

**BroadwayMalyan<sup>BM</sup>**

# The Community Learning Centre

Envisioning the future of whole-family  
life-long learning in a retail setting



# The changing face of the mall

## The emergence of the shopping mall was originally a question of scale.

Populations grew, communities integrated, and the market stall became a hall, which in time became the mall. Once the bedrock of physical interaction so critical to the human condition, the advent of the technological age has rendered the traditional model increasingly one dimensional and moribund.

The retail sector has responded vociferously to the creeping threat of the internet with a multi-channel explosion – e-commerce sites, marketplaces comparison shopping engines and social marketing – but the elixir of sustainable life for physical retail remains elusive.

Retailers and operators are embracing a wide range of new models to capture the mood of the modern shopper with pop ups, showrooming and personalised experiences driven by smart data and analytics.

The traditional retail mall becomes part of something more compelling and experiential with F&B, leisure and entertainment also combining in the quest to drive a new generation of footfall.

The retail first model is slowly being replaced by an “*experience first*” approach, but this is a journey that has no fixed destination and the next stop along the line is a model that responds to that most basic of human instincts – *community*.



Brighton College, Singapore

## Education in a multi-use environment



*Galeria Młochiny, Warsaw, Poland*

For all the advances in technology, the need and desire for physical interaction remains the same – something that has been so clearly reinforced by our inability to engage in it during a pandemic.

Customer trends are telling us that the big box mall still has a place in our urban centres but the opportunity is growing to create a different mix where retail supplements rather than dominates.

A diversity of activity is not just encouraged but is becoming increasingly essential with the mall becoming a community hub and a cultural hotspot, a place where you can access services, post a letter, or have your hair cut, as well as visit a gallery, collaborate with your peers, or learn a new skill.

The numbers and wider benefits are already clear. According to GlobalData, the more experiences

and services in a retail destination, the more regular your visitor and the longer the dwell time – to the power of three for those most advanced along this path. Consequently, more people are drawn into the area, creating a virtuous halo affect for the wider neighbourhood.

As such a fundamental element of many people's daily lives, it is understandable that we are beginning to see education in a variety of

interpretations emerge within what were previously traditional retail environments.

In a number of markets, particularly in Asia and the Far East, we are seeing an ever-increasing proportion of leasable area going to education tenants, providing 'enrichment' and after school care.

In Singapore for instance there is a prevalence of holistic enrichment

for kids aged 6-12 – an educational approach with a focus on physical and mental well-being that looks beyond the curriculum being taught in traditional schools.

The National Library Board of Singapore also has more than a dozen libraries within shopping centres across the island, with the intent of making them more accessible and encouraging life-long learning within the community.

The emergence of the so called 'edutainment' sector is also beginning to influence our community spaces with major global media and entertainment companies from Walt Disney to Lego investing in fun-based activities underpinned by learning and knowledge, driving a £10bn market that will continue to change how we think about the delivery of educational services and the environments in which they reside.

Global retail operator Westfield describes this emerging format as a "hyper-connected micro-city" which focuses on the growing importance the consumer places on "experience, leisure, wellness and community" rather than solely on retail.

It is a format where new technologies are blended with back to basic concepts and the idea that education is life comes to the fore as the retail itself can also become a learning experience.

We are seeing a growing focus on the artisan and the evolution of creative clusters where craftspeople have their own studio and sales spaces as part of a new generation of retail, entertainment and learning destinations, a concept in the UK encapsulated by Milligan Retail's Creative Trade project in Manchester.

The last decade has also seen an explosion in urban farming, a trend that is increasingly being considered in a retail setting, driven by the desire to live in vibrant, multi-use environments where people can access their needs in a healthy and sustainable way, better reflecting not just their lifestyles but also their values.

The statistics on the potential for this greater community integration are clear. Even before the Covid crisis, around half of all retail customers expressed a desire for a stronger relationship with their local community and wanted shopping destinations to reflect and facilitate this.

Post Covid, people's need for community and a desire for local and accessible services will undoubtedly have increased significantly. As traditional retail anchor tenants used to drive footfall, so these new community functions become the anchors, adding a fresh vibrancy and becoming the new beating heart of a new community model. Just as in retail, targeting a single common denominator ignores the opportunity to provide those learning experiences that will add sufficient value and drive the engagement that will be

the difference between a vibrant and sustainable offer and a new white elephant.

Regardless of a changing tenant mix, we clearly need to move away from centres being treated simply as 'leasable' and 'non-leasable' space and consider a more holistic approach where new learning environments are integral rather than seen as an add on.

*School of Concepts, SingPost Centre, Singapore*



# The Community Learning Centre

The future could be a complete lifelong learning ecosystem that incorporates the entire learning lifecycle from Kindergarten to executive training – a multi-generational community hub that provides educational opportunities for all, distinct from but also potentially integrated within the other experiential offers within the traditional retail environment.

Despite the demise of the department store, perhaps it is signposting towards a model that can be repurposed as a diagram for this holistic future shopping centre, where the education operator becomes the curator with multiple providers within.

This new learning centre will create an incubator environment where local businesses and innovative start-ups come together with retailers, big and small tech and education providers to generate opportunities

for new knowledge and capabilities, also serving to retain talent in the community and region.

It is a model that enhances the destination and completeness of the overall commercial offer, piecing together a range of complimentary activities that can provide a diversity of income streams for operators and property owners while also creating extended trading hours and driving footfall throughout the day and evening.

The mall as we have always understood it remains a marketplace but not just for goods and not even for additional services but also a marketplace for ideas and knowledge.



