

Reimagining the Keta Library

Project Owner: **Keta Library**

Location: **Keta, Volta Region - Ghana**

DECEMBER, 2025

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Initial Project and Site Research: Fowota Mortoo (2025 MA Geography, UNC Chapel Hill)

About the Project

This project began as a Masters in Geography research project at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The initial work examined the relationship between memory, place, and environmental change in Keta, a coastal town that has lost entire settlements to flooding and persistent coastal erosion. What started as academic research has developed into a community-focused preservation and design initiative.

The project now seeks grant funding to support physical renovations to the Keta Library and the creation of a learning hut designed for outdoor reading, social activities, and cultural programming.

The library building itself has a layered history, serving first as a colonial courthouse before becoming a public library. Today, it is in deteriorating condition and regularly affected by flooding from the Keta Lagoon. The proposed interventions aim to restore the structure while transforming it into a dynamic space for ecological knowledge, archival documentation, and community engagement.

A central goal is to revitalize the library as a place where the history of Keta's disappearing settlements can be preserved and shared. The project envisions exhibitions and an archive of photographs, videos, and oral histories documenting the ruined towns and the lived experiences of residents displaced by water. At the same time, the redesigned library will function as a social space, offering outdoor seating, areas for children to play, and programming that encourages people of all ages to use and value the library.

By merging heritage preservation, environmental awareness, and community design, this project hopes to transform the Keta Library into a living center of Eʋe cultural identity and ecological education.

Current Project Team: Fowota Mortoo (geographer), Michael Mawuena Baccah (architect), Dela Amedume (head librarian), Kojo Derban (architect)

Acknowledgement

Thank you to those who have supported the research and project thus far, including:

