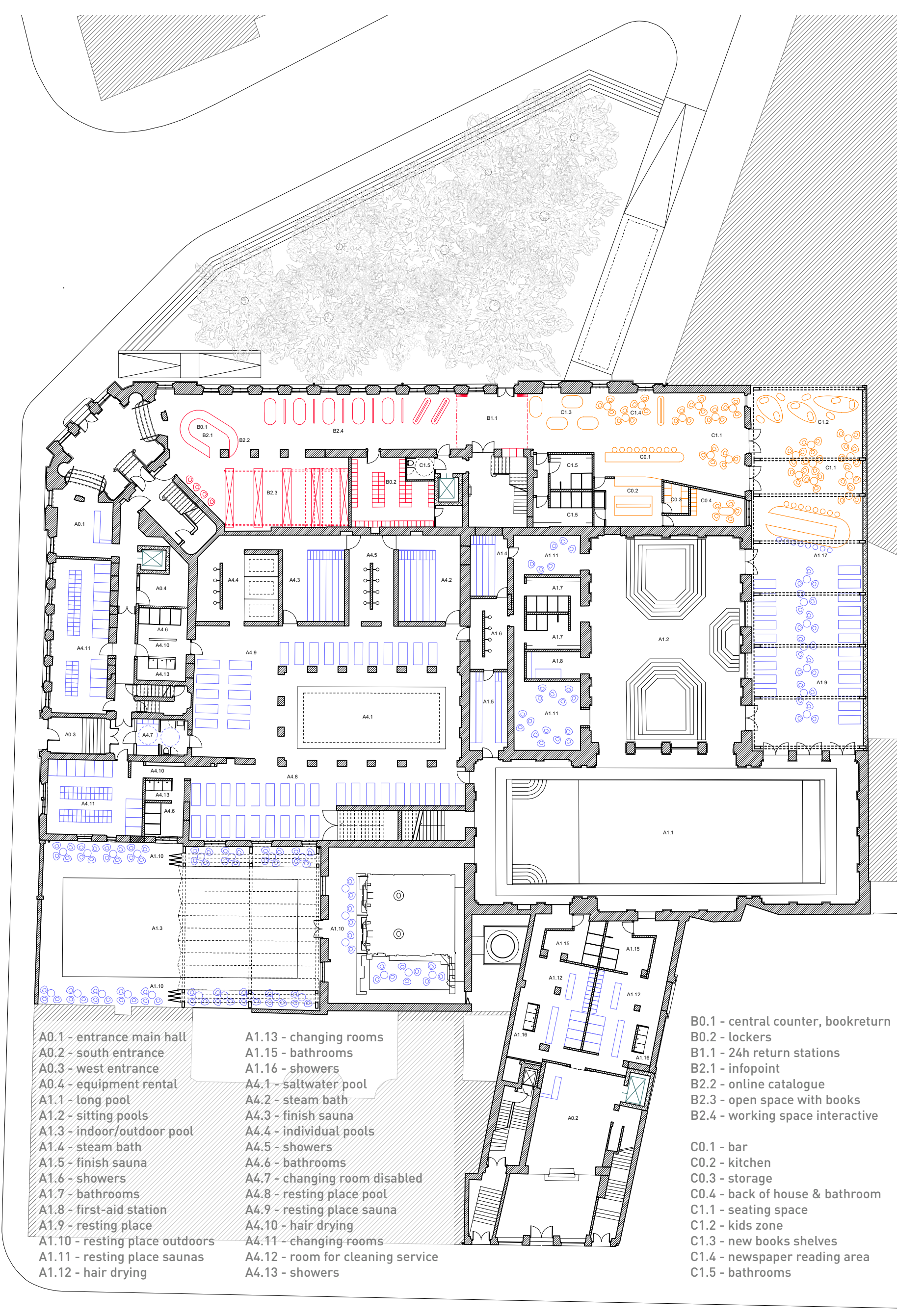
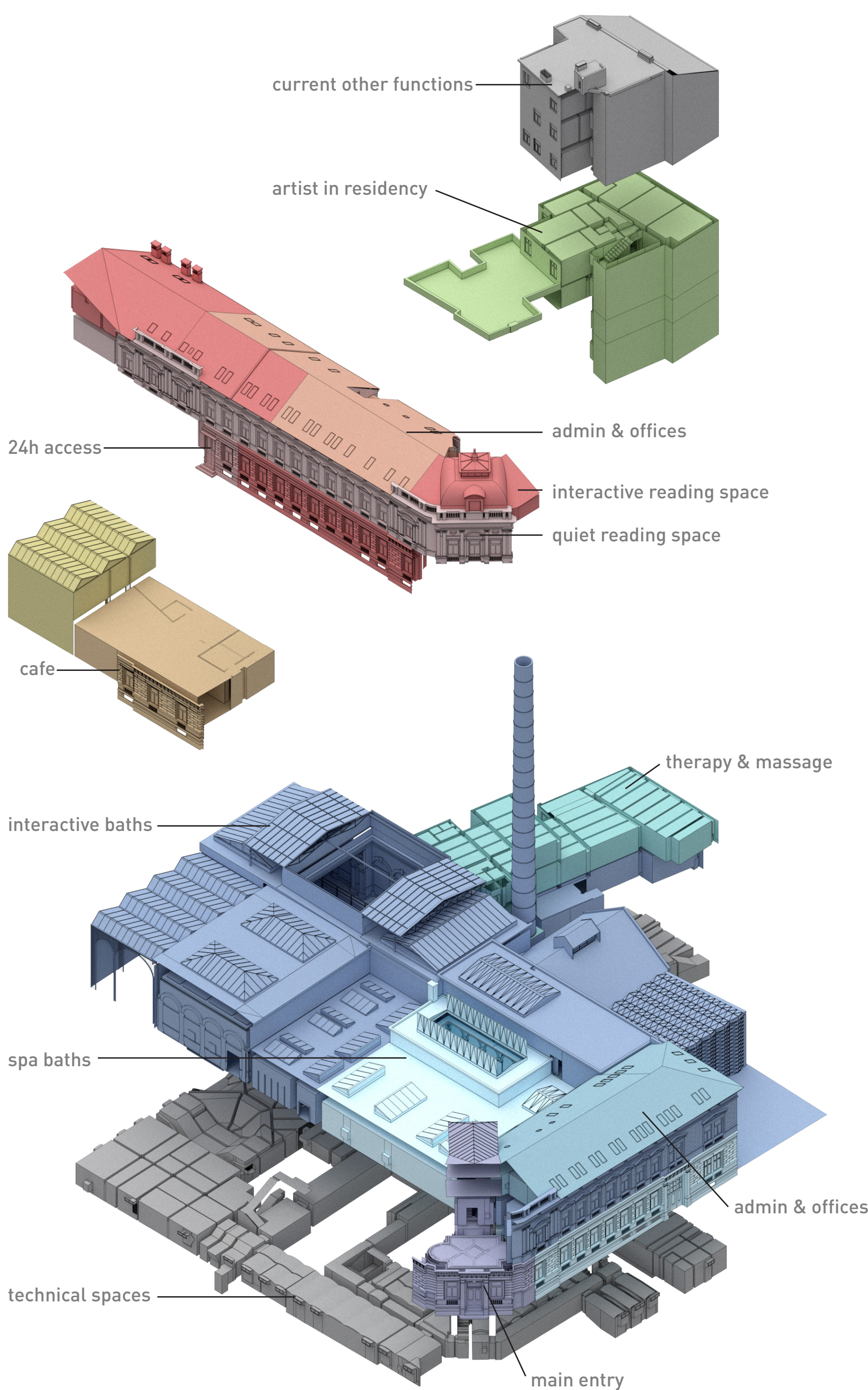
With the completion of both stages III the current usable footprint will be restored. Stages IV and V are the recommended extensions within both courtyards of the composition.