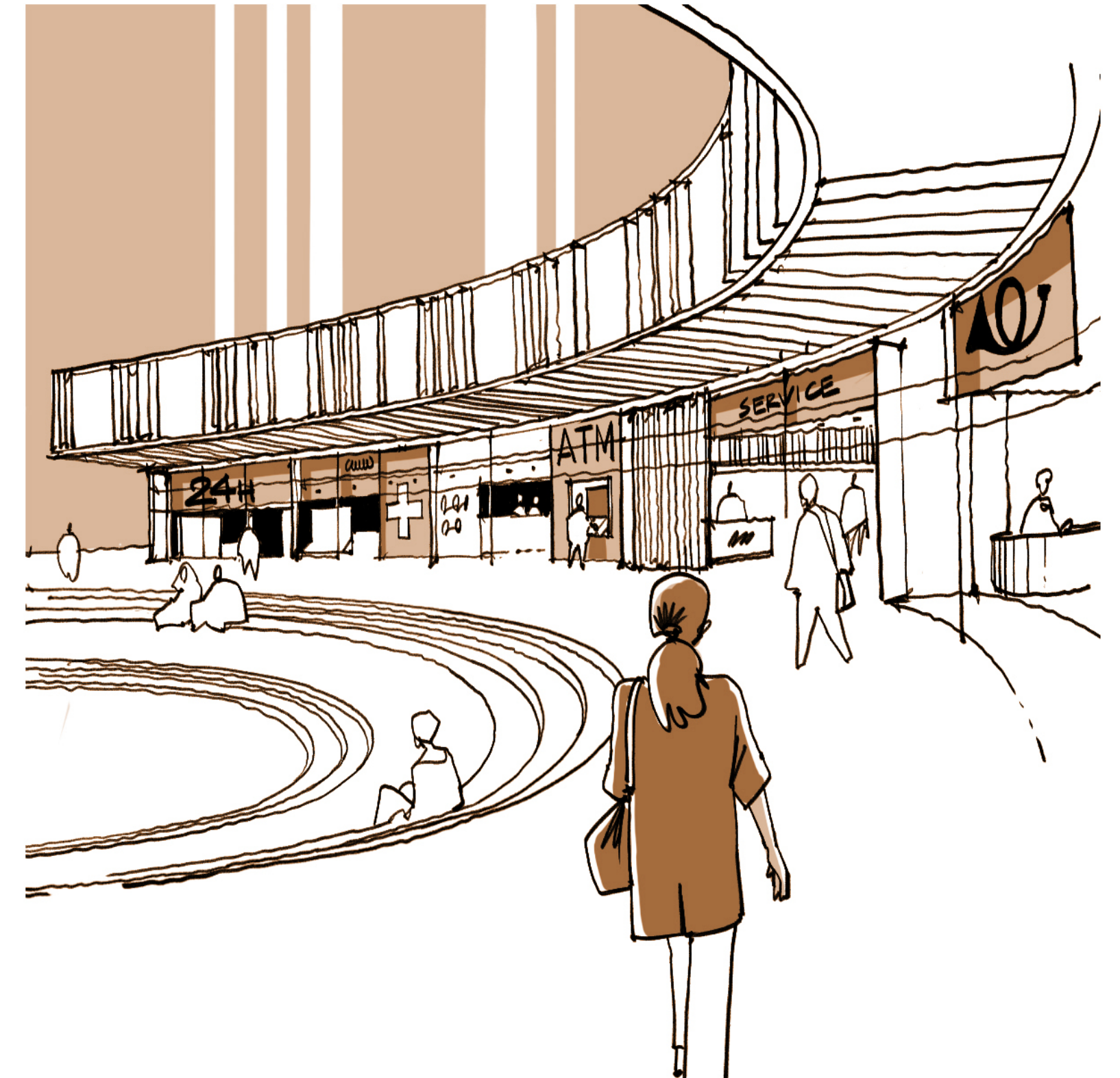
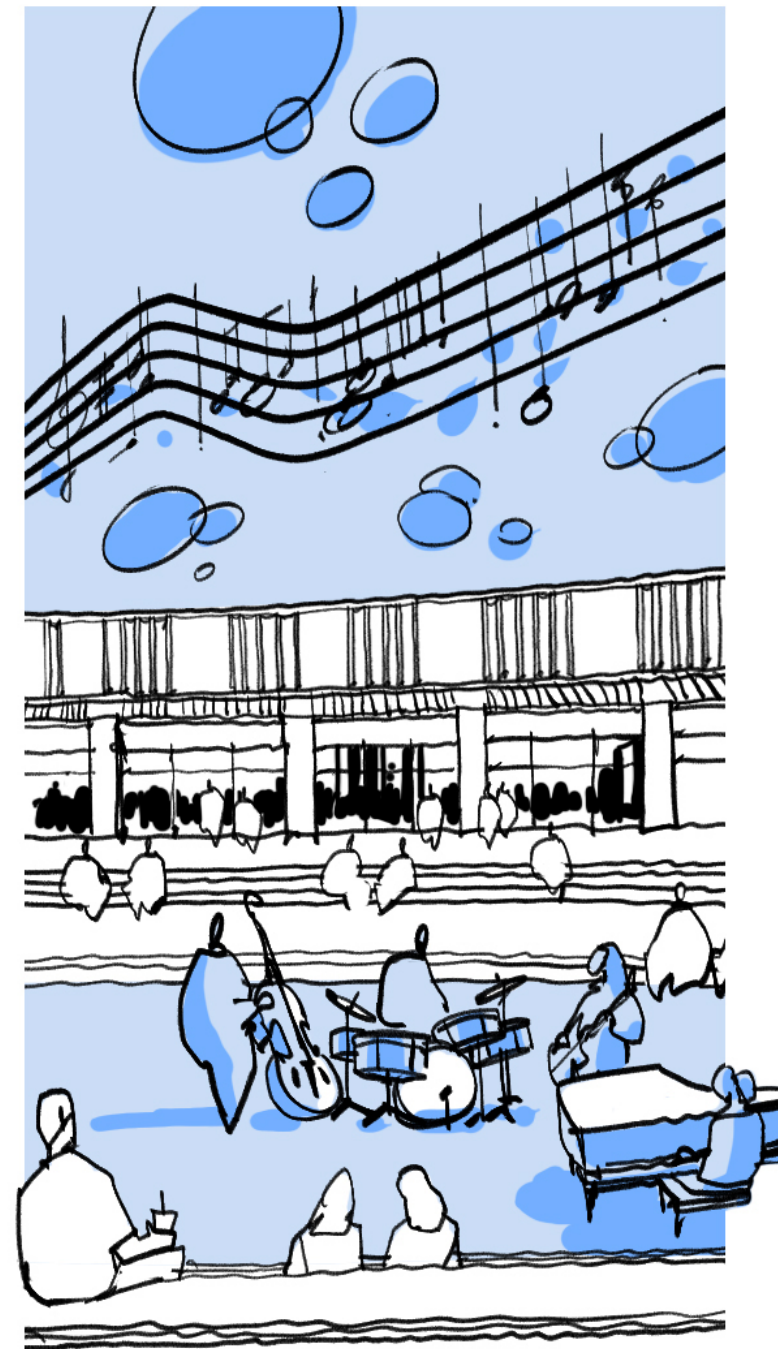