Victor Dela Amedume Odamson, Head Librarian, Keta Library

Kojo Derban, Architect

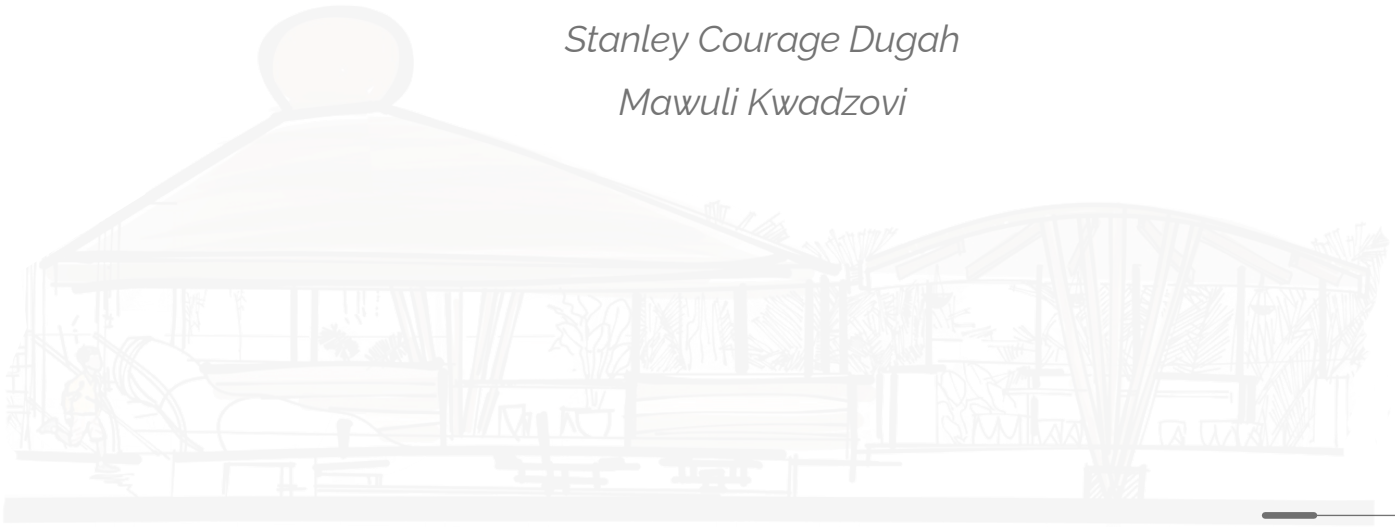
Eric Agyekum, Archivist at PRAAD Accra

Benedicta Anibiri, Bureau of Ghana Languages

Ivan Quashigah, Filmmaker

Stanley Courage Dugah

Mawuli Kwadzovi



Project Objectives

Many of the books housed in the library's collection have been donated by NGOs based in the US and UK, and don't appear relevant to students in the area. Additionally, the head librarian, Victor Dela Amedume, has outlined books and textbooks that are frequently sought after but that are unable to be provided.

This project aims to address this need, through the following steps:

- Purchasing up-to-date textbooks to support students
- Renovating the building's floors and lights; stabilizing building foundation
- Creating an Eʋe book collection that features not only texts in Eʋe but also texts in English by renowned authors from the region, including DEK Amenumey, Kofi Awoonor, and Kofi Anyidoho. Many of these books have been requested by patrons over the years.
- Consistent monthly supply of power to ensure the building can remain open in the evenings to support studying by local nursing students.
- Acquiring 40 tablets to support literacy efforts by Anlo Literary Project in 3 local primary schools

Progress

To date, we have completed a comprehensive catalog of the materials in the upper floor of the library, with the bottom children's floor remaining. We have also collected a series of oral testimonies with individuals who recall frequenting the Keta Library as a young child. In addition, we have collaborated with Benedicta Anibiri of the Bureau of Ghana Languages and Dela Amedume, the Keta librarian, to develop a list of potential books for purchase.





Cataloging in Keta Library, May 2025

Site Location



Dynamics of Flooding in Keta

1. Keta sits between the Atlantic Ocean and Keta Lagoon, facing flooding from both sides.

2. Coastal erosion and rising water levels damage buildings and displace residents.

Flooding in Keta and Surrounding Communities






Image Source: Google



Image 1: 2015 Google Earth Image of Keta showing rising sea levels



Image 2: 2023 Google Earth Image of Keta Library showing Effects of Flooding from the lagoon

Image Source: Google Earth

Existing Condition of the Library

Exterior







The Library is currently suffering neglect and continuous deterioration

Interior







Books lack proper care and documentation

Interior of the Library is disorganized making it difficult to use

Periphery








Classroom Blocks

A.M.E Zion Church

Abandoned Building

Library Compound Lacking proper ground cover

Flooded Compound of the Library

Image Source: Authors' Site Visit Images

Concept

Architectural Design / Concept

Culture & Ecology

This renovation project reimagines the Keta Library as a functional space for reading, curating, and ecological learning, while responding directly to local environmental challenges. The interior design will prioritize flexible reading areas, archival display surfaces, and secure storage for community collections. Shelving and seating layouts will be reorganized to support both quiet reading and small group activities related to heritage documentation and cultural programming.

The outdoor area will be transformed to encourage open-air learning and social use. A series of reading lounges and small huts will be constructed using local materials, including thatch roofing and rammed earth walls, creating comfortable shaded spaces that reflect Eʋe building traditions.

A sand pit, bring the keta beach to the library, will provide a safe play area for children, supporting family-friendly use of the library grounds. Gardens with native plant species will serve as ecological learning zones, fostering awareness of coastal vulnerability and environmental preservation.

To address seasonal flooding from the lagoon, elevated walkways will connect the library to its surroundings, ensuring access during high water and protecting movement paths. Together, these interventions will create a resilient, community-centered learning environment that preserves cultural knowledge, supports outdoor engagement, and strengthens ecological awareness.

