

Operation Brown Building 2015



Phase 2 Workshop
March 16th



McGill Brown Student Services Building Exterior

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0. Executive Summary

Operation Brown Building is a multi-stakeholder building redesign initiative that was created to address a series of complex challenges that have recently emerged in McGill University's Brown Student Services Building. In response to a request for help from McGill's Student Services, we, an interdisciplinary group of students (studying architecture, urban planning, sustainability, and urban systems) developed and undertook an iterative design process that focused on drawing insight and feedback from community engagement and consultation. This process unfolded in the form of a semester-long applied student research course: ARCH 514 - Community Design Workshop, and was collaboratively facilitated by Professor Nik Luka and the McGill Spaces Project, a student-led placemaking organization.

We began the process by conducting preliminary research on the Brown Building, as well as a situational analysis through a series of interviews with building stakeholders and an observational mapping analysis of the building. Through preliminary research, the students identified the building's original intention; to unite all student services on campus and provide clear passage from Dr. Penfield to SSMU. The lack of clear signage, the problems with wayfinding and the prevalence of undefined spaces emerging as major issues (amongst others) during this initial stage of investigation, directly contradict these original goals.

Drawing from our analyses, five design categories were chosen to address these issues throughout the length of the project. These included: reorganization (of existing furniture & space); signage; reception area; modular spaces; and greenery. Long term space interventions were also considered but were mostly identified as out of the project's scope, keeping budget and time constraints in mind.

Over the course of two rounds of community engagement workshops and two public consultations, student teams created design ideas, while incorporating public feedback at each stage and refining their interventions.

The final design recommendations focused on site-specific interventions to address a varied combination of these needs. **These design interventions are presented in Section 3: Space Interventions and Recommendations with estimations of cost and time regarding implementation. In particular, we suggest prioritizing redesigns of the lobby and the signage in the building.**

We hope that this report captures the essence of the community engagement processes we embarked on, and that our design recommendations reflect the needs and desires of our stakeholders as well as those of the greater McGill community.

1. Introduction

What is Operation Brown Building (OBB)?

Brown Student Services Building - A Brief History

Built in 1997, the Brown Building was a space designed to unite all of McGill's Student Services under one roof and create easy passage between Docteur Penfield Avenue, McTavish Street, and the SSMU Building. It was planned and built through a thorough participatory process, funded entirely by students, and served 200,000 students a year in the late 1990s.

Over the past two decades, both the student population using the services and the space needed to provide the services have grown substantially. Although the Brown Building was built to serve McGill's student population, its institutional atmosphere does not align with these intentions. Furthermore, as offices and services have changed in size and location over time, a lack of proper upkeep with wayfinding and signage has left Brown's open hallways feeling unclear and difficult to navigate.

Compounding these problems of image and wayfinding are a series of undefined nooks and crannies in the building - often being used to store unwanted furniture and packaging from offices and students looking for indoor places to sit on campus.

Waiting areas are also a challenge in Brown as the students who use the Student Health Service, the Mental Health Service, and Scholarships and Student Aid Office in their peak hours and seasons find themselves waiting in crowded leftover spaces in extreme proximity to each other, compromising both privacy and comfort.

Introduction

In the face of this intricate web of issues, Student Services from the Brown Building approached students in Fall 2014 with a request to help them re-imagine the design of their building for the students and staff that use the space. Together with the McGill Spaces Project and an interdisciplinary group of students (studying architecture, urban planning, sustainability, and urban studies in ARCH 514), the Operation Brown Building (OBB) initiative sparked a series of public participatory events in Winter 2015 to engage the McGill community in an iterative process of feedback and design.

OBB Project Initiation

In the face of this intricate web of issues, Student Services from the Brown Building approached the McGill Spaces Project (MSP) in Fall 2014 with a request to help them reimagine the design of their building for the students and staff that use the space. Together with the MSP and an interdisciplinary group of students (studying architecture, urban planning, sustainability, and urban studies in ARCH 514), Operation Brown Building (OBB) conducted a series of public participatory events in Winter 2015 to engage the McGill community in an iterative process of feedback and design.

OBB's Vision

OBB envisions the Brown Student Services Building as a vibrant, accessible and functional environment that better serves the needs of the McGill community.



“Give students a [better] reason to come here The only reason [people come here now] is if [they] have a problem.”

-staff member

2. Methods - Community Design Process

With community-based design principles in mind, Operation Brown Building (OBB) was developed with the goal to use practical design strategies and interventions shaped by the collective ideas of individuals from the community. Through OBB, we sought to translate insights and feedback from the staff and student users of the Brown building into physical design improvements that reflected their needs and desires.

The design process unfolded over several phases with an iterative intent: we began with a Situational Analysis (see Phase 1) by gathering historical and experiential information about the building to inform a set of design precedents categories (see Design Precedents) that would form our redesign focuses. These precedents and ideas were brought to the public in Phase 1 of our public consultation sessions - the feedback we gathered went on to inform the design choices and presentations that were put up for show and feedback in Phase 2. The feedback from our second round of consultations further refined our ideas and final designs; these recommendations are presented in Section 3. Space Interventions.

BBRAG information session
January 12th, 2015

BBRAG guided site visits
January 19th, 2015

Stakeholder workshop 1
February 2nd, 2015

Public workshop 1A
February 16th, 2015

Public workshop 1B
February 18th, 2015

Public workshop 2A
March 16th, 2015

Public workshop 2B
March 18th, 2015

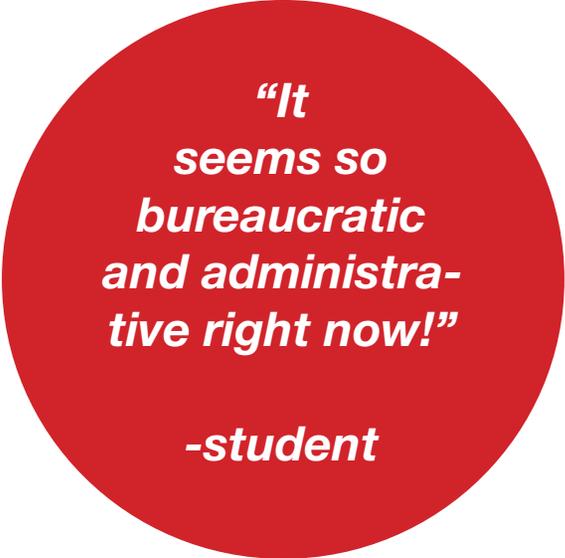
Final stakeholder presentation
April 8th, 2015

2.1. Situational Analysis

Our situational analysis of the Brown Building was conducted in three parts:

- a - Interviews
- b - Mapping analysis
- c - Wayfinding analysis

Explanations of each process and summaries of the findings are given in each of the sections below (interview and mapping data are presented together for the sake of clarity - see Section 2.1.a.&b.). The overall conclusions drawn from the situational analysis informed our choice of design categories & precedents (See Section 2.1.d), all of which we presented for feedback in our first round of public consultations. The design interventions generated for Phase 2 were informed by the data gathered in Phase 1.



***“It
seems so
bureaucratic
and administra-
tive right now!”***

-student



ARCH 514 - Class in-session

2.1.a. Interviews

As part of the research conducted for Phase 1, a team of students interviewed a series of key informants who are knowledgeable of the Brown Building and could provide valuable information. The list of individuals was given to us by BBRAG. Either a part of student services or campus-wide building and facilities managers, the individuals who were requested for interviews were asked as representatives of each student service or as university staff who work in and/or have a connection with the building. The interviews were conducted on a conversational one-on-one basis between the interviewee and one or two team members, and notes and/or recordings were taken when permitted.

Speaking directly with these individuals supplied our project with valuable insight on how the spaces in the building are used from those who know it firsthand. Additionally, discussions with safety and energy experts opened our eyes to understanding why certain features of the building exist in the way that they do. The conclusions drawn from these interviews are summarized below and categorized according to floor level. For clarity, they have also been combined with a mapping and observational analysis conducted by a separate team of students from ARCH 514.



*Refer to
Appendix
(pp. 61) for a list
of stakeholders
interviewed*

2.1.a. Interviews

General Comments

- Overall need for better signage.
- Not enough washrooms to serve the users of the building.
- Formal and informal meeting spaces are limited and in high demand.
- The “feel” of the building is too institutional, not the welcoming atmosphere student services wants to provide.
- Many interviewed understand the safety concerns with keeping the building open after work hours, but believe the building should be made available to students as many hours of the day as possible.

2.1.a. Interviews

Level 1

- Entry is ambiguous from the outside and shows no strong indication that student services are housed inside. Once in the building signage is not consistent or clear.
- The space underneath the first floor stair case is a dark corner that is underutilized.
- The reception desk is not welcoming or visible to guests when they enter the building. Also it is too high for those with limited mobility or in wheel chairs.
- The elevator often jams, making it difficult for anyone who is physically or visually impaired to use the building and services.

Level 2

- Waiting area next to elevator has is undefined and underused, though has great potential with all the natural light coming in from window on Dr. Penfield.

2.1.a. Interviews

Level 3

East Wing

- Transition between the east and west wings and entrance from Dr. Penfield does not obviously indicate the floor you are on or how to get to services in different wings.
- Long hallway has billboards for each student service, but has space and potential to engage students more.
- Waiting area next to Scholarships and Student Aid needs to offer more seating so those with limited mobility don't have to stand in line while waiting. Also, the counters too high for those in a wheelchair. Currently the open space offers no privacy for those having discussion that are sensitive or confidential.
- Computer nook is a legal obligation, but underused and in need of attention.
- Staff lounge is tucked away and underused.
- The dragonfly art installation is ominous from below and difficult to clean. All interviewees who commented on the pieces of art favored taking it down.

West Wing

- Signage when traversing from the East Wing to West Wing is poor and hard to navigate once entering from the Dr. Penfield entrance.
- The Entrance is small and very cold during the winter time. The doors are very heavy.
- Door between first people house and the Brown building is only wheel chair accessible for students going into the First People's house. There is no signage to indicate this, and that this student service is on the other side of the door.
- Waiting areas in the Health clinic are limited in the morning when students are waiting to sign up for drop in hours.
- Pathways to access the different waiting areas are cluttered with students awaiting and others trying to get to one end of the clinic to the main reception.
- Main reception has a confidentiality problem when students are speaking to the receptionist and when they are in the triage location with the nurse.
- The stairways to get from one floor of the Health Clinic to there other are fire stairs and aren't indicated well to explain way finding around the building.
- Hallways are used for storage because there is a lack of space to keep supplies, such as: refrigerator for vaccines, and water bottles for the water cooler.

2.1.a. Interviews

Level 4

East Wing

- There are only staff offices on this level in the east wing, so student spaces should be concentrated on other floors.
- West Wing
- Furniture and other equipment gathers in the empty corridor spaces and clutters the pathways.
- Lack of space in the health clinic, in need for more offices and clinic rooms for doctors and nurses.
- Lack of visibility for International Student Services. The waiting area is small and there isn't an opportunity for students to wait inside the office in case of confidentiality issues.

Level 5

West Wing

- Doorway that connects East Wing Mental Health and West Wing is used as a corridor to the reception of Mental Health. This disrupts privacy of the individuals waiting to be served.
- Waiting room is very small and not very private for users. Reception is visible and students can hear confidential conversations that are happening behind the reception.
- Large waiting area before the Mental Health personal waiting area, perhaps can be pushed for other purposes.

2.1.b. Mapping Analysis

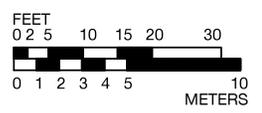
A team of students took on the role of analyzing the Brown Building spatially, with observational methods. Students visited the building on several occasions, on different days and different times of day to assess how the building was used throughout the day and to identify awkward, misused, unorganized, cluttered and unused spaces. The spaces and uses were documented on maps of the building then compiled at the end of Phase 1. In addition, students did sensory mapping to classify different spaces based on noise, colour and temperature. From these findings, particular spaces were identified as priority, and guided the later phases and design interventions.



“Why do we have a reception area? Does anyone even use the front desk?”