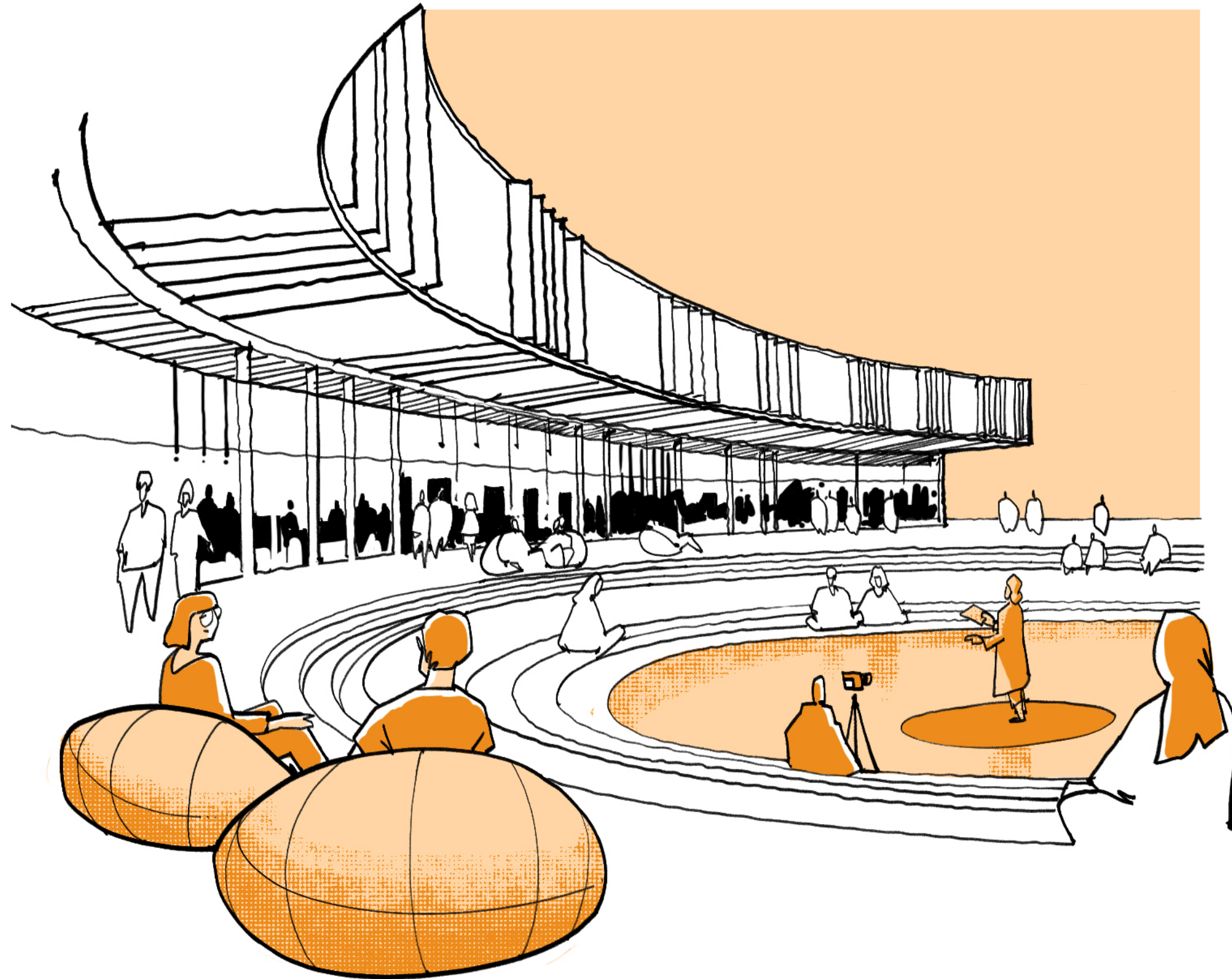
*Galeria Młochy, Warsaw, Poland*