Stage IV - Orangerie

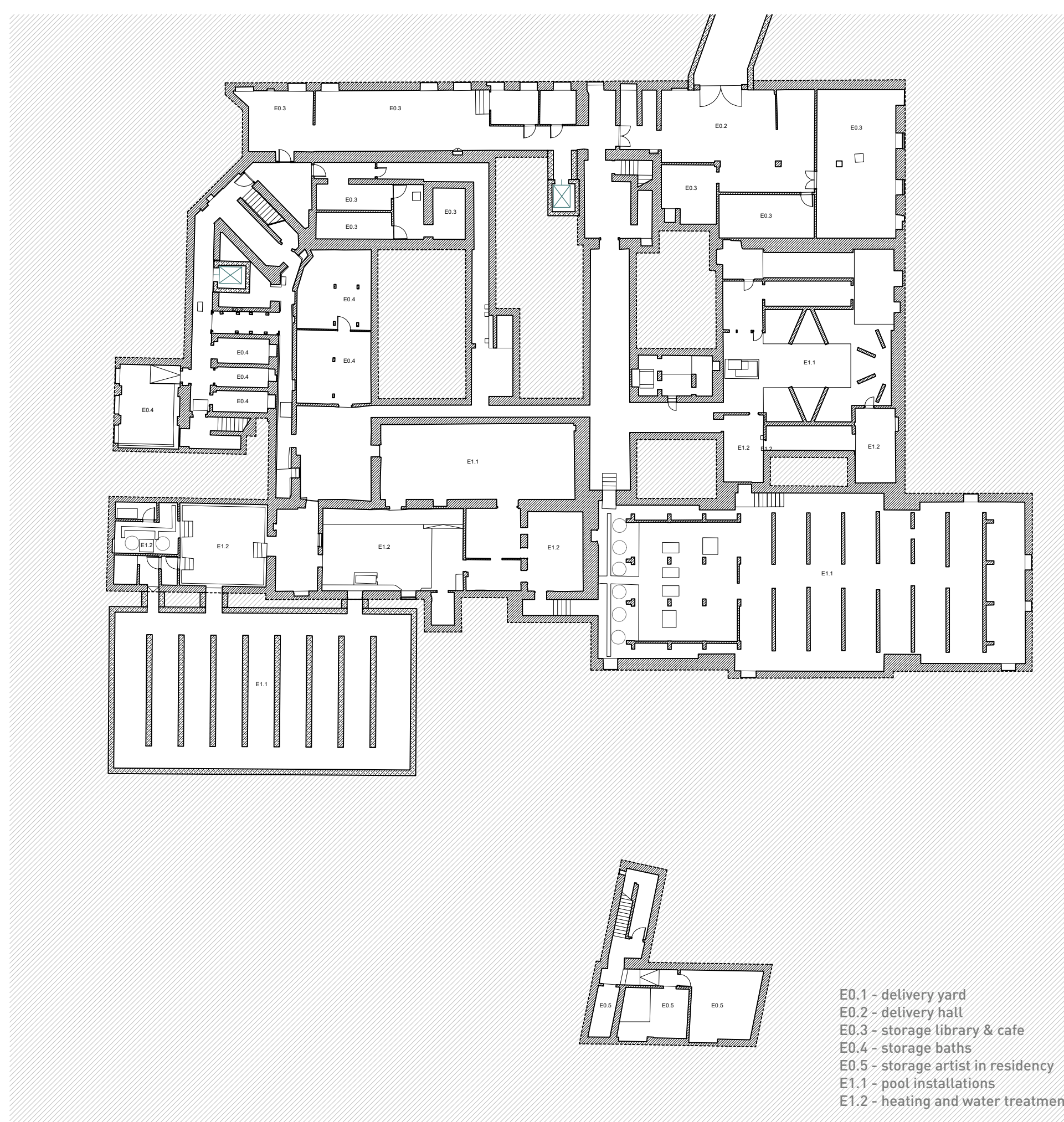
As a semi-temperate space, the Orangerie, situated in the North-East courtyard, can be built independent of the other stages of the project. It extends the seating space of the cafe as well as the relaxing area for both the long pool and the sitting pools with a small refreshment bar.