- Anonymous

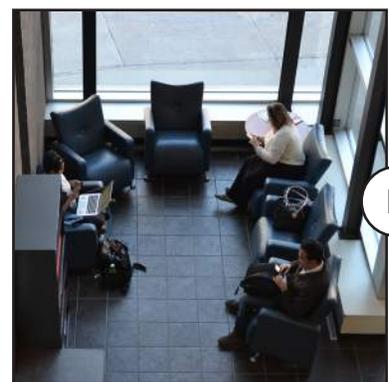
Methods • Situational Analysis
2.1.b. Mapping Analysis



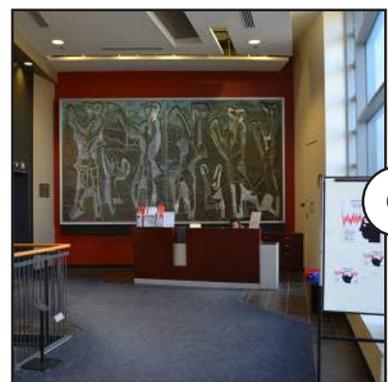
Level 1



below the lobby

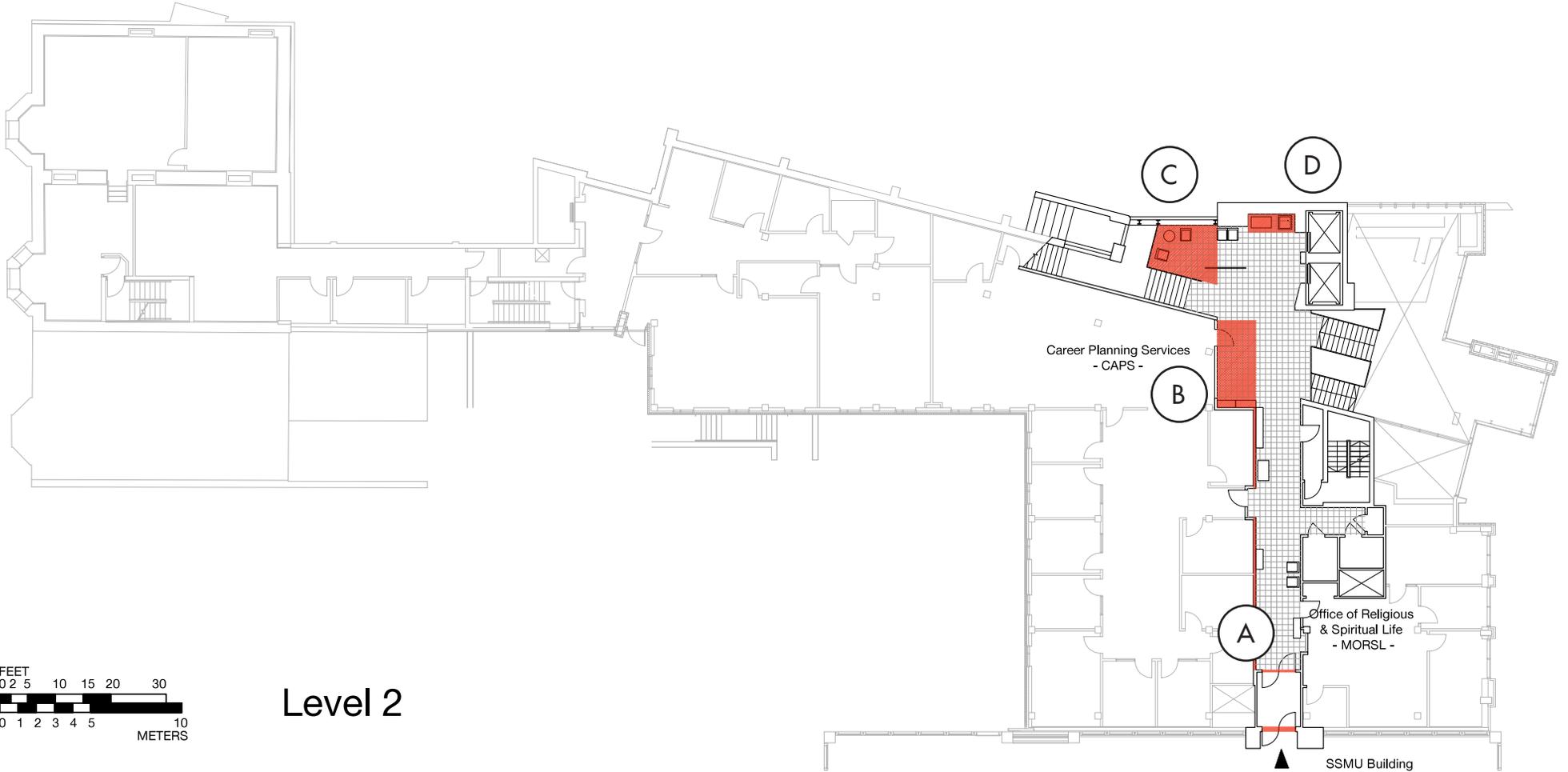


lobby waiting area

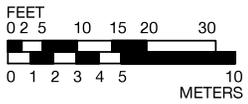


reception

Methods • Situational Analysis
 2.1.b. Mapping Analysis



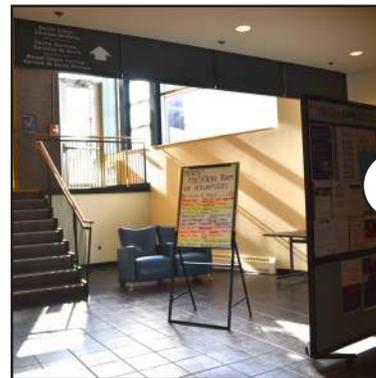
Level 2



2nd Floor hallway



CaPS

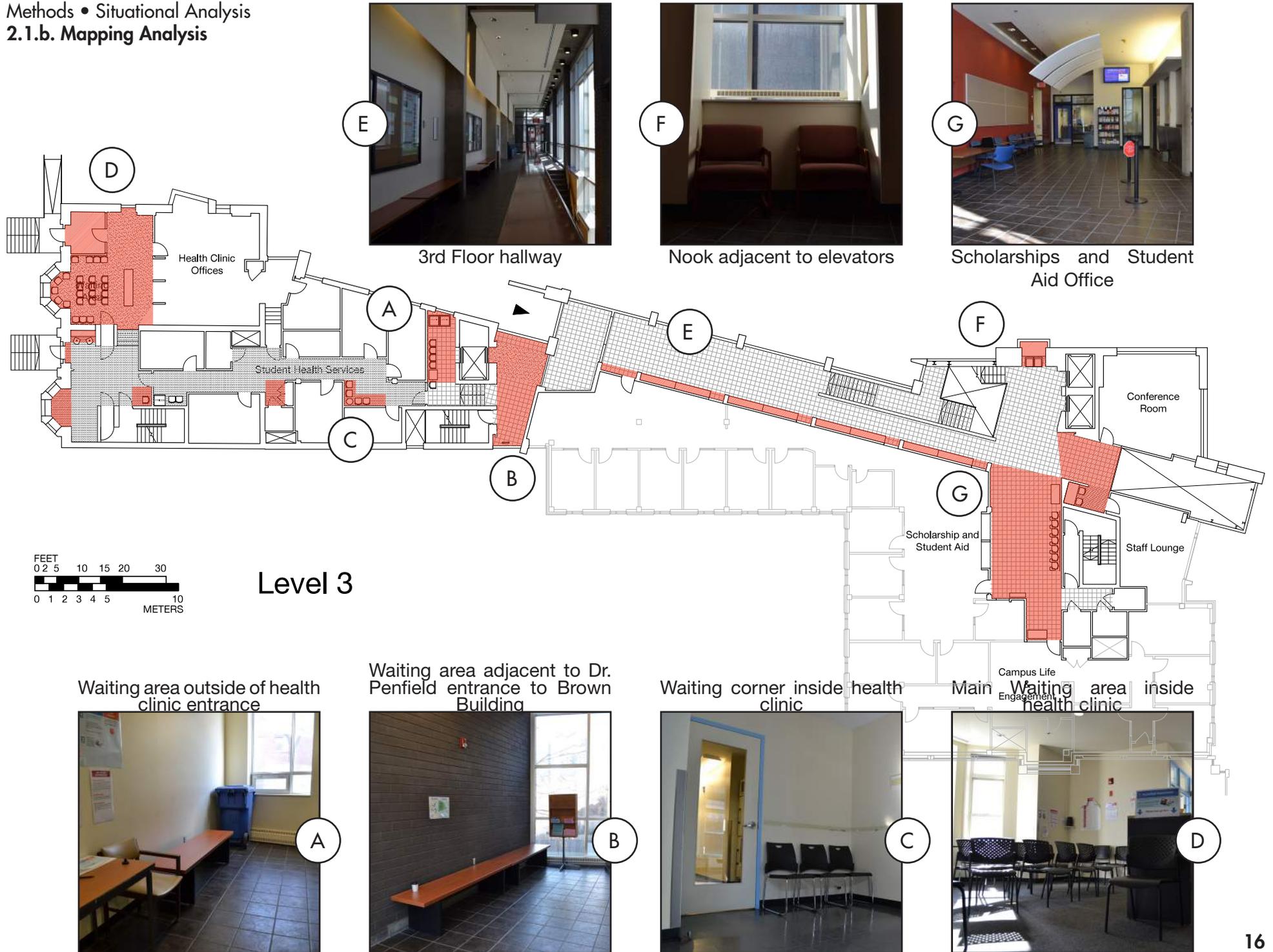


Space adjacent to stairs

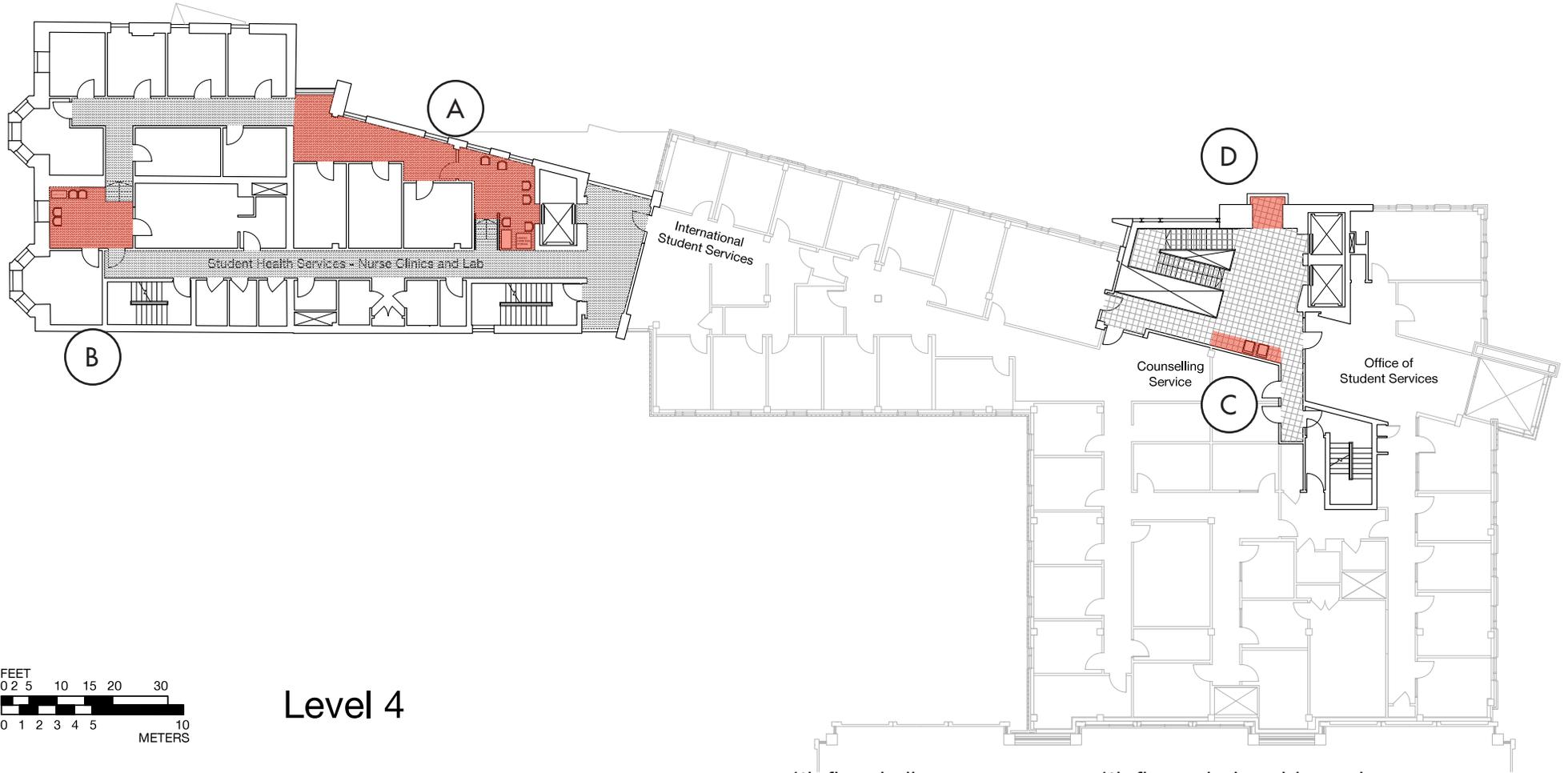


Nook adjacent to elevators

Methods • Situational Analysis
 2.1.b. Mapping Analysis



Methods • Situational Analysis
 2.1.b. Mapping Analysis



Level 4

Health clinic inner hallway



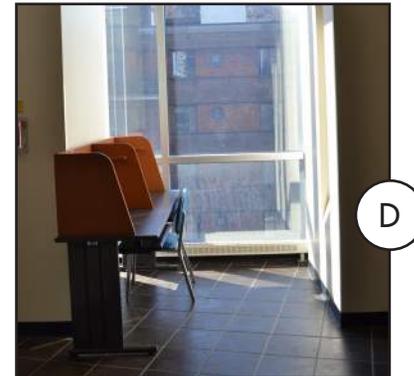
Health clinic inner waiting area



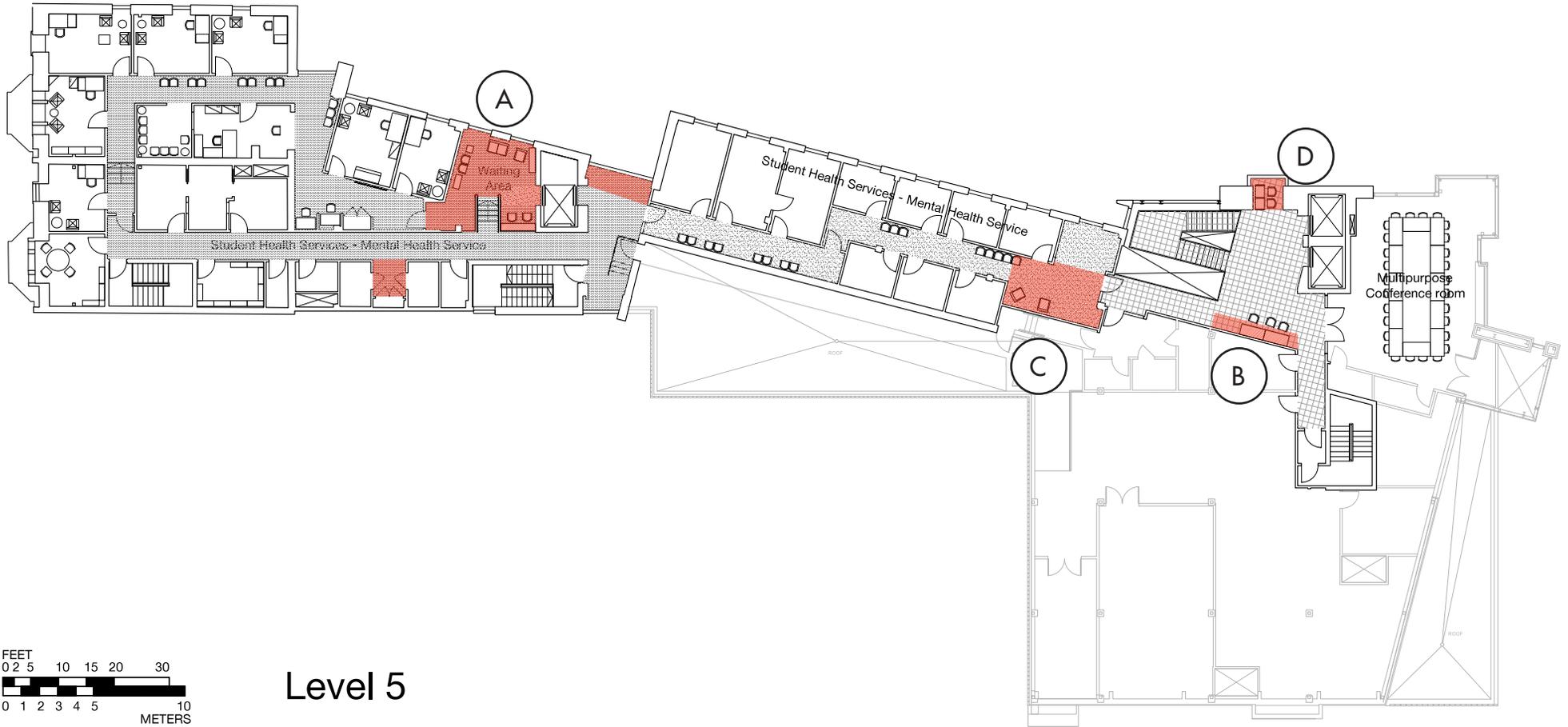
4th floor hallway



4th floor window side nook