# 10 steps to a Community Learning Centre

1

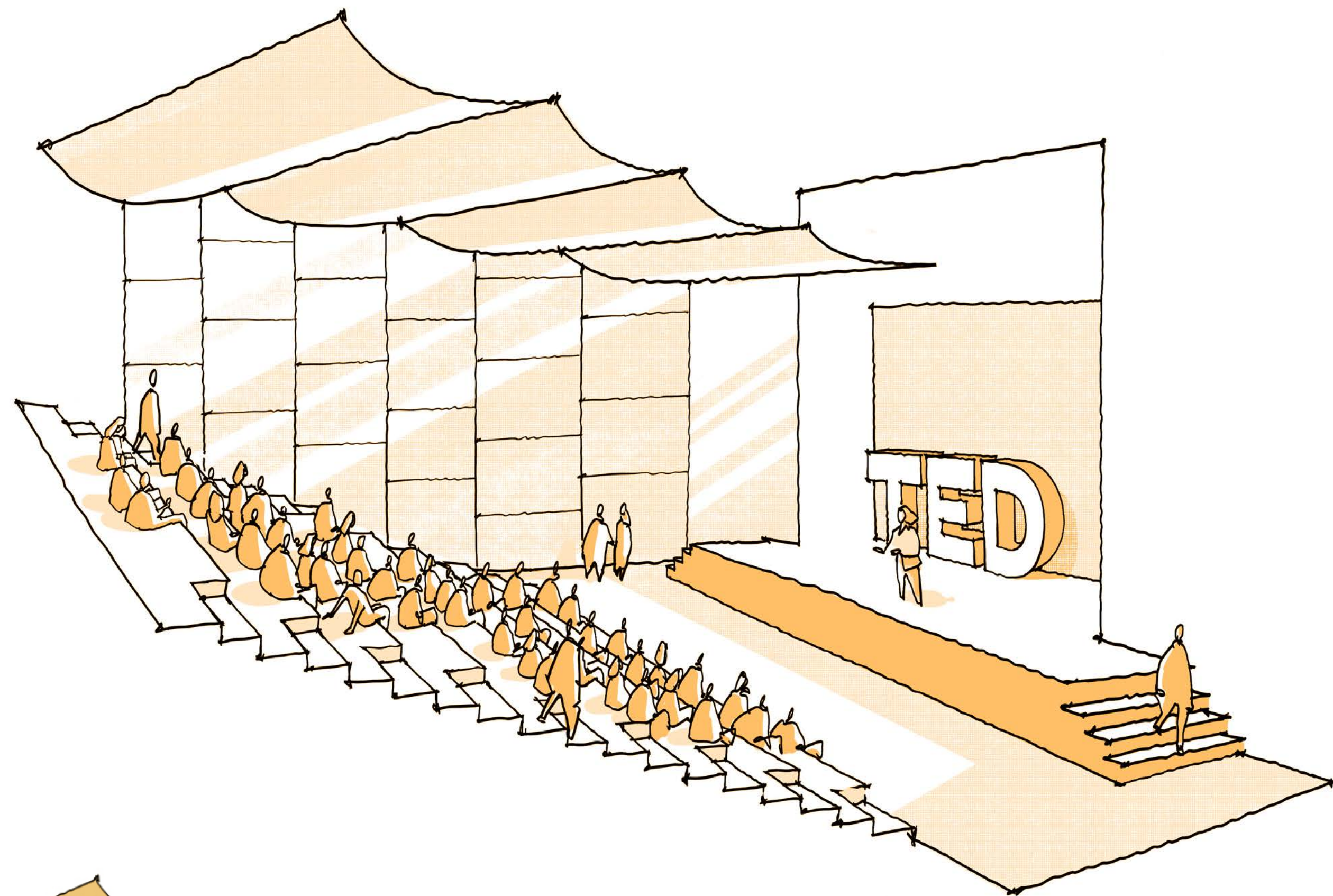
## The Community Hall

This is the public space at the heart of the Learning Centre, a functional and bookable focal point for the local community designed to host 'town hall' meetings, events and festivals. The community hall exists within the public realm, activating the centre and creating additional footfall.