Stage V - indoor/outdoor pool

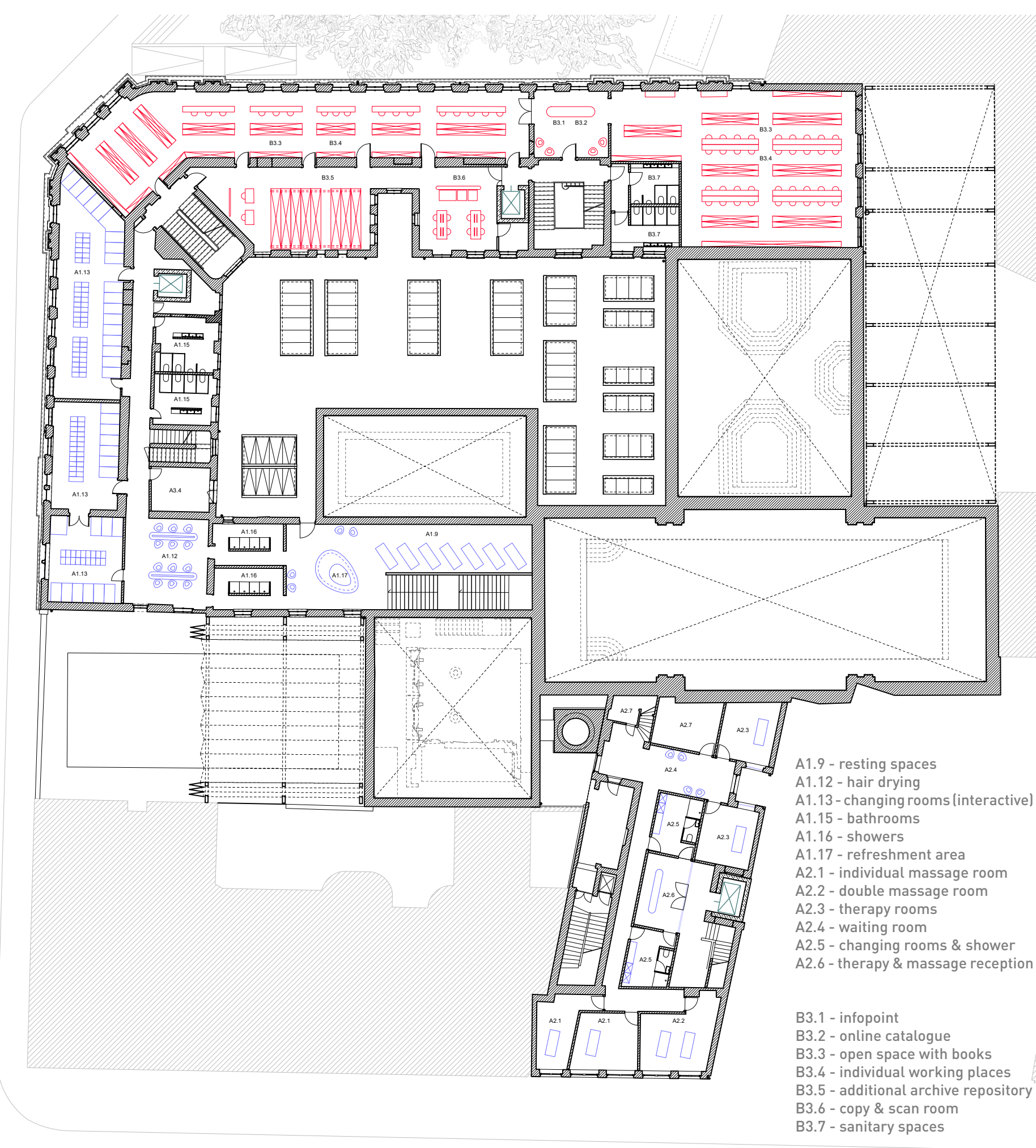
Within the courtyard on the West-Side at kupelna Street we recommend the construction of an indoor/outdoor pool that uses the old oven room for relaxation spaces. Here, an outdoor pool without cover can be implemented first and later extended to be half covered. We recommend this stage to be evaluated according to the possible changing demand for capacity of the baths.