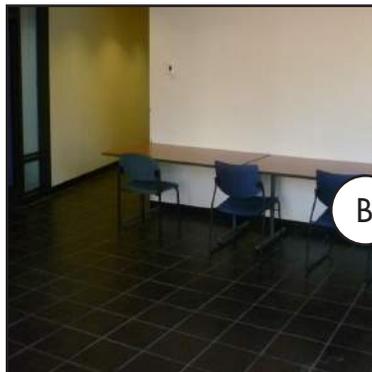
Methods • Situational Analysis
2.1.b. Mapping Analysis



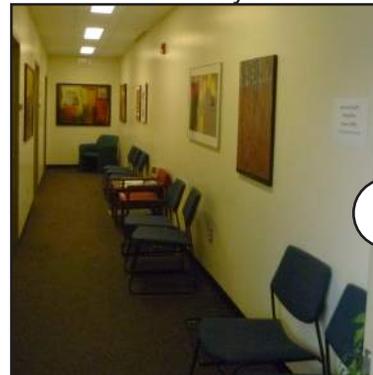
Waiting area outside of
Mental Health Services



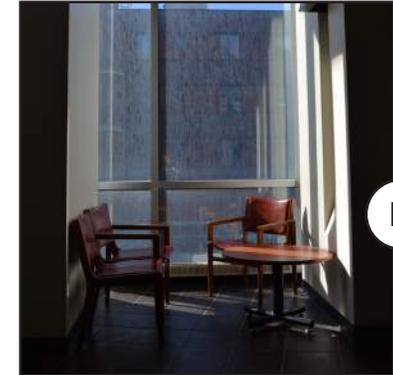
Waiting area/lobby



Mental Health Services inner
hallway

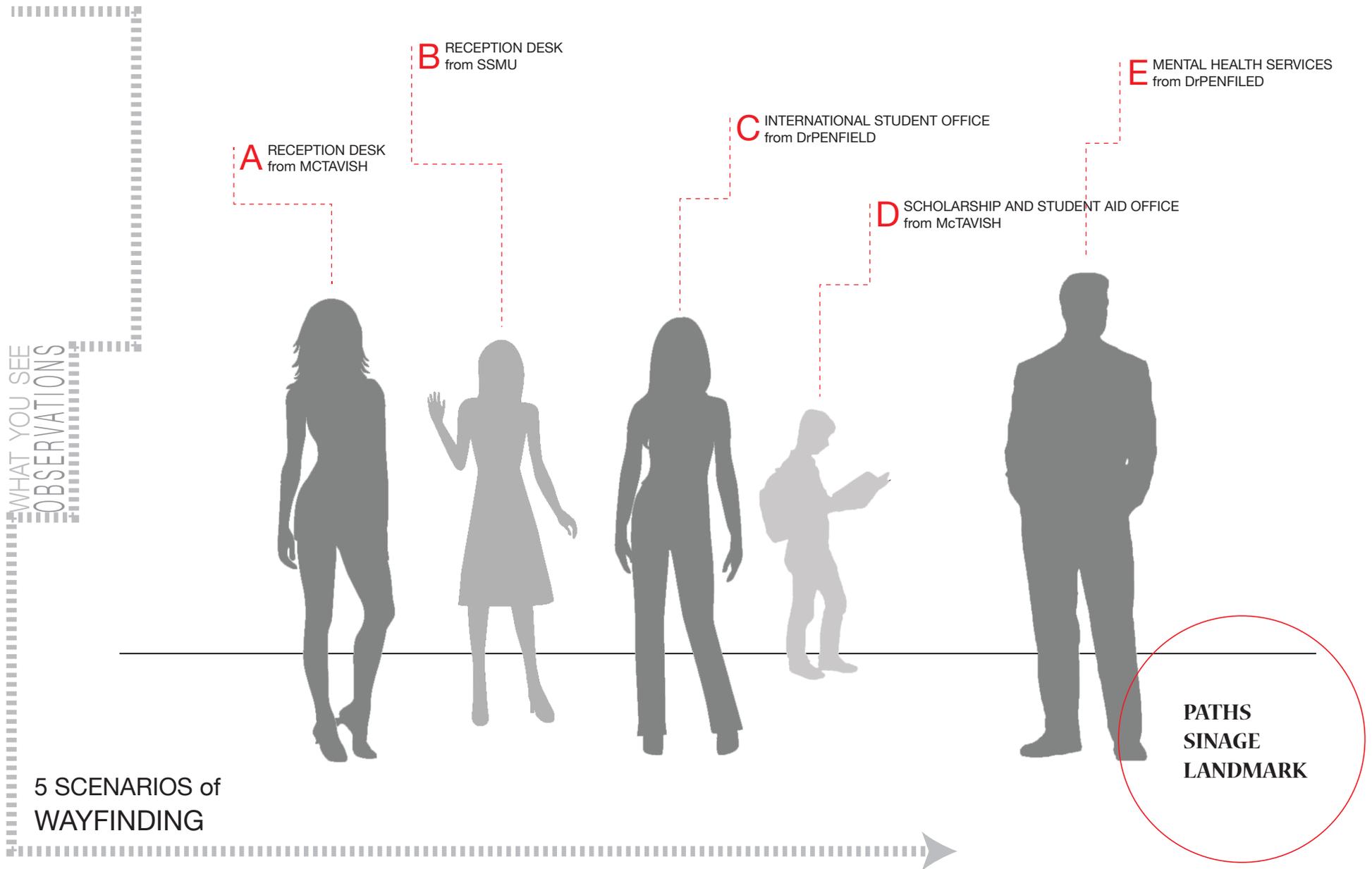


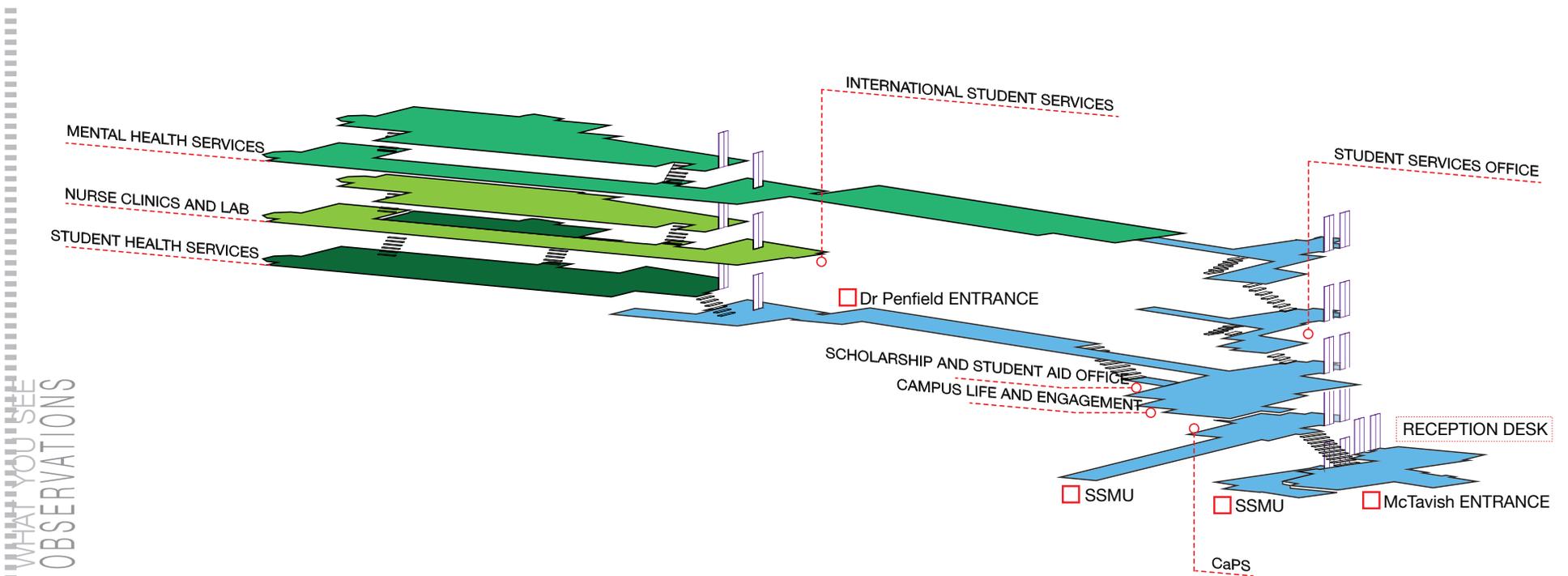
5th floor windowside nook



2.1.c. Wayfinding

As part of the mapping process for the Brown building, the Way-Finding portion identifies key routes taken by hypothetical users and tries to capture the difficulties encountered by these, as they make their way through the building. An example of such a hypothetical scenario is that undertaken by a person who has entered the building from the main entrance and seeks to reach the reception desk. The difficulties encountered by that person would be listed in bullet-point format.