Mood Board



1. Inspiration includes coastal hut forms seen in Keta beach resorts to create familiar, inviting reading spaces.



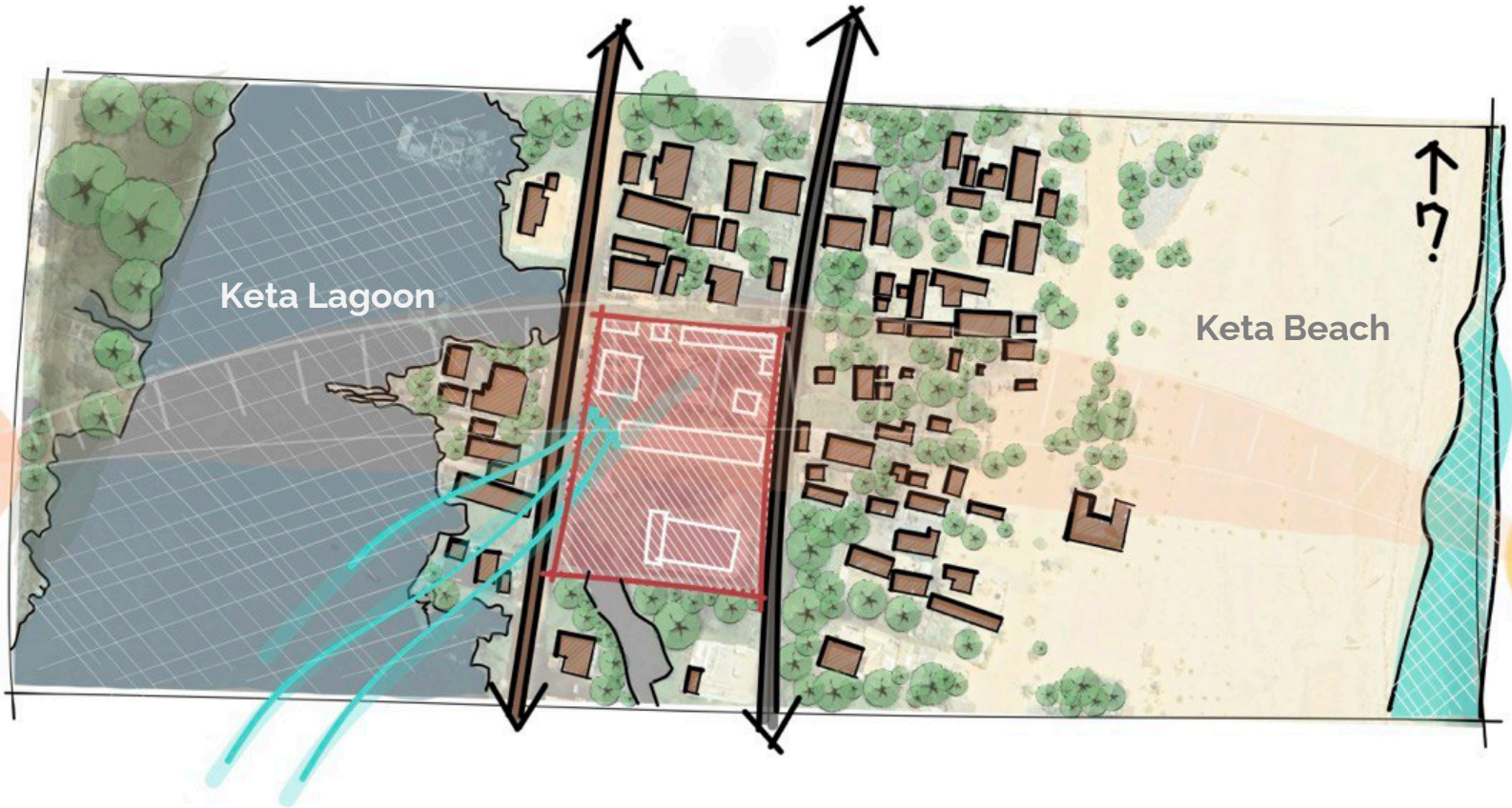


2. Mood board emphasizes rammed earth construction for durable, climate-responsive outdoor structures.

Image Source: Google

Site Analysis

Threatened by both lagoon and sea erosion, with lagoon impacts most severe.