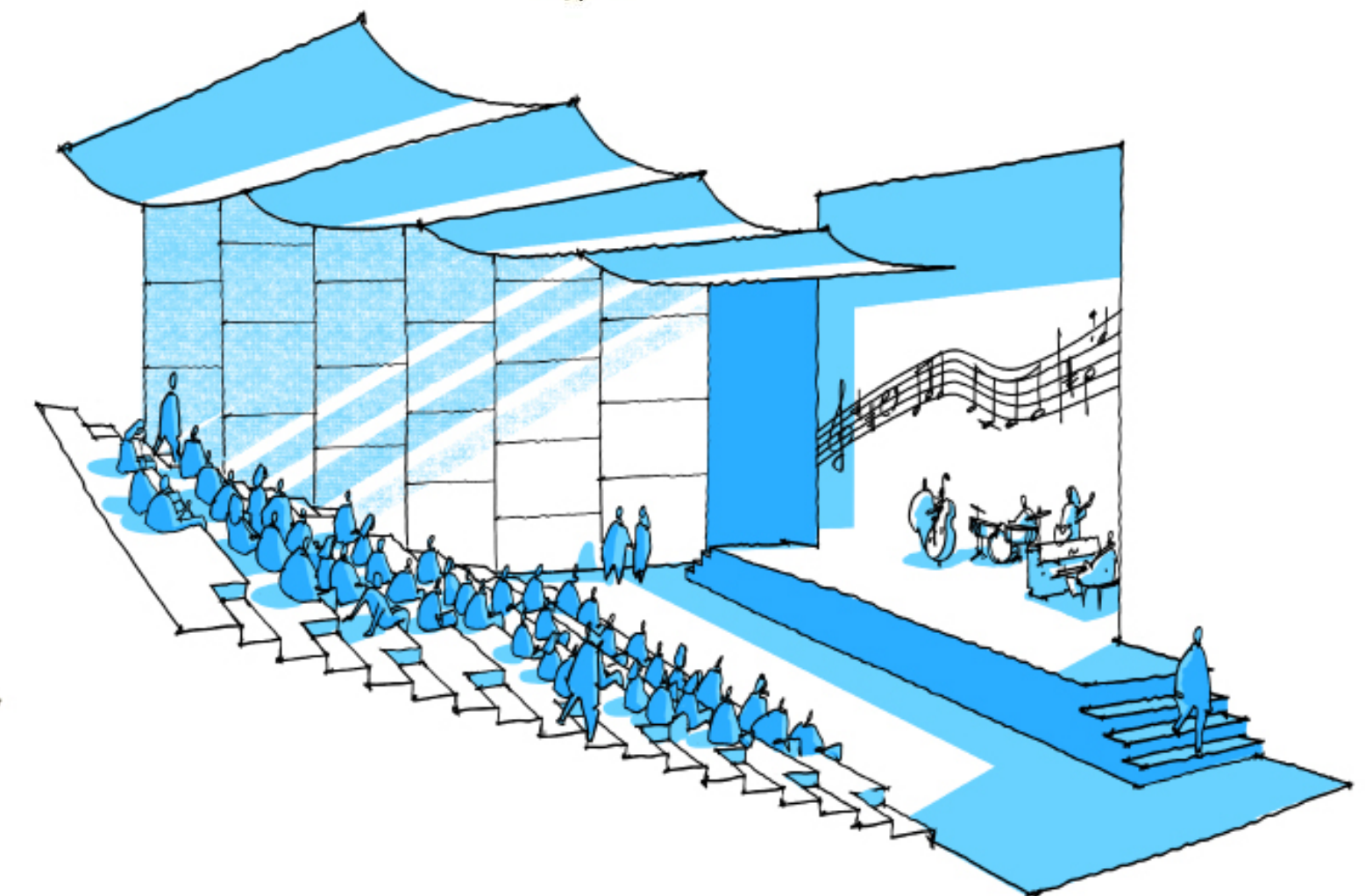
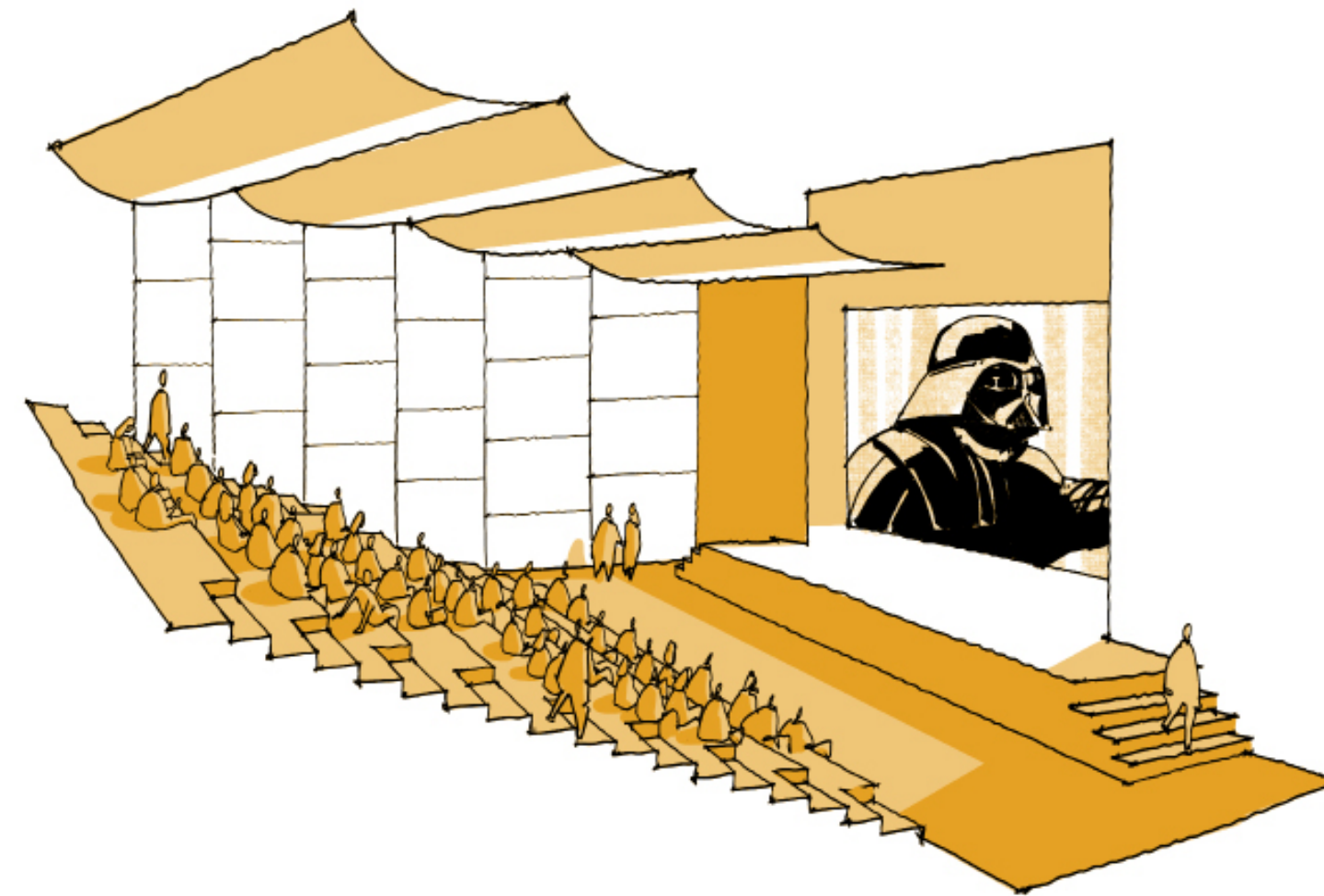
## 2 The Department Store