4 ENTRANCES:

- Dr Penfiled Entrance
- McTavish Entrance
- SSMU Connection (main floor)
- SSMU Connection (cafeteria)

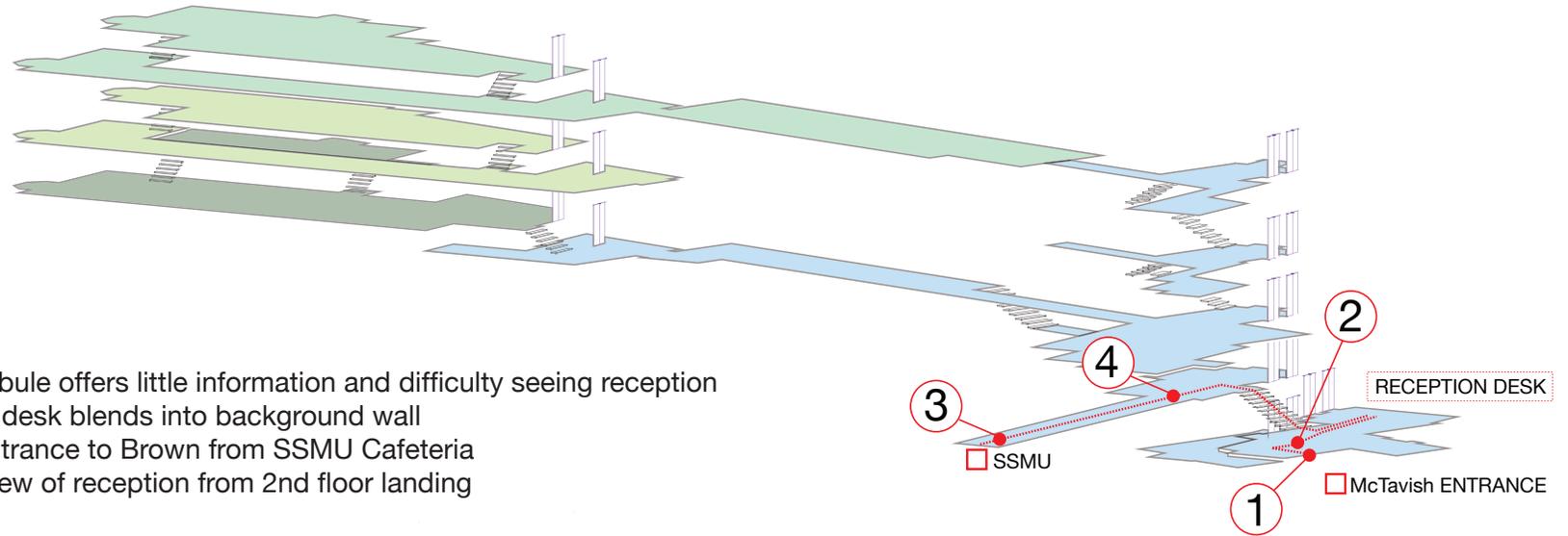
8 MAJOR OFFICES:

- Mental Health Services
- Nurse Clinics and Lab
- Student Health Services
- International Student Services
- Scholarship and Student Aid Office
- Campus Life & Engagement
- Student Services Office
- Career and Planning Services

MAPPING



SCENARIO A RECEPTION DESK from MCTAVISH
SCENARIO B RECEPTION DESK from SSMU

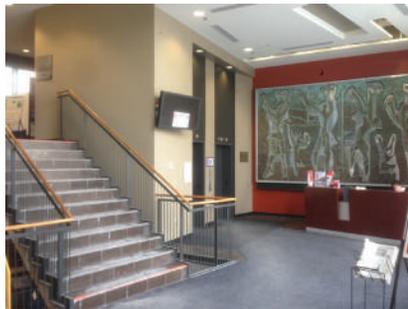


WHAT YOU SEE
OBSERVATIONS

1. Front vestibule offers little information and difficulty seeing reception
2. Reception desk blends into background wall
3. Unclear entrance to Brown from SSMU Cafeteria
4. Blocked view of reception from 2nd floor landing



1

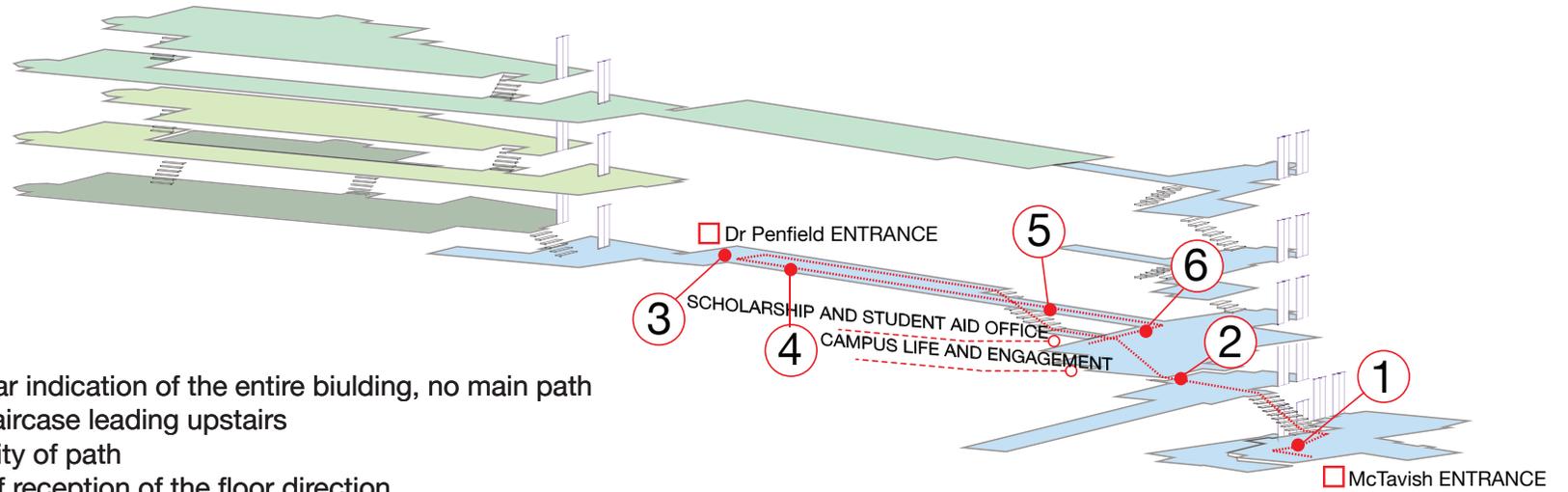


2



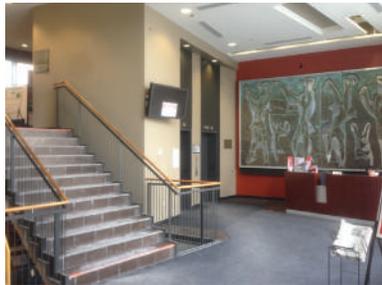
4

SCENARIO C SCHOLARSHIP AND STUDENT AID OFFICE from McTAVISH

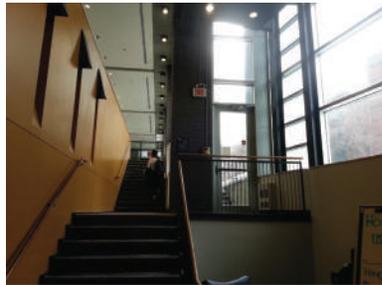


WHAT YOU SEE
OBSERVATIONS

1. lack of clear indication of the entire building, no main path
2. straight staircase leading upstairs
3. discontinuity of path
4. absence of reception of the floor direction
5. beginning of another core vertical circulation
6. dim lights, poor signage of destinations



1



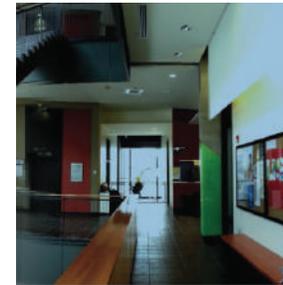
2



3



4

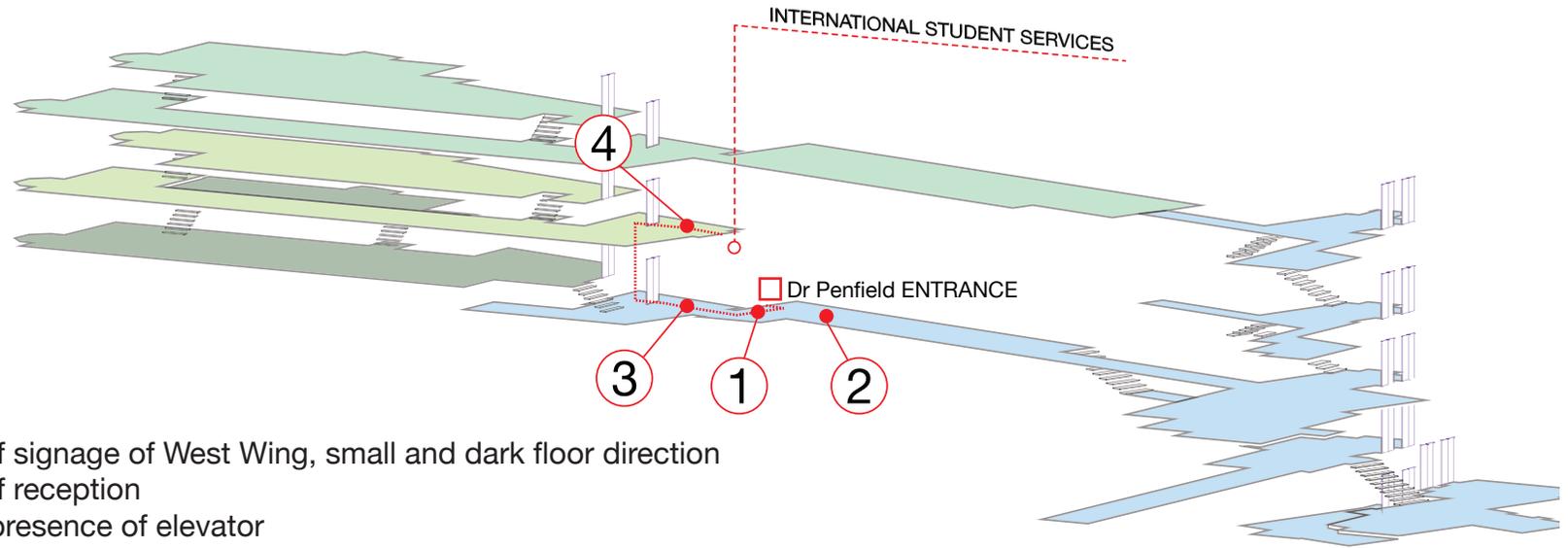


5



6

SCENARIO D INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES from Dr PENFIELD



WHAT YOU SEE
OBSERVATIONS

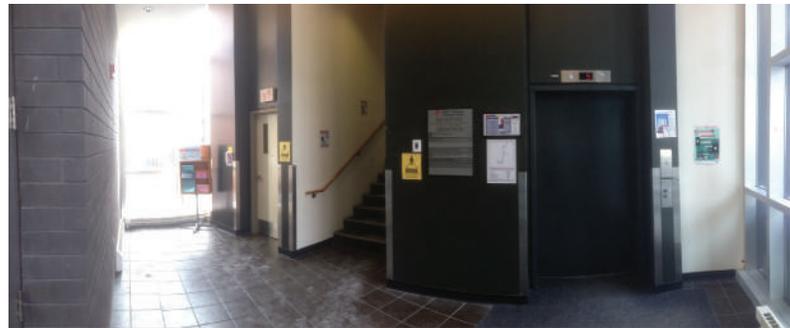
1. absence of signage of West Wing, small and dark floor direction
2. absence of reception
3. noticeable presence of elevator
4. clear indication of the destination



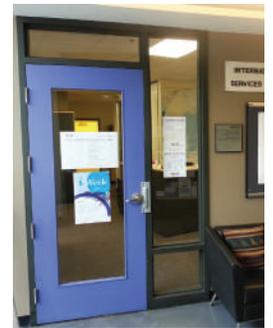
1



2

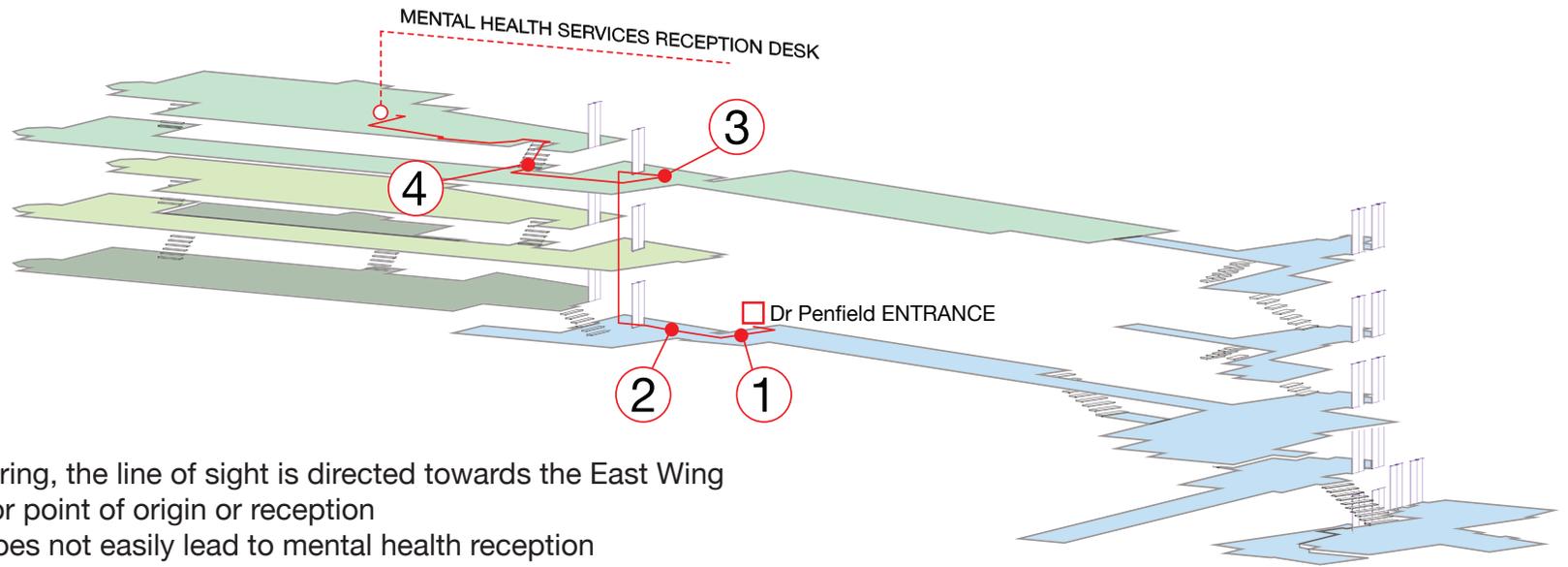


3



4

SCENARIO E MENTAL HEALTH OFFICE from DrPENFILED

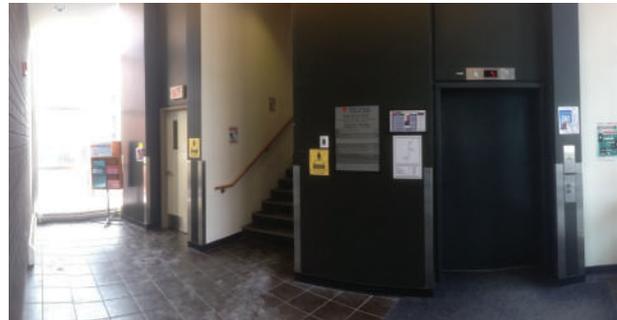


WHAT YOU SEE
OBSERVATIONS

1. When entering, the line of sight is directed towards the East Wing
2. No 3rd floor point of origin or reception
3. Corridor does not easily lead to mental health reception
4. Stairs leading to reception are not obvious



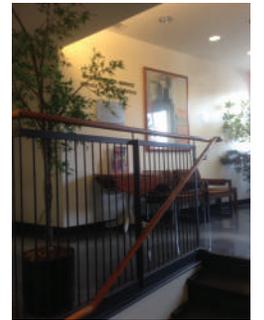
1



2



3



4

2.1.d. Design precedents

Design precedents were sought for the redesign of the Brown Building as both a student service centre, and as a student oriented space with potential for informal studying, meeting, and comfortable waiting in the inefficiently used circulation spaces of the building.