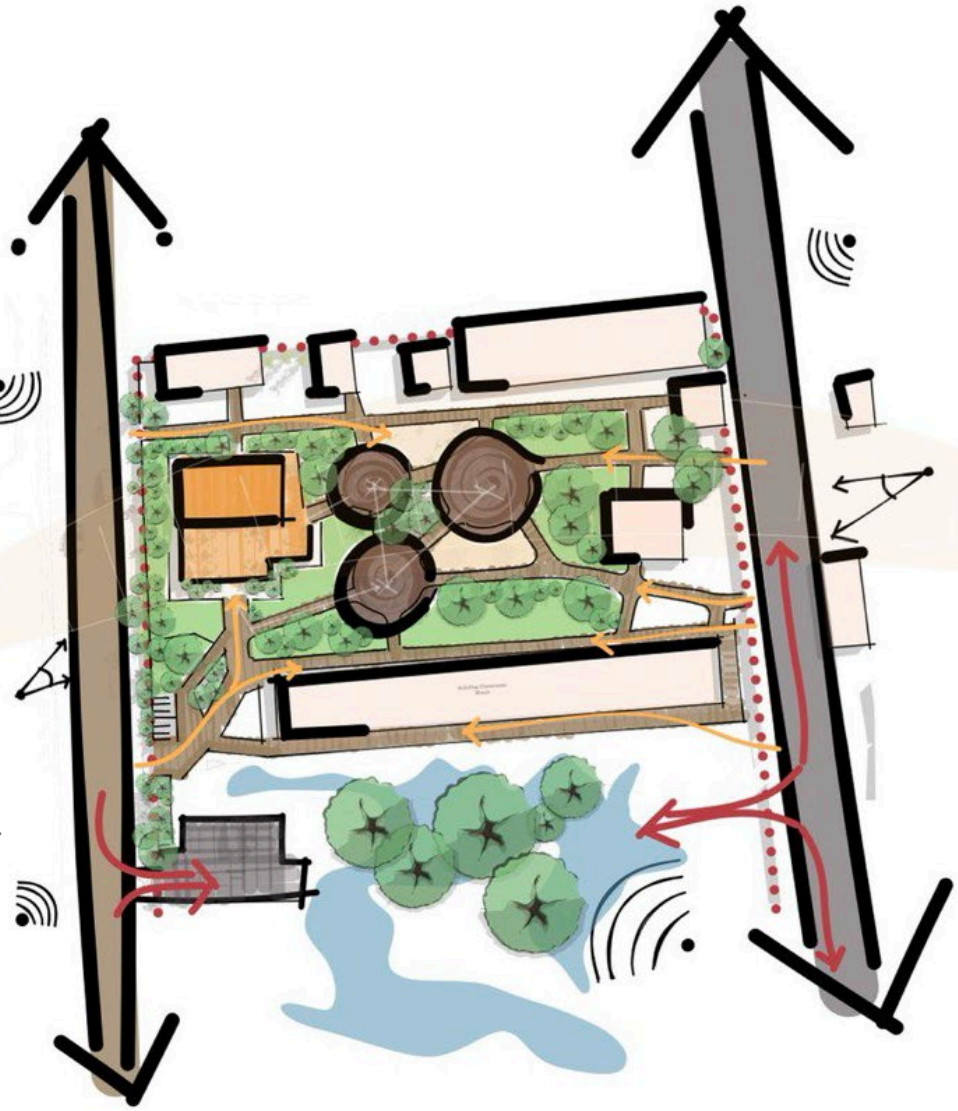


The Keta Library sits between Lagoon Road and Keta Market Road, offering central access, though the unfinished and poor condition of Lagoon Road limits reliable entry, especially when it floods.

Form Development

Weaknesses

- Frequent lagoon flooding.
- Poor access via Lagoon Road.
- Deteriorated building.
- Weak drainage and erosion control.
- Noise from nearby church, school, and houses may disrupt quiet reading and programming.