Groundfloor Plan with public square 1:300



Underground Plan 1:300



Firstfloor Plan 1:300



Rooftop Plan 1:300



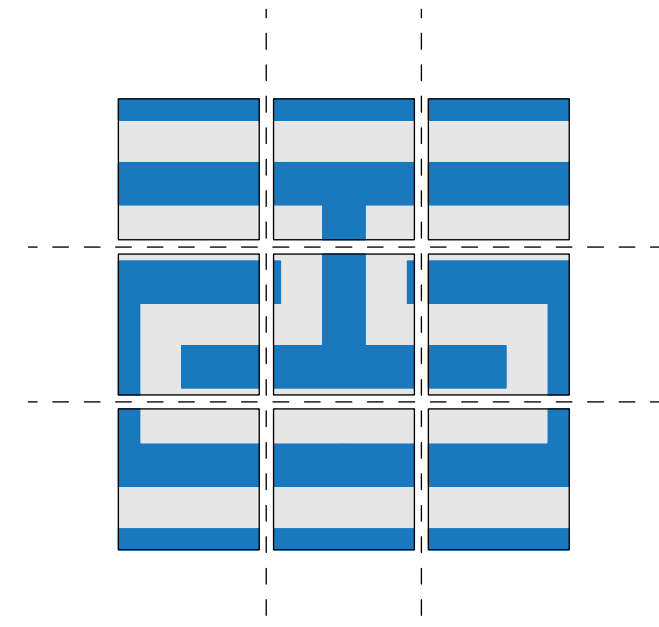
Secondfloor Plan 1:300



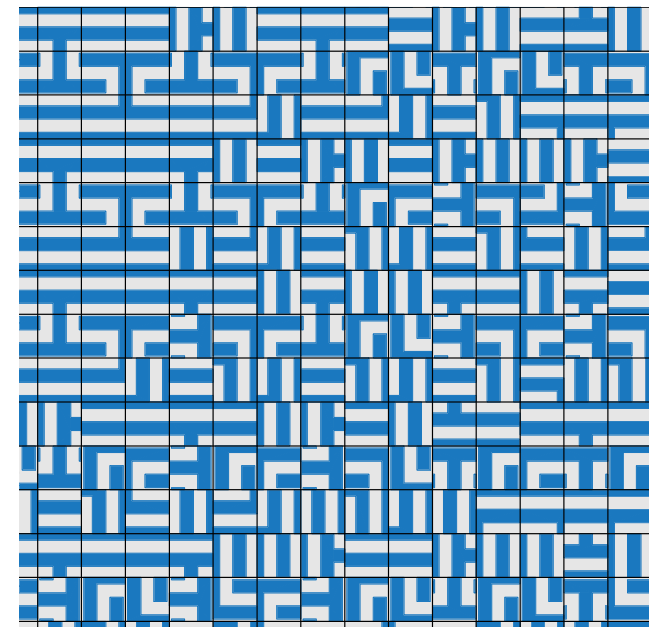
open reading spaces at the cafe with new books and magazines



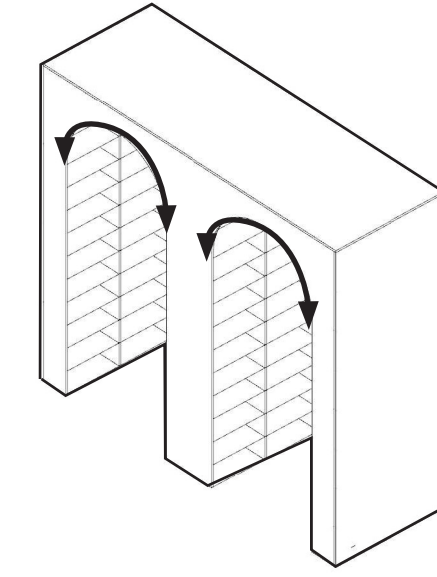
quiet reading spaces with books and individual working niches



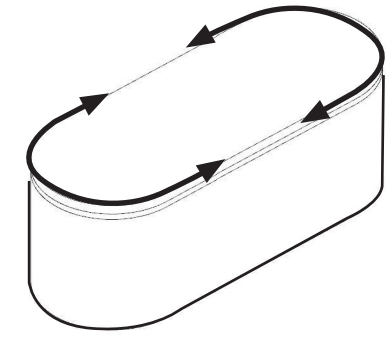
Dividing the original tile to create individual unique tiles.



Creating a modern interpretation of the original pattern.



Introducing arches in the new design.



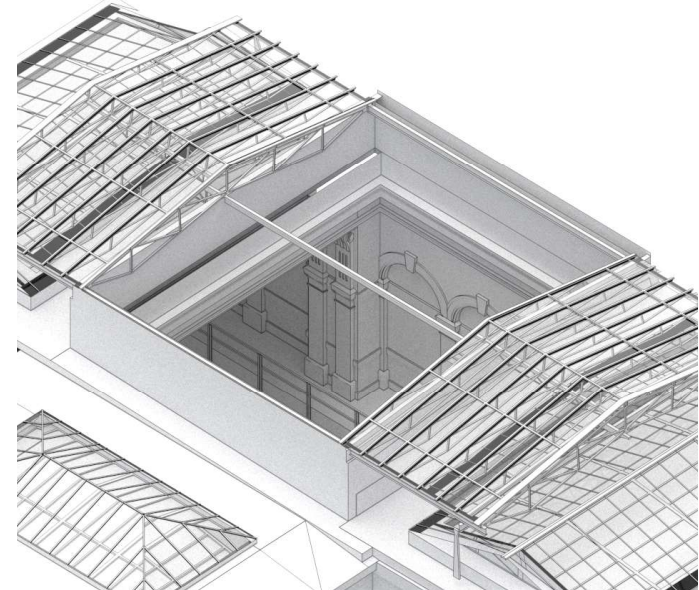
Adding same soft curvature to the furniture. Creating the link between old and new.