2.1.d. Design precedents

Informal meeting spaces

With the intention of creating flexible student spaces for informally meeting in groups or working individually, these design precedents were used to develop ideas for more creative use of space and configurations of furniture

Modular Spaces

In order to fill awkward spaces in the building that were often being used very little, this set of design precedents inspired designs for modular spaces able to both help insulate from sound and temperature while providing useable space.

Design interventions for circulation space

Preliminary designs for ways to improve circulation space and corridors were founded on this set of precedents that aim to address the shortage of 'useful space' in the building, by providing students with useful space along walls in naturally-lit areas.



HAA Design, Glasgow
Caledonian University



HAA Design
St Martin's College



Break-out furniture - Dymitr
Malcew architect & designer



HAA Design, Glasgow
Caledonian University



William Nimmo & Partners
University of Glasgow



Take Your Place Initiative
University of Calgary



Nomad RDC
Design Consulting,
University of Glasgow



Nomad RDC Design Consulting
University of Bradford



Cocoon Concept



Kivo structure
Alexander Lorenz designer



HAA Design
University of Cumbria, UK



Take Your Place Initiative
University of Calgary



HAA Design
St Martin's College



E02 - KONTOUR -Simon
Jarl et Martin Palsson
architects



Nomad RDC
Design Consulting,
University of Bristol

2.1.d. Design precedents

Divisions of Open Space

This set of design ideas was sought out to provide inspiration for interventions in more open areas of the Brown building in order to both enhance the privacy of some areas within the building, while creating more easily understood spaces.

Useful yet fun spaces to create identity

This set of references was put together with the intention of creating an identity or the building, though useful, fun, and inviting spaces for staff and students in the most prominent areas of the building. Preliminary designs for the Lobby and 2nd floor spaces were founded on these ideas for design that invites users to stay, relax, and enjoy the building – contrary to its current institutional feeling.

Signage

This set of precedents explores various approaches using text, colour, and intensity to clarify interior layouts and signage in complex space. Research on various techniques for clarifying spatial layouts both within and between a building's levels helped to inform the approach taken for Operation Brown Building's presented solutions for navigating the various student services housed in the Brown building.



Ellenzweig Architects, University of Vermont.



Nomad RDC Design consulting, University of Glasgow



Take Your Place Initiative University of Calgary



Take Your Place Initiative University of Calgary



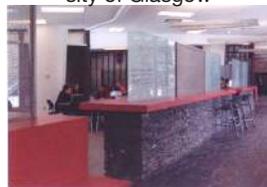
Student dwellings Lundgaard & Tranberg Architects



Brajas Airport Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners



Take Your Place Initiative University of Calgary



Take Your Place Initiative University of Calgary



HAA Design, Glasgow Caledonian University



OCAD Environmental Design, Ontario College of Art and Design



Ellenzweig Architects, Syracuse University



Take Your Place Initiative University of Calgary



Studies in signage - Ruche d'entreprises et parking silo de la Tossée - Tank Architects



Studies in signage - Ruche d'entreprises et parking silo de la Tossée - Tank Architects

2.1.d. Design precedents

Greenery Precedents

Greenery is a versatile design element that works passively to provide a variety of benefits, from purifying air indoors to positive effects on psychology of building-goers. Its passive benefits necessitate a certain amount of active maintenance, however. These modular design precedents were chosen to help provide ideas and inspiration for smaller installations that are still immersive but less demanding to maintain.



Sky planters



Vertical Gardens Green Sculptures - Ronstant tensile architecture



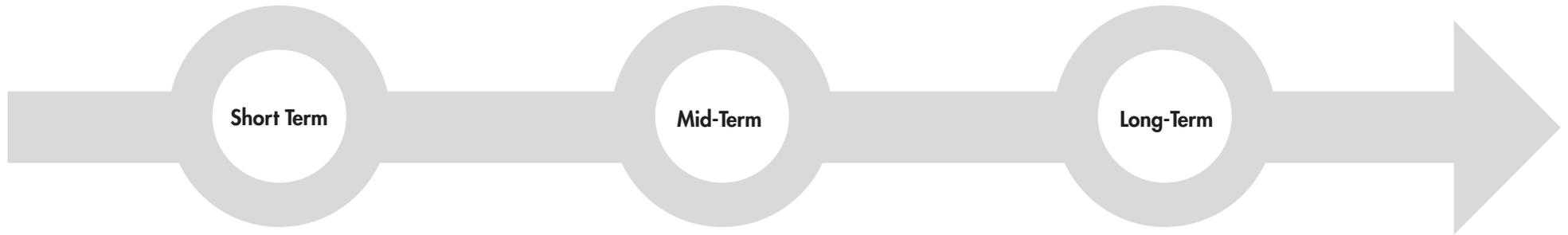
Modern display pots for indoor plant



Hongkun café brand Home Café - Penda architects

2.1.e. Design categories

Five intervention categories emerged as our design focuses from our Situational Analysis & first round of feedback:



Reorganization

To create more organized spaces with clearer functions, we can utilize many opportunities to reorganize existing collections of random furniture throughout the building into currently undefined spaces.

Modular spaces

To make better use of undefined spaces, structured but mobile designs can provide creative spaces for individual or group work. Staff and/or students gathering in areas can arrange them in different way to suit their needs, while better protecting users from cold temperatures and drafts and reducing echoes/sound pollution in the building overall.

Greening

Incorporating natural elements and greenery into the shared spaces of the Brown Building where possible can create vibrancy, facilitate cleaner indoor air, and encourage positive psychological effects such as increased happiness and decreased stress. Plants can also help to cool a building in the summer and humidify spaces in the winter.

Signage

To allow for an easier user experience and facilitate wayfinding, we want to create clear and consistent signage throughout the entirety of the Brown Building.

Structural Suggestions

Long-term interventions that increase the efficiency and better address the space-use needs of the Brown Building. These interventions are more structural and are for later phases requiring additional financial investment. Purpose: To answer the needs of the staff and users of the building, regarding space deficiency, building configuration and to improve the continuous flow of people throughout.

2.2 Design Interventions & Participatory Workshops

In our next round of community engagement workshops, we presented our second iteration of preliminary design ideas informed from the feedback we received during Phase 1's consultation processes. The content differed from the first round of workshops: instead of presenting an analysis of the building's opportunities and challenges, we produced site-specific architectural renders to garner more concrete feedback from the community compared to data collected in Phase 1. Each design attempted to incorporate elements highlighted in our design categories (See Section 2.1.d.), and for each space three options were presented to the public for feedback from passers-by. We collected a variety of different types of data (for our third iteration) – written comments, oral feedback, participant sketches, as well as informal interviews. We also asked people to vote for their preferred option through a sticker voting process. The designs we presented and the feedback gathered are summarized below. conclusions drawn





Should the Brown Building be more student-oriented or staff-oriented?
How could we do both?

H₂O fountain?

PLEASE SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS!

Plants? Art
are good for
health? productivity?

What would YOU put in these random nooks and crannies?



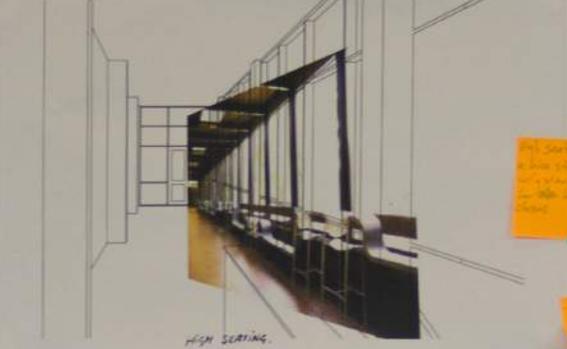
Reorganization
 Reorganizing the building can...
Modular spaces
 Incorporating modular green...
Greening
 Incorporating natural elements...
Long term Structure
 Long term infrastructure that...
 ...

East Wing 3rd Floor Hallway

Comments
 "More green spaces and art work"
 "Full space for people to interact - create a friendly atmosphere"

Sketchpad

Show your ideas for changing them here

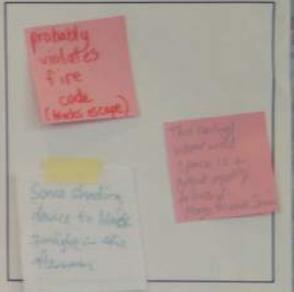


Dot stickers



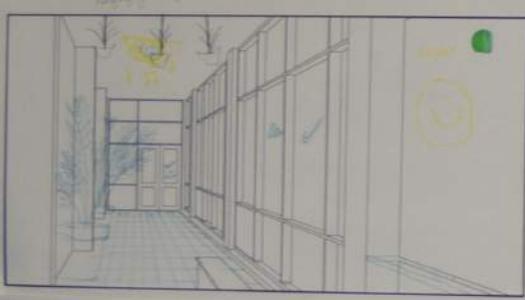
Comments

If you have any feedback or suggestions to share, describe it clearly on a post-it note and place it in that box for us to collect afterwards.



Sketchpad

Show your ideas for changing them here

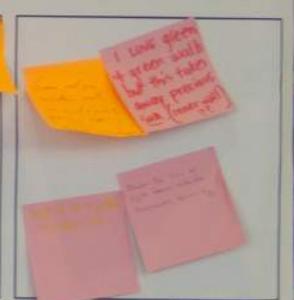


Dot stickers



Comments

If you have any feedback or suggestions to share, describe it clearly on a post-it note and place it in that box for us to collect afterwards.

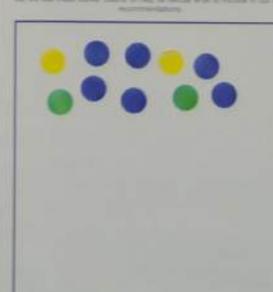


Sketchpad

Show your ideas for changing them here

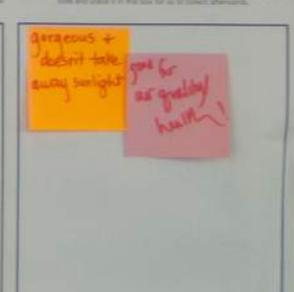


Dot stickers



Comments

If you have any feedback or suggestions to share, describe it clearly on a post-it note and place it in that box for us to collect afterwards.



2.2.a. Lobby & Reception

We presented ideas for a green wall in the lobby space, an atrium garden, and lighting ideas for the glass atrium.

The atrium garden got most number of votes, as people were keen to the large artwork that would be hidden by the green wall. An enthusiastic participant also sketched the idea of having a café in this space, which was seconded by many votes. People also expressed concern about the bug installation in the atrium - most said that although they liked the bug, they strongly felt that it required maintenance and had gotten into a state of disrepair.

Analysis – People were positive about the idea of greenery in the space, but they wanted to keep the large art piece and the Bug. They also wanted comfortable café-type seating in the lobby.

Refreshing the space by incorporating a green wall



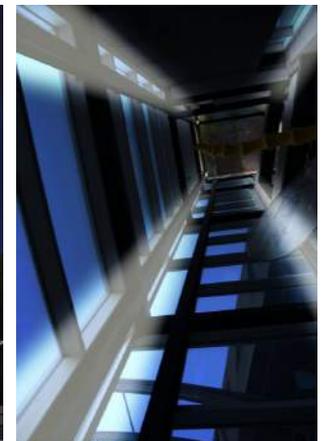
Increasing the number on potted plants in the building



Enhancing the tower with lighting effect



Enhancing the tower with lighting effect



2.2.b. Below the lobby/stairs Basement space leading to SSMU Office

This comfortable and cozy nook offered a lot of potential – we presented three options: a modular study space, creating a green zone, and colour coding floor levels.

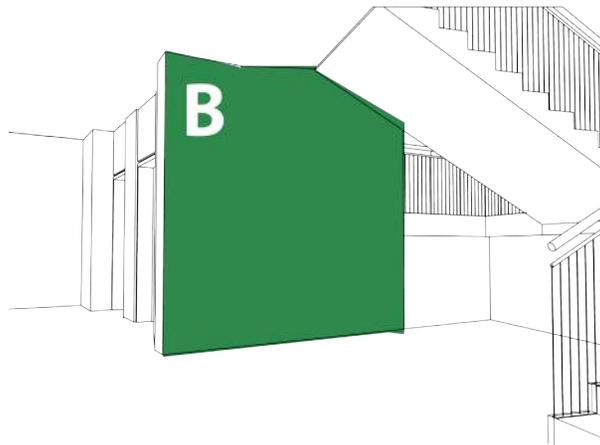
The colour coding idea was more relevant to the entire building design and not only to this space – a lot of people recognized this and voted for the idea. People also like the idea of the modular seating space though they found it too enclosed and inaccessible. A drawing by a participant suggested a display area for student art – other offbeat ideas included rooms for beds, another coffee shop and a multi-media panel.