The department store concept envisages a single education operator acting as the main or anchor tenant with multiple providers operating within, creating a flexible yet cohesive setting for various learning opportunities to be provided. This model allows functions (and providers) to develop organically over time to suit changing needs and trends.



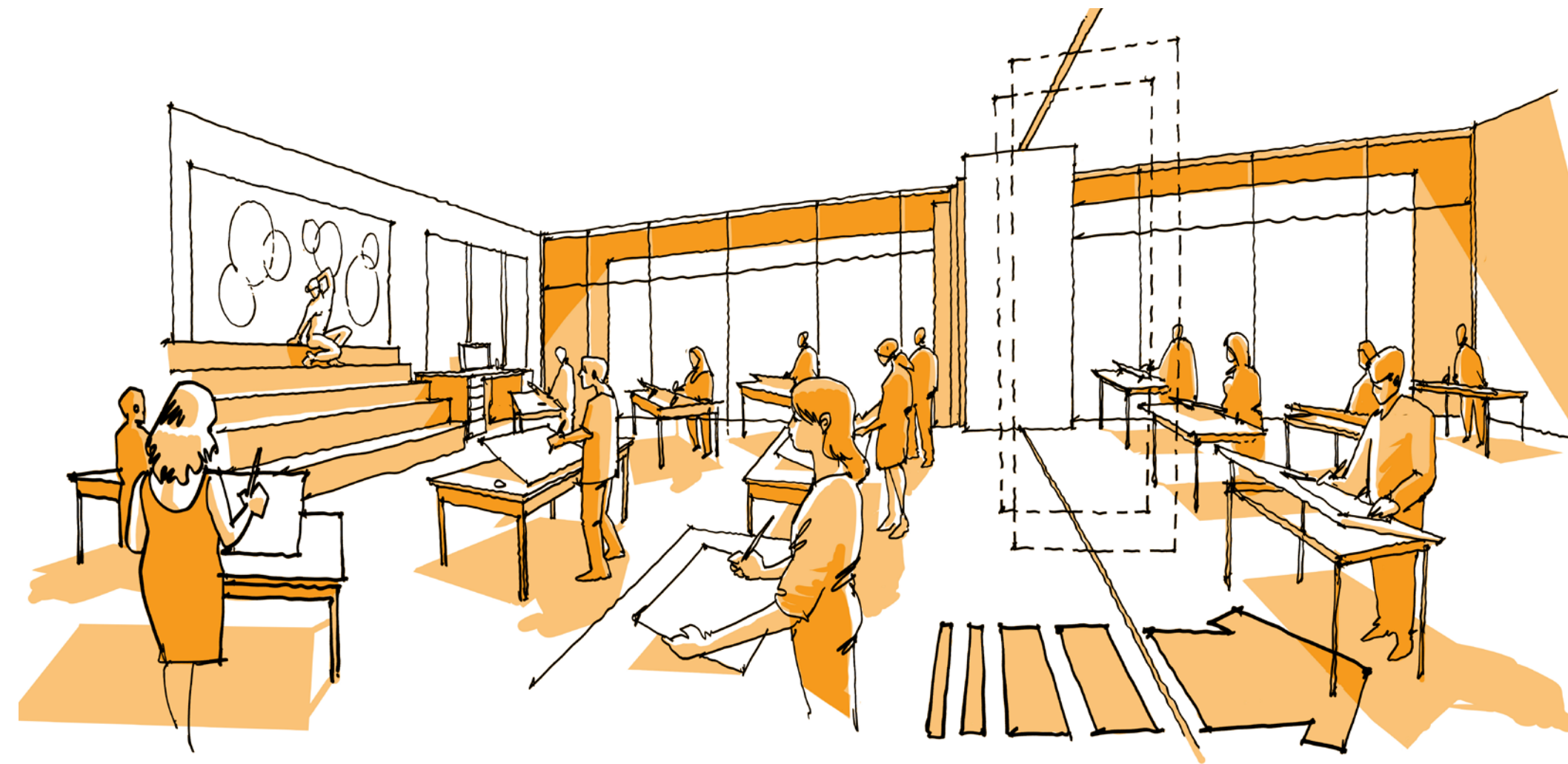
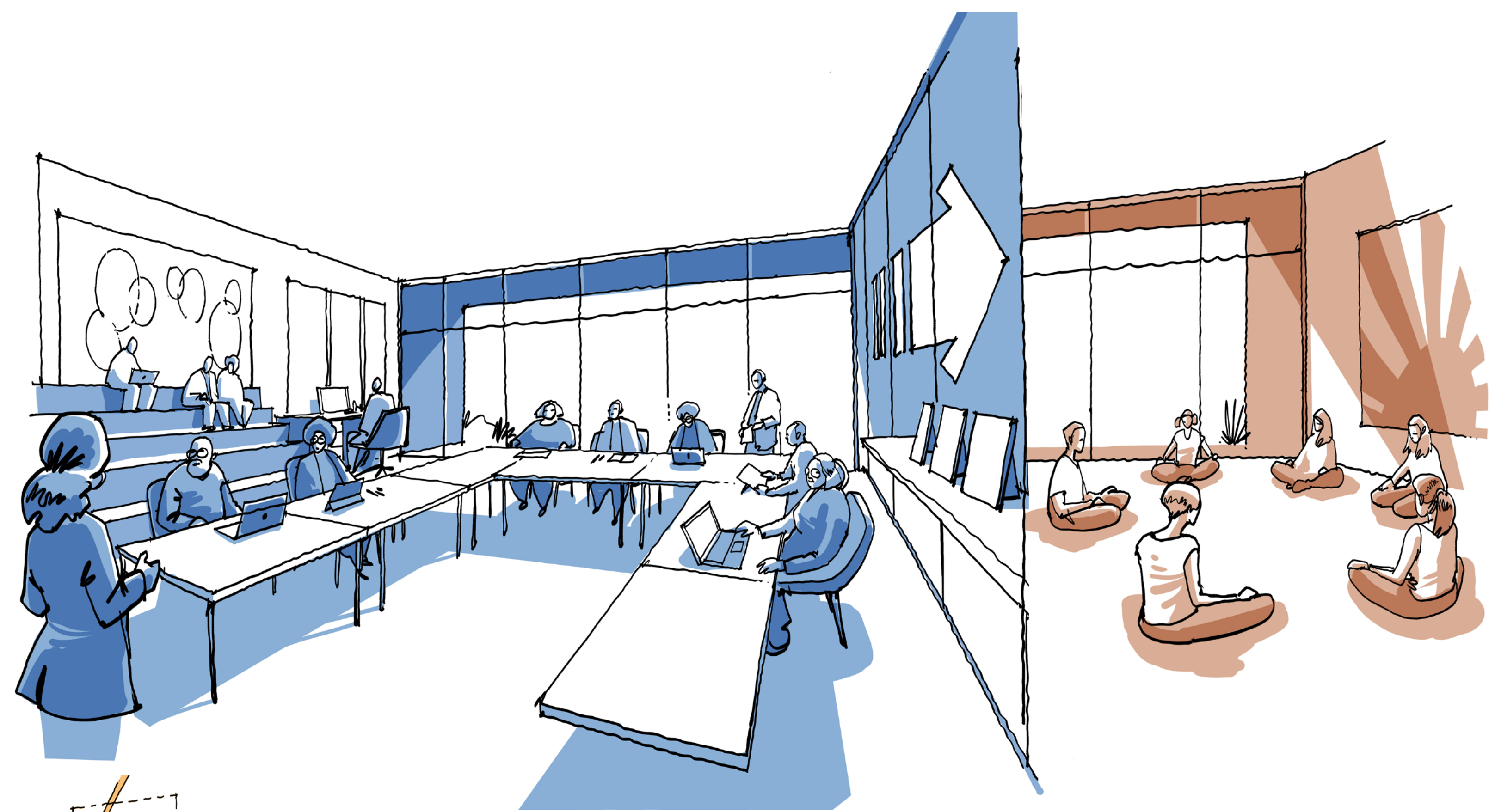
## 3 Repurposing current offers