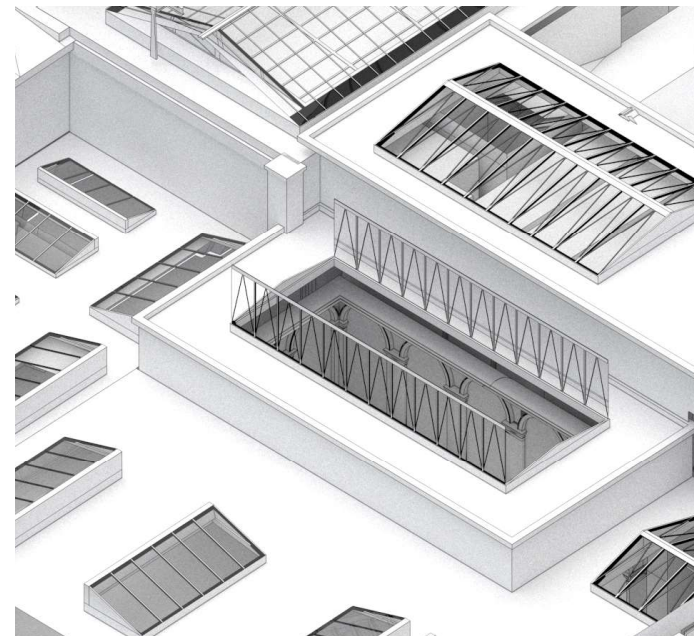
salt water pool located at the spa baths with openable roof



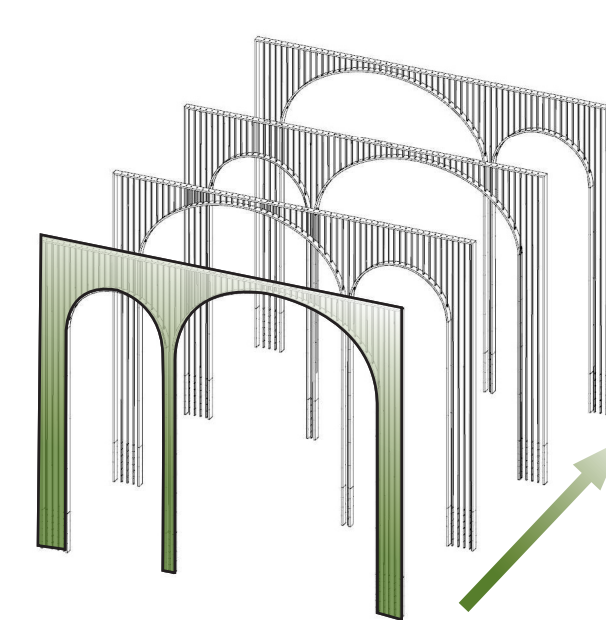
orangery resting space with refreshment bar and access to the interactive pools



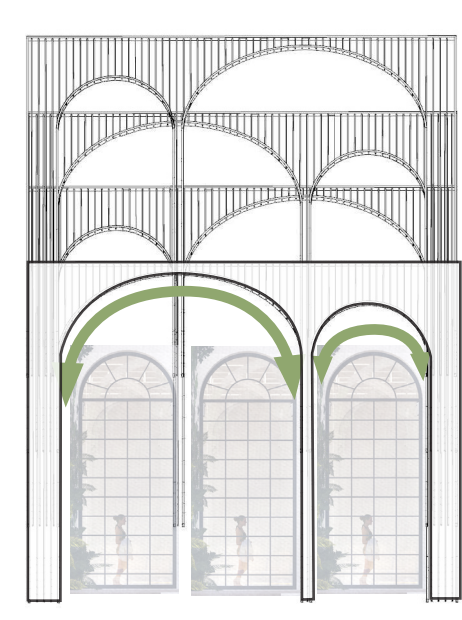
Sliding roof of the main bath.



Opening skylight of the salt bath.



Creating green layers in the new Orangerie.



Connecting the interior of the bath with the semi-outdoor area by exposing the original openings.