Analysis – The possibility of a cosy nook that was more open and not too enclosed seemed agreeable to most participants. The idea for a student art exhibit also received a lot of positive feedback.

Including greenery in the basement level



Indicating bold signage to facilitate way finding



Placing a modular space under the stair case which will include furniture



2.2.c. East Wing Second floor - Space adjacent to stairs

For this space we presented ideas for bench-like seating that incorporated greenery, a modular study space, and an alternative location for the building reception.

The 'green seating' got the most number of positive responses with the modular seating a close second. People were confused about the idea of moving the reception, but once it was explained that it would be more visible and central to the building, they were more agreeable to the concept. Some staff expressed concerns about security of students' possessions in this area if it were to be used for study space. While some found the bench like seating too formal, other expressed that the modular seating was too closed in. Once again, participants sketched ideas for looser, more informal seating suggestions that created a cosy ambience.

Analysis – People were very positive about the idea of developing seating in this space and incorporating greenery into it. They wanted a space that achieved a balance between comfort and openness.

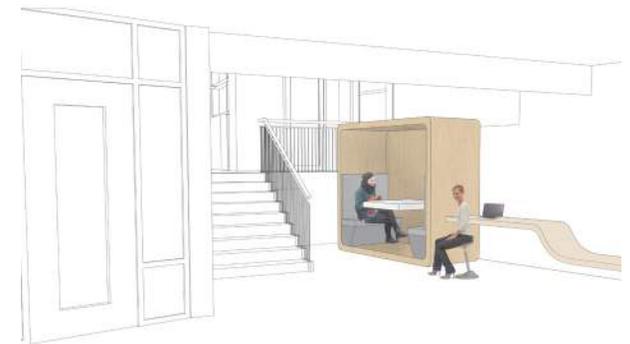
Creating a gathering space by placing seating along the wall and potted plants



Placing the reception on the second floor for more visibility



Transforming the space into a working area with tables and seating



2.2.d. East Wing Third Floor hallway

The options presented for this long, circulation space were high seating along the windows, a green wall, and planters by windows.

The high seating was the most popular option albeit with some concerns about existing fire codes regarding blocking the pathway. A lot of comments mentioned that the seating would be better along the other wall i.e. the blank outer wall of the financial aid office. An innovative suggestion recommended using colored transparent glass or acrylic panels along the windows to add some colour and dynamism to the space. Plants were also mentioned to be somehow incorporated with the seating. Once again, people expressed concerns about students' belongings being at risk in this area if study table were provided.

Analysis – The high seating along the blank wall for study with planters at intervals seemed the best combination of ideas.

Incorporating a green wall in order to refresh the space



Increasing greenery in the hallway by placing plants along the green wall



Placing benches and tables along the glass wall to take advantage of the natural light



2.2.e. West Wing

Although we were unable to provide design renders for the west wing, we invited people to share their concerns and recommendations for this area. The space that received the most comments was the waiting area for health services i.e. the west wing entrance vestibule. People requested better signage, more colour, a larger waiting area or a better seating configuration as this one was too 'congested'. Similar ideas were expressed for the waiting area within the clinic, requesting art, plants and a more efficient use of the space. For the mental health waiting area, people expressed concern about privacy requesting separators in the form of low walls or plants.

3. Space Interventions & Recommendations

Our third and final design iterations are presented here. Building on a solid foundation of research and stakeholder input, these ideas and renders bring together a mélange of inspiration and feedback cultured over a semester’s worth of engagement.

- a. Lobby & Reception
- b. Below the Lobby Stairs
- c. 2nd Floor Hallways
- d. 2nd Floor – Space Adjacent to Stairs
- e. 3rd Floor Hallway
- f. Scholarships and Student Aid Office Waiting Area
- g. 5th Floor Mental Health Service Hallway
- h. 5th Floor Mental Health Service Waiting Room
- i. Signage Interventions
- j. Nooks

Estimated Cost Ranges

- ★ - Low
- ★ ★
- ★ ★ ★
- ★ ★ ★ ★
- ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ - High

Estimated Time

- ★ - Short
- ★ ★
- ★ ★ ★
- ★ ★ ★ ★
- ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ - Long

Space Interventions & Recommendations

From Least to Most Expensive:

5th Floor Mental Health Service Hallway ★

Nooks ★ ★

2nd Floor Hallways ★ ★

Below the Lobby Stairs ★ ★ ★

2nd Floor – Space Adjacent to Stairs ★ ★ ★

3rd Floor Hallway ★ ★ ★

Scholarships and Student Aid Office Waiting Area ★ ★ ★ ★

5th Floor Mental Health Service Waiting Room ★ ★ ★ ★

Lobby & Reception ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Signage Interventions ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

From Shortest to Longest Term:

5th Floor Mental Health Service Hallway ★

Nooks ★ ★

2nd Floor Hallways ★ ★

Below the Lobby Stairs ★ ★ ★

2nd Floor – Space Adjacent to Stairs ★ ★ ★

3rd Floor Hallway ★ ★ ★

Scholarships and Student Aid Office Waiting Area ★ ★ ★ ★

5th Floor Mental Health Service Waiting Room ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Lobby & Reception ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Signage Interventions ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

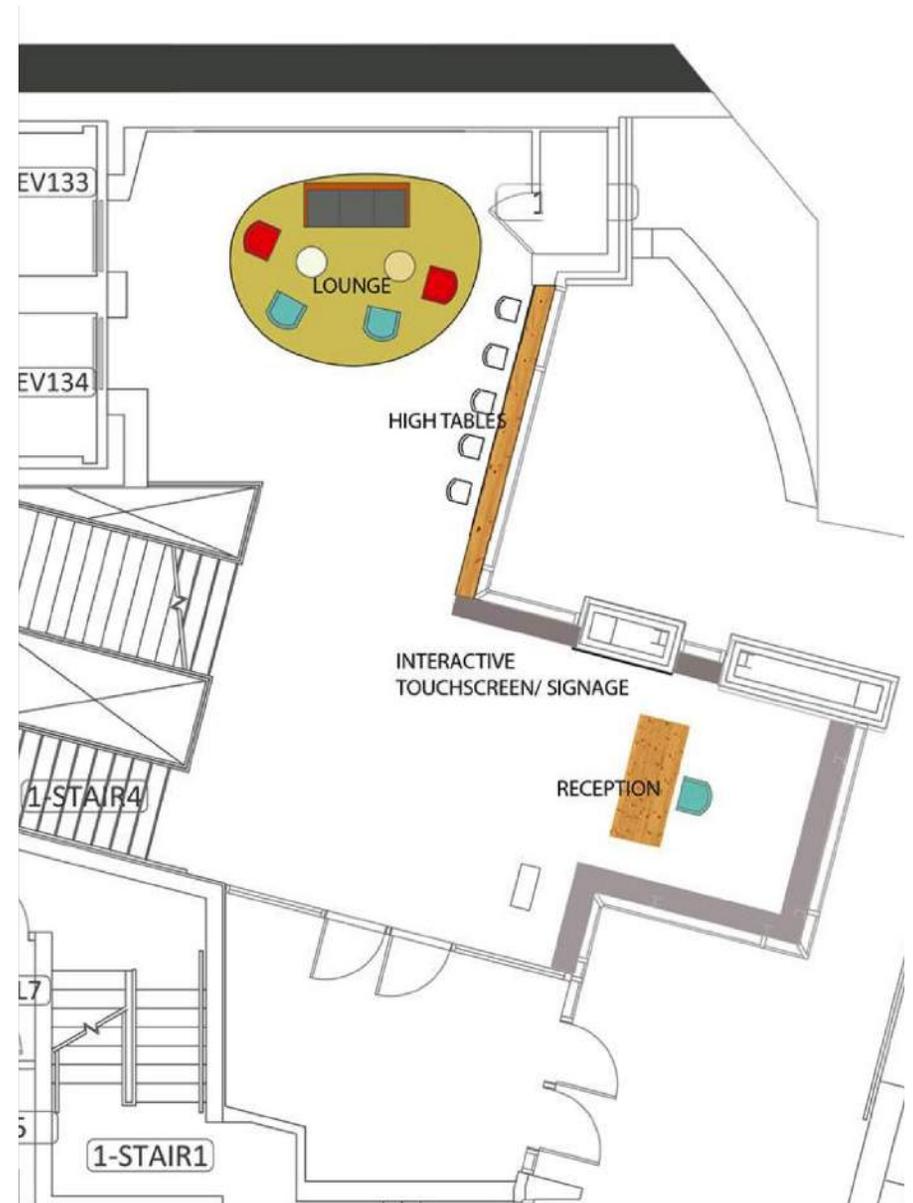


3.a. Lobby & Reception

Est. Cost: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Est. Time: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

This redesign sets out to take advantage of the well-lit, open atrium and highlight its presence on McTavish street to create a welcome area to the Brown Student Services Building that's more flexible and easier to understand. Repositioning the reception desk and surrounding it with greenery provides an attractive focal point for the lobby, while the open space and variety of seating presents informal spaces that invite passers-by to stop and enjoy the light and windows. The use and positioning of plants will also help to ameliorate cold drafts from the front door and absorb sound to prevent echoing throughout the rest of the building.



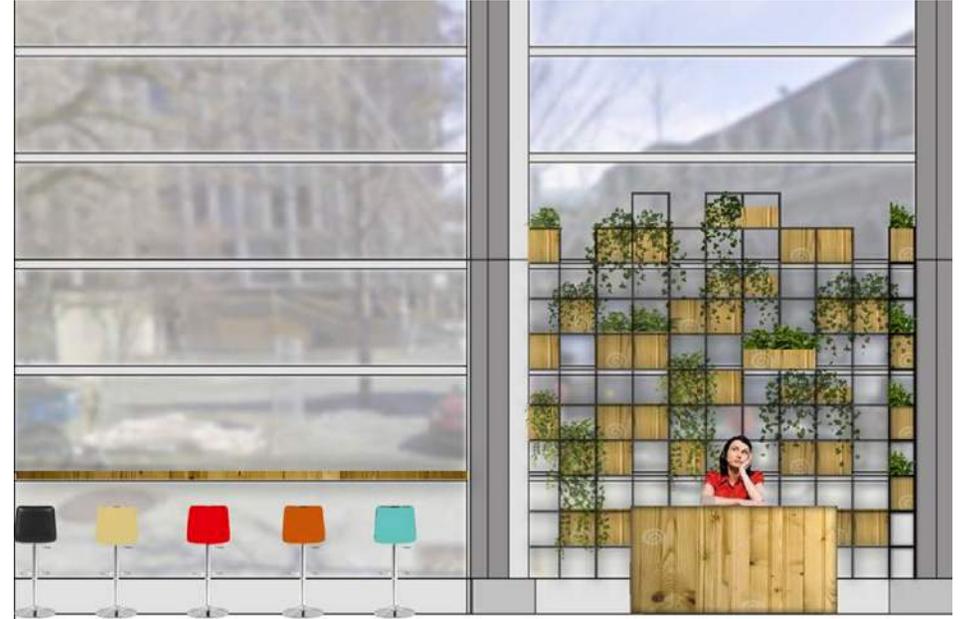
Space Interventions & Recommendations

3.a. Lobby and Reception



Needs addressed:

Common themes that arose while talking about the lobby included making it more inviting and orienting and less institutional. As mentioned previously, our choice of green elements was a multi-faceted attempt to create a welcoming atmosphere while addressing and ameliorating concerns around the echoing of noise and temperature chills. The opportunity around the lobby involves a potential to form some identity for the Brown Building and provide useful space for students in an institutional context of space scarcity at McGill.



Components:

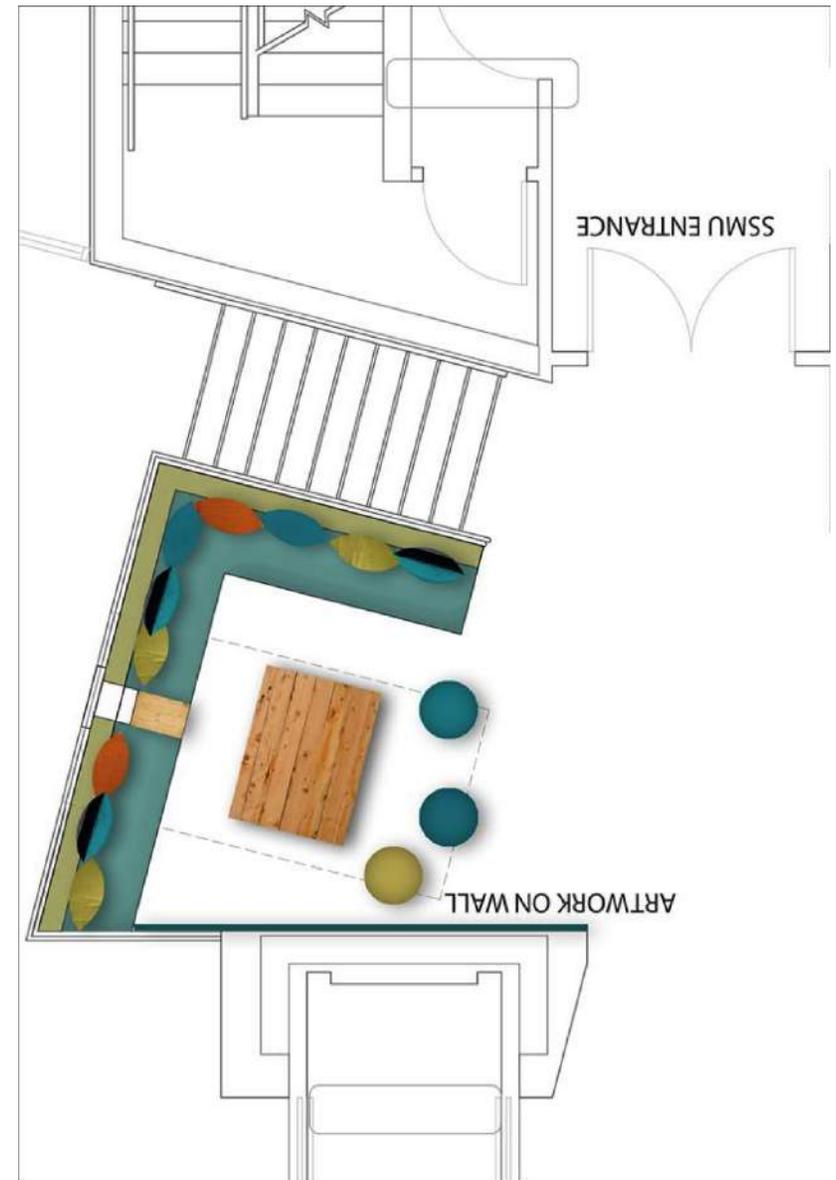
- Steel-rod lattice structure encircling a new reception desk to support low-maintenance climbing plants, creating an immersive green space in the front windows.
- A variety of comfortable and moveable furniture (such as chairs, ottomans, sofa, and coffee tables) in front of the elevators to provide a comfortable waiting area and flexible seating arrangements able to accommodate informal meetings outside of the way
- Potted plants to be placed around the entrance.
- Custom high-table seating to create useful student workspace in a well lit space
- Custom reception desk made of wood, with storage space provided for mail
- Touchscreen information screen (similar to service point) mounted on the wall near the reception desk.
- Painted floor markings begin in the lobby to help identify a path to the West wing of the building, while a model of the building's floor plates aims to help visitors situate themselves and identify a clear path to the services they seek.

3.b. Below the Lobby Stairs

Est. Cost: ★ ★ ★

Est. Time: ★ ★ ★

The space below the stairs has great potential to be transformed into a highlight of the Brown Building. Shaping this area into a lounge-style art alcove will transform this dark, undefined and underused space into one that is inviting and comfortable. This intervention makes use of one of the blank walls by establishing a rotating showcase of student and/or Indigenous artwork. This will enhance the visual quality of the space and serve as a conversation starter, not to mention a reason to draw people in as they enter from the SSMU building. Installing benches and warm lighting will help better define this alcove as a cozy space to share conversations, study, or look at art.



Space Interventions & Recommendations
3.b. Below the Lobby Stairs



Needs addressed:

This design looks at one potential avenue of fulfilling the community's desire for more student and/or Indigenous art on campus. The current space is dark and peppered with sparse sofas, frustratingly undefined and left underused despite its cozy potential. The area also provides a major connection and bridge between the SSMU building and Brown. By creating a more attractive space, we hope to encourage people to explore the physical linkages between the two buildings and create a more connected image through continued usage over time.

Components:

- Collaboration with student and/or Indigenous art groups
- Rotating art schedule (new art to be installed once a semester/a year, etc.)
- Custom or heavy-duty stools
- Custom deep benches with side tables (similar to ones found in McConnell's hallway adjacent to Milton Gate/Square)
- New lighting installation to spotlight the art and brighten the alcove throughout the day

3.c. 2nd Floor Hallways

Est. Cost: ★ ★

Est. Time: ★ ★

This intervention seeks to revitalize the indoor connection between the Brown Building and SSMU with fun, oversized signage; a continuous wall-mural and streamlined brochure shelving. The novelty of oversized signage and a continuous mural will bring about a more-student friendly entrance in place of a fire door that currently looks institutional and intimidating. By highlighting the adjacency of SSMU and the Brown Building, we hope to encourage a positive shift in the image of the Brown Building by helping students realize that these services exist and that they are accessible and right next door - via the indoor connection from the Student Union Building. Familiarity with Brown and its services will improve as students are prompted to explore the Brown Building before needing to use its



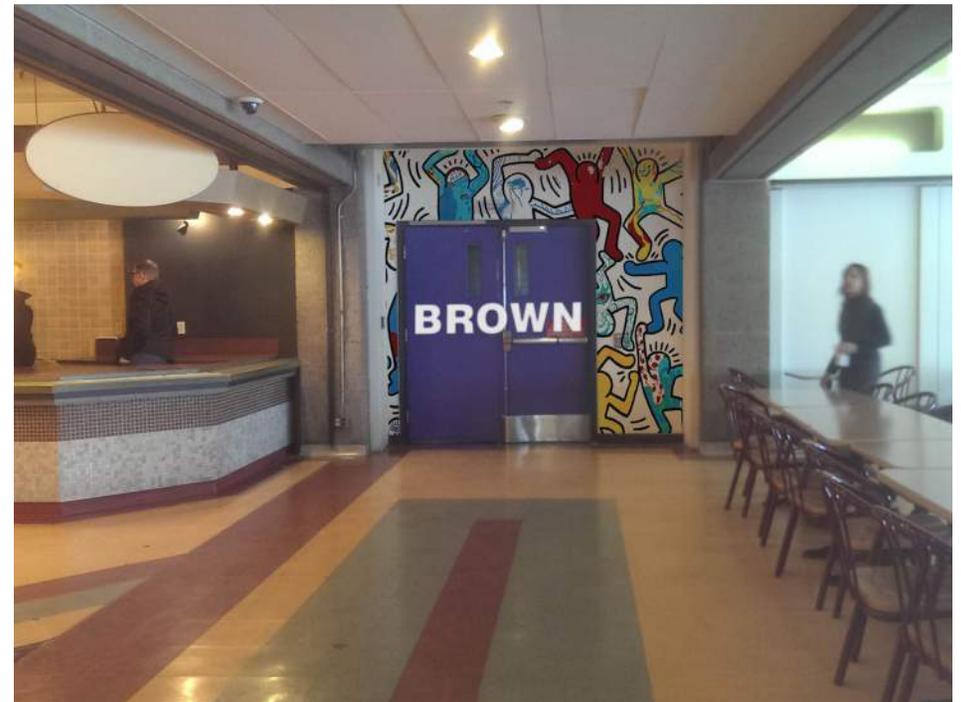
Space Interventions & Recommendations

3.c. 2nd Floor Hallways



Needs addressed:

Although the hallway was originally mandated to act as a bridge between the Brown Building and SSMU when constructed, it is innocuous, discouraging, and underused in its current state; an intimidating fire door stands at the end of a long and uninviting hallway sparsely peppered with furniture that looks out of place. With the use of vibrant art, novel signage, and better functioning shelves, this design recommendation hopes to revitalize not only the hallway but the connection between the SSMU building and Brown.



Components:

- Oversized text-based door-mounted signage in Brown towards SSMU and in SSMU towards Brown.
- 3-part wall mural visible from both from Brown and SSMU.
- Opportunity for commissioned/volunteer-based art - student art groups exist on campus including but not exclusive to Folio and the Fridge Door Gallery. Stakeholders have also expressed a desire to see more Indigenous Art in the building from the First People's House.
- McGill Office of Religion and Spiritual Life (MORSL) should be consulted in the selection of an artist/artists. They are currently curating several paintings on the side the hallway closest to them. SSMU should also be consulted.
- Custom, low-cost, streamlined brochure shelf in Brown corridor in front of MORSL that blends with the wall mural.
- Installation of brighter lights along the corridor.

3.d. 2nd Floor Space adjacent to stairs

Est. Cost: ★ ★ ★

Est. Time: ★ ★ ★

According to the conclusions we made from observations, interviews and crowd sourcing, the second floor space in front of the elevator is described as a relatively bright and high foot traffic space. However, its issues are not to be ignored: undefined and underused. Also, because of building regulations, the area requires the presence of a recycling bin, which needs to be considered for our design propositions.

After proposing our preliminary design for the area and collecting feedback and ideas from the public, we came up with two designs for the second floor.



Needs addressed:

The concept of this design is to offer a space where staff and students can have seating area in a place with daylight. The idea behind the bleachers is to maximize the usage of space. They can also be used for accommodating an audience during a temporary event. A low bench will go all along the wall and blend into a cupboard that will serve as storage for the recycling bin. Natural wood and colored wood are the materials proposed for this design. Also, the presence of yellow stripes is added to represent the color code of the second floor. Plants is integrated into the design in order for the space to be vivid and fresh.

Components:

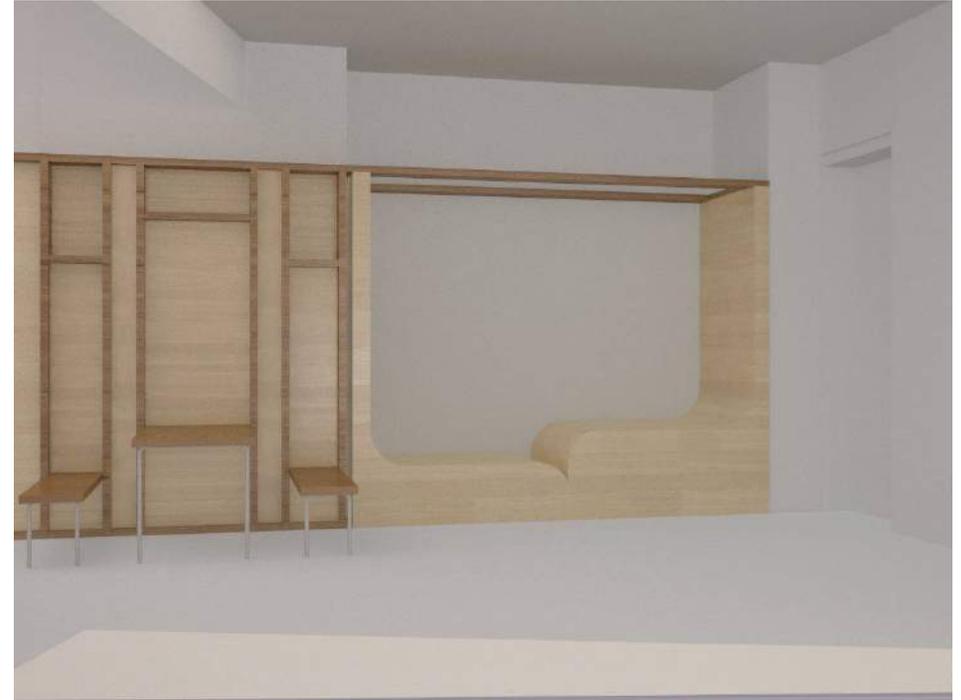
- The proposal is custom tailored to the space and as such we suggest to seek out a design-build service in which the design and the construction of the project would be taken up by a single entity.

Space Interventions & Recommendations
3.d. 2nd Floor space adjacent to stairs



Needs addressed:

The purpose of this design is to allow flexibility and low maintenance in this area. By having foldable benches and tables, the space can be used by staff and students for gathering, and also by temporary events (such as kiosks). A modular design is incorporated into the space by the elevator where people can sit and where the recycling bin can go. Greenery will be placed along the staircase, but also by the wall space between the benches. The wall space can also be a place for announcements (posters and flyers) for student services. The main material used for this design is wood.



Components:

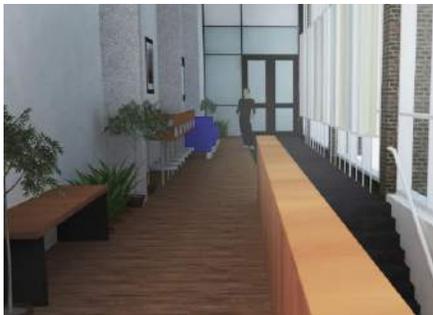
- Just as with the first proposal, we advise hiring a designer/builder for the project.

3.e. 3rd floor hallway

Est. Cost: ★ ★ ★

Est. Time: ★ ★ ★

The designs presented here are simple and seek not to transform but to complement the existing transitory function of the 3rd floor hallway. Adding color to the large glass panels is a cost-effective way of taking advantage of all the existing light while revamping the building's outer-image. The inclusion of high chairs and desks create more student-friendly space, while potted plants dot the corridor with greenery and give passers-by reason to linger on strategically placed seating that makes better use of empty space towards the corridor entrance.



Space Interventions & Recommendations

3.e. 3rd Floor Hallway



Needs addressed:

With reference to our situational analysis, the intervention for this space aims to better define the area while taking advantage of its current strengths. Much of the feedback we received focused on the large, bright windows and wide, spacious corridor. While conducting observations, we noticed that much of the space went unused, including a lack of people that used the existing benches against the wall or noted the mounted bulletin boards. By using plants and chairs instead of benches, the space's potential usage becomes more defined. High chairs and tables also provide the hallway with more usability and create more opportunities for work space and window-side lounging.