The Learning Centre will promote the 24/7 use of common shopping centre offers such as the cinema or food court. Live lectures will be live streamed to the cinema for schools, university students and adult learners, embracing the post-pandemic 'flipped learning' era. The typical food court will host cooking classes and demonstrations throughout the day, driving activity and footfall as well as additional revenue for F&B tenants.

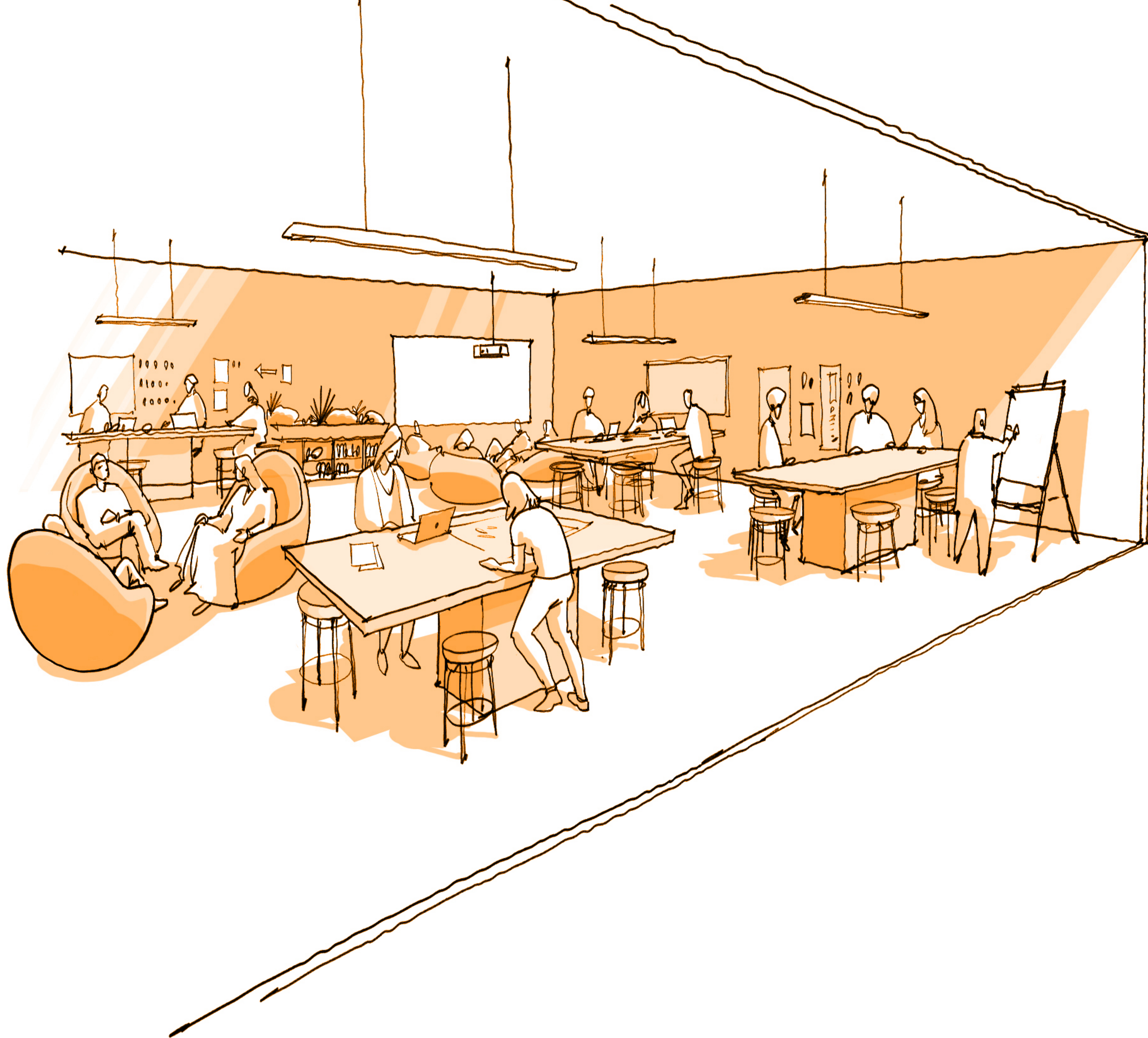


## 4 The Training Centre

The Learning Centre will provide flexible training facilities bookable by local businesses and adult learning operators. This can provide everything from executive training to vocational skills training and upskilling, creating a highly skilled local workforce and helping to retain talent. Scale can vary from centre to centre, with some capable of hosting a conference, others providing a setting for online learning.

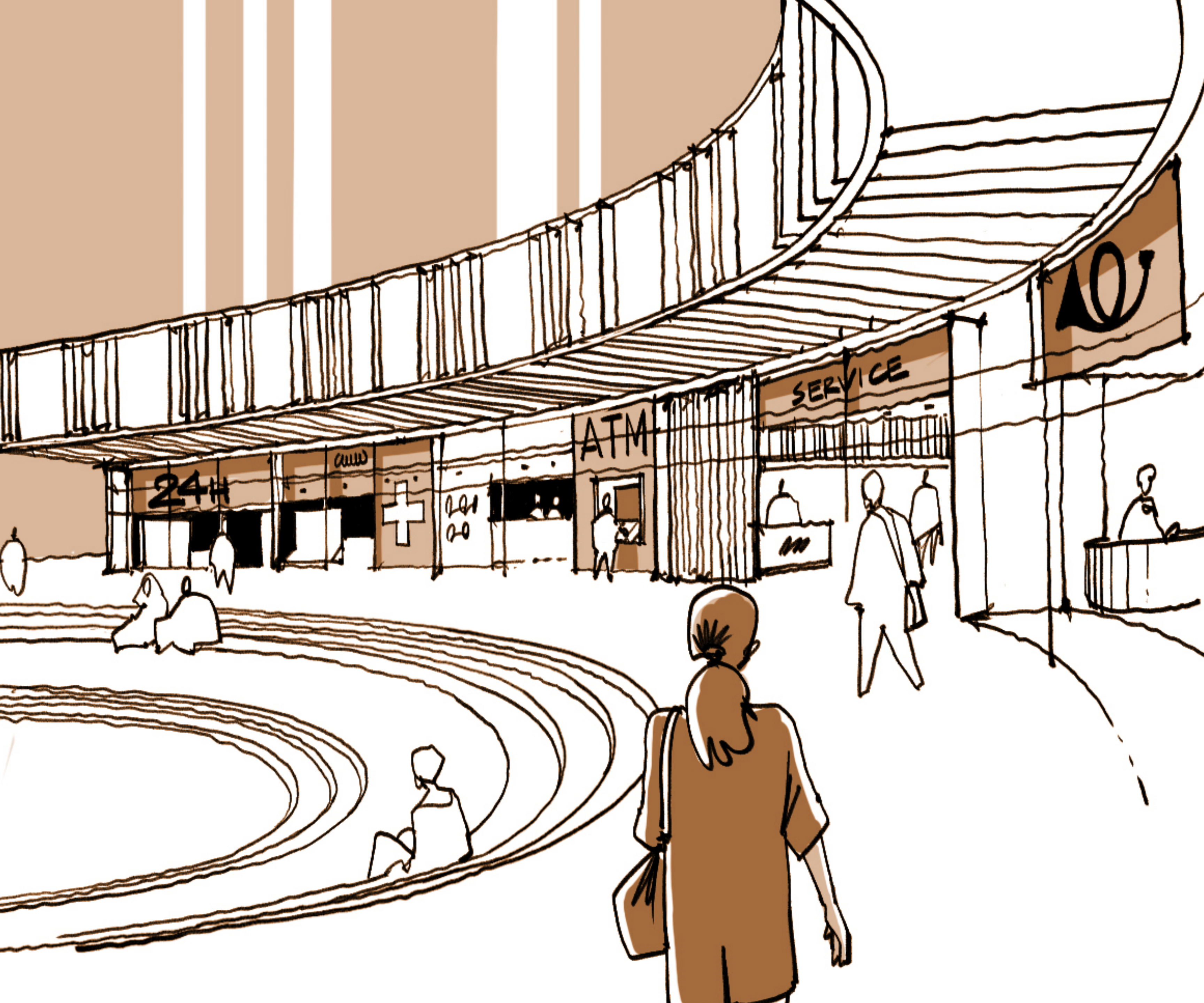






## 5 The STEAM Hub

The STEAM Hub will support K-12 education, from enrichment and tutoring to specialist teaching, providing additional learning opportunities for toddlers to high school students. This is achieved through blended learning (a mixture of on-line and in-person) applied technology, robotics & AI, botany labs, and maker spaces. The STEAM Hub will be open during school hours for local schools to visit the specialist facilities and for after-school care and enrichment for all ages of children and will be flexible enough to accommodate adult learners in the evenings.