Components:

- Color panels: add vibrancy by taking advantages of the big bright window put them angled and provide selective views
- Greenery: put potted plants to bring some life into the space and make them removable and flexibly re-organized for the future
- Two toned flooring: helps to keep the existing circulation and separate the new function of seating area
- Seating suggestions:
 1. path beside the railing - keep one bench of each set and loosen the space and add more space for greenage
 2. high chairs - add some more high desks and chairs for students to seat longer for study
 3. re-organizing arm chairs from other floors to near the vestibule - kept them there since the 2nd public intervention and since then students started to use the space better
- Bulletin boards vs. student or Indigenous artwork: reduce the number of bulletin boards and replace with student or Indigenous artwork

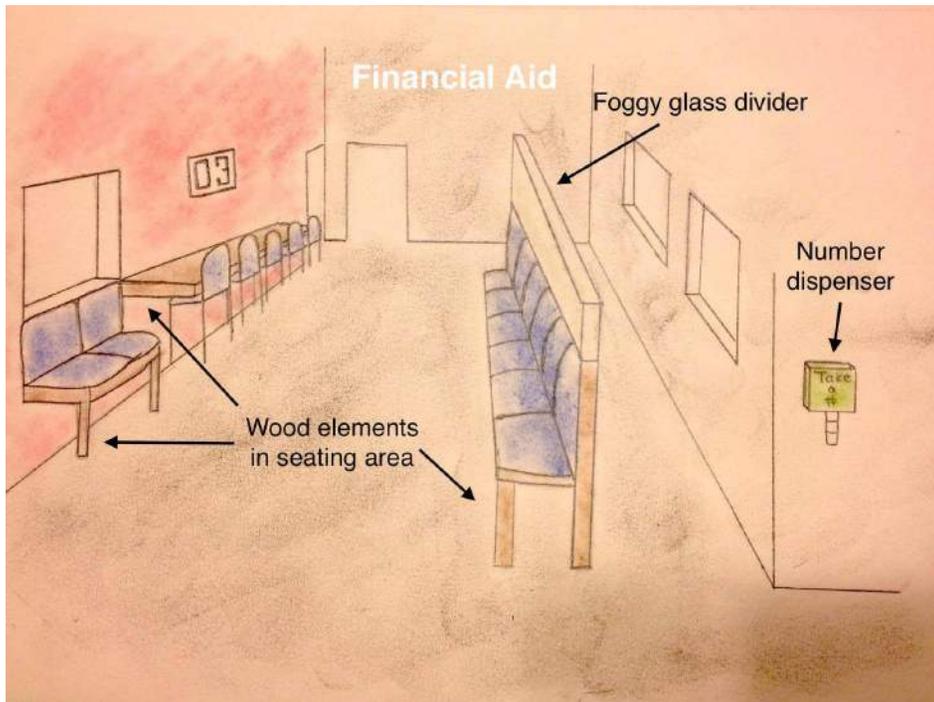
3.f. Scholarships and Student Aid Office Waiting Area

Est. Cost: ★ ★ ★ ★

Est. Time: ★ ★ ★ ★

The design interventions proposed for the space in front of the Scholarships and Student Aid office aim to tackle a few of the issues in this space. The Scholarships and Student Aid office require more privacy during their interactions with students, so the divider is present to shield some of the noise and create a barrier between waiting students. Waiting students can take a number

and wait on the other side of the barrier in the seats provided. This space also offers an area for students to briefly sit and relax, or use the high tables and chairs to do work when the space is less used.



Needs addressed:

The design proposal for this space aims to create a more functional area, by providing space for uses when it is busy and when it is not. It allows for more private interactions between staff and students in the Scholarships and Student Aid office and provides additional seating for waiting students.



Components:

- Ticket dispenser complemented by employing the existing TV: to remove existing long line up and keep the hallway more available for circulation
- Wood furniture (use benches from the hallway): for students waiting
- High chairs: continuous language from the lobby and the hallway
- Glass dividers: to provide privacies to students

3.g. 5th floor Mental Health Service Hallway

Est. Cost: ★

Est. Time: ★

The recommendations for this hallway are simple: the walls can be painted a combination of brighter colors to break the existing monotone. Greenery can provide points of vibrancy and break the length of the hallway into sections.



Before



After

Needs addressed:

The Mental Health Clinic seeks to be a supportive space for those seeking help. Mindful usage of brighter colors and plants would work to provide a happier atmosphere and disrupt the current institutional tone.

Components:

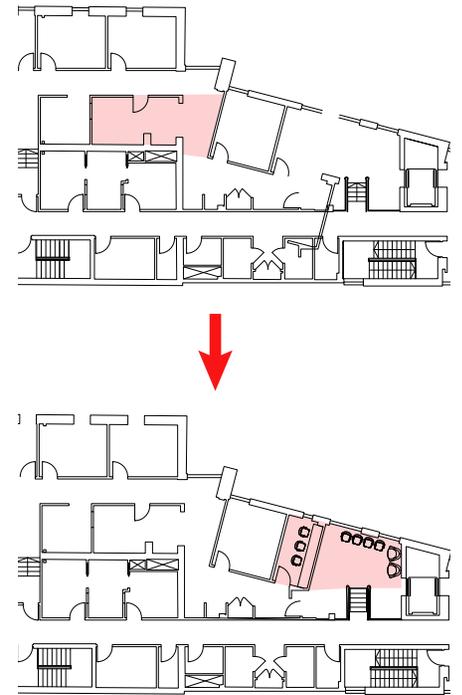
- New paint colors: to break monotone and long hallway
- Greenery potted plants: to absorb sound echo and keep it more vibrant

3.h. 5th floor Mental Health Services Waiting room

Est. Cost: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Est. Time: ★ ★ ★ ★

The seating area in front of the elevator can turn into a new waiting area, allowing for more space for people to sit and wait in. The room behind the wall can turn into a new reception area by making a hole in the existing wall. Therefore, the reception area can remain for greeting and assisting users, while the staff members can have private conversations (ex. medical) inside the clinic, which will protect the confidentiality of patients.



Space Interventions & Recommendations
3.h. 5th Floor Waiting Room Mental Health Clinic



Needs addressed:

The Waiting room is very small and therefore lacks both capacity and privacy for users.

The distance between the seating area and the reception desk is too close, which again leads to confidentiality problems.

Components:

- Installation of a hole in the wall
- comfortable furniture (ex. sofas)
- Greenery (ex. potted plants)

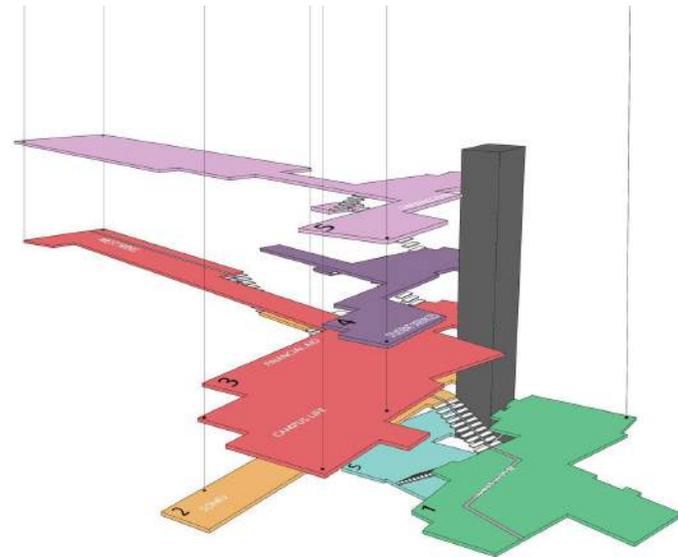
3.i. Signage Interventions

Est. Cost: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Est. Time: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

To help visitors to locate various levels in Brown building, we proposed a colour scheme that progresses according to floor level. This scheme combines existing colours of walls and doors with additional colours to create a clear representation of different floor levels and spaces. This intervention makes it not only easy to locate but also more vibrant and

inviting. To complement the color scheme, we designed a suspended way-finding model that occupies empty air space in the McTavish lobby area. The 3D way-finding device should help visitors to better visualise and navigate Brown Building's multiple floors and services.



Space Interventions & Recommendations

3.i. Signage Interventions



Needs addressed:

Signage emerged as a prevalent and recurring issue during our initial situational analysis and interview process. Wayfinding exists as a pervasive issue throughout the building, as purveyors often lose their way regardless of how many times they've come to find a service. We hope this signage intervention will help to provide first steps to better orienting building-goers as they make their way to and from their destinations.

Components:

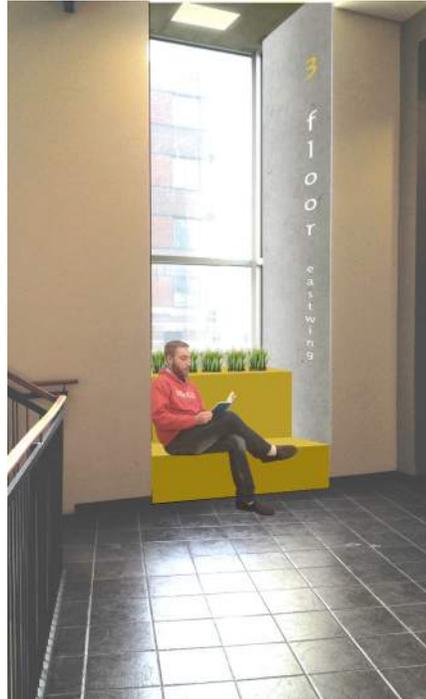
- Interactive way finding model: It uses markers to locate different spaces and is therefore flexible in its representation, allowing for changes to be made regarding future decisions that have yet to be made.
- Color coded floor levels

3.j. Nooks

Est. Cost: ★ ★

Est. Time: ★ ★

The small window-side nooks in Brown Building are quite small and are currently devoid of any defined function. Given their size, they are not able to host much activity. These simple nook-benches were conceptualized to use the available space with a design that does not interfere with the circulation space in front of the stairs and elevator.



light



vegetation



wayfinding



furniture that fits the available space



connection + sockets

Needs addressed:

The design addresses a number of core ideas that were frequently touched on during our crowdsourcing activities, including the creation of interesting spaces to sit down and relax, the addition of more green space, and better signage for wayfinding. Currently, these nooks also represent collection sites of unwanted furniture that have been discarded from existing offices in the building. These benches are designed to be embedded in each nook, giving the space a better sense of unity.

Components:

- Custom wood seating adjusted to fit the varying widths of each nook
- *The top of the benches should not come over the the line of the wall
- The materials used can be coordinated with existing materials used around the building to give the space a better sense of integration with the rest of the building
- Paint for the benches and for the walls for the wayfinding
- Electrical installation and socket for laptop and phone use
- Resistant pot plants

4. Conclusion + Final Recommendations

Following on a fulfilling semester's worth of engagement, collaboration, and design iterations, our class' final decisions regarding design recommendations for the Brown Building are presented here. Within the ~\$100,000 budget set for the OBB redesign process, we have prioritized certain intervention recommendations over others. These priorities are based both on the discussions that unfolded during class and the overall sentiments we have garnered through extensive consultation with the community and the building's stakeholders.

Referencing Section 3: Space Interventions and Recommendations, we believe that focusing on redesigning the lobby and installing better signage would be most cost-effective for student services at McGill in terms of investing in high impact interventions with lower costs. By redefining the lobby as a welcoming and student-oriented space, we hope to redefine the community's overall impression of the Brown Student Services Building within our funding and time constraints.

Furthermore, we recommend a funding a study based on our wayfinding conclusions that delegates a decentralized responsibility of way-finding to the designers and not to a centralized process facilitated by McGill. In terms of estimated time needed, a decentralized design and implementation process would likely be a lot quicker than the default alternative.

Other interventions can be implemented in later stages and with more funding in the pursuit of secondary objectives. These decisions are to be determined by Student Services however in acknowledgement of the ephemeral opportunities that come about within McGill's institutional context.

The students of ARCH 514 hope that the OBB initiative has meaningfully engaged with Brown Building's stakeholders, and that our designs accurately reflect the concerns and needs that you voiced to us. We hope that the designs we have presented in this final report will help to inform future decisions regarding space-usage and design in the Brown Student Services Building at McGill.

OBB Vision (re)Statement:

“OBB envisions the Brown Student Services Building as a vibrant, accessible and functional environment that better serves the needs of the McGill community.”

5. Appendix

List of stakeholders interviewed

Jerome Conraud Energy Manager, Facilities Operations & Development (University Services)
Leslie Copeland First-Year Coordinator, Campus Life & Engagement
Jacqueline Courtney Clinic Manager, Health & Mental Health
Pauline L'Ecuyer Director, International Student Services
Luiz Fernandez Fire Prevention Officer, Campus Fire Prevention
Frederic Fovet Director, Office for Students with Disabilities
Paige Isaac Coordinator, First Peoples' Houses
Jennifer Janzen Interim Director, Counselling Service
Nancy Low, Giuseppe Alfonsi NL: Clinical Director, PA: Associate Clinical Director, Mental Health Services
Sara Louise Parks Director, Office of Religious & Spiritual Life
Cara Piperni Director, Scholarships & Student Aid
Ian Simmie Director, Campus Life & Engagement
Pierre-Paul Tellier Director, Student Health Service
Richard Zereik Associate Executive Director, Student Services

Operation Brown Building
Students of ARCH 514 - Community Design Workshop

Omar Alameddine
Eadeh Attarzadeh
Jordan Bowden - MSP
Alan Chen - MSP
Adam Cutts
Ila Dcruz - MSP
Pedro de Gois Nogueira
Justin Hung - MSP
Emily Koo
Ariela Lenetsky
Nicholas Luka - Professor
Kassandra McCleery
Reneta Sampaio
Ei Hwang (Eric) Seo
Allison Smith
Jeeyoung (Anita) Song
Lindsay Vanstone - MSP
Michael Wexler

Thank you!

Brown Building Redesign Advisory Group (BBRAG),
ARCH514 - Community Design Workshop,
and McGill Spaces Project (MSP).