## 6 The Public Service Centre

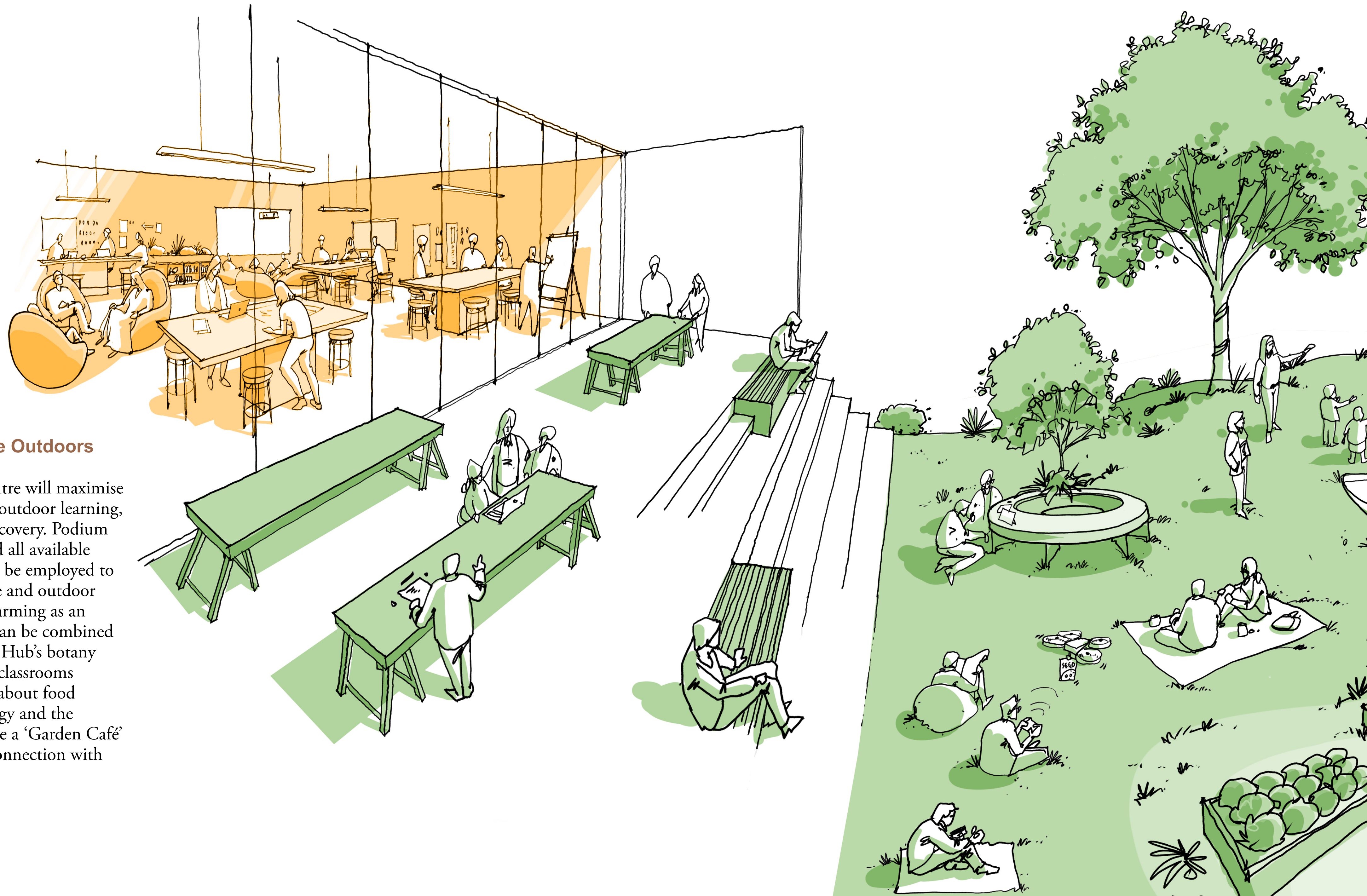
A public library that responds to the needs of the 21st century user, a pharmacy and a post office are just some of the core services that should be incorporated within the Learning Centre and accessible via the main Community Hall, creating an essential element to the overall offer and through-the-day vitality.

## 7 Senior Learning Centre

Lifelong learning opportunities will be provided to seniors in the local community so they can learn new skills and stay mentally active and healthy. In China and much of Asia and increasingly in the West, grandparents are often the primary care givers of school-aged children. When those children are in the STEAM Hub, their grandparents can gather with likeminded peers for educational and social activities in the multi-generational Learning Centre.

## 8 Maximising the Outdoors

The Learning Centre will maximise opportunities for outdoor learning, adventure and discovery. Podium rooftops, atria and all available external space can be employed to provide play space and outdoor learning. Urban farming as an educational tool can be combined with the STEAM Hub's botany labs and outdoor classrooms to teach students about food production, ecology and the environment while a 'Garden Café' can further this connection with nature.



## 9 Shop Houses

The original live-work model, 'shop houses' where residents live above commercial spaces are a familiar building typology in Southeast Asia, Southern China and parts of South Asia. The Learning Centre Shophouses will be opportunities for local craftspeople to 'make-sell' where the production process will be showcased and the makers themselves will take centre stage while also utilising the Learning Centre's wider educational offer.

## 10 The Incubator Park

A creative incubator park and business centre facilitates new business start-ups for entrepreneurs in the local community and encourages innovation and personal development, embracing the unique 'education ecosystem' of the Learning Centre through collaborations with other facilities such as the Training Centre and STEAM Hub. The Incubator Park provides a variety of agile spaces will be provided for growing businesses from SOHO to creative incubator office units.



BroadwayMalyan<sup>BM</sup>

*Case study*

# Agora Colearning

Singapore

Client Agora

Size

Skills Interior design

Status Completed



**Agora Colearning is an education hub that has launched in the HarbourFront Centre mall in Singapore.**

The Agora concept has evolved from Singapore's growing after-school enrichment market with the creation of a unique ecosystem under one roof that combines technology and inspirational learning spaces to provide educational services for a variety of users throughout the day.

The educational services are delivered by a wide variety of established education providers. Agora's digital platform enables parents to search, book and pay for courses in one space as well as allowing parents and teachers to communicate and share homework.

The 20,000sqft centre, which has been designed by Broadway Malyan, includes a variety of engaging spaces that provide different learning opportunities, including modular classrooms that have been designed specifically for the needs of children and can be reconfigured and combined as appropriate.

The centre also includes a makerspace focused on helping children acquire 21st century skills and provides them with hands on learning that enables them to develop critical thinking skills and boost their self-confidence.





There are two multi-function studios for dance, gym, yoga, martial and performing arts, a colearning lounge and library for children to rest and work and a large outdoor space overlooking Sentosa Island for children to play various sports.

The centre caters for children aged 0 to 12 and as well as providing after-school services throughout the week. The centre provides daily pre-school sessions in the morning while also becoming an important hub for the home-schooling community, providing facilities that are unavailable in a home environment as well as helping to foster important social connections.

A photograph of a modern rooftop garden. The foreground and middle ground feature curved wooden decking and planters filled with greenery and red flowers. In the background, a building with a dark facade and red vertical accents is visible. The sky is overcast.

**BroadwayMalyan** <sup>BM</sup>

[www.broadwaymalyan.com](http://www.broadwaymalyan.com)

**Ben Somner**

*Practice Principal, Design Director*

[b.somner@broadwaymalyan.com](mailto:b.somner@broadwaymalyan.com)

+65 9752 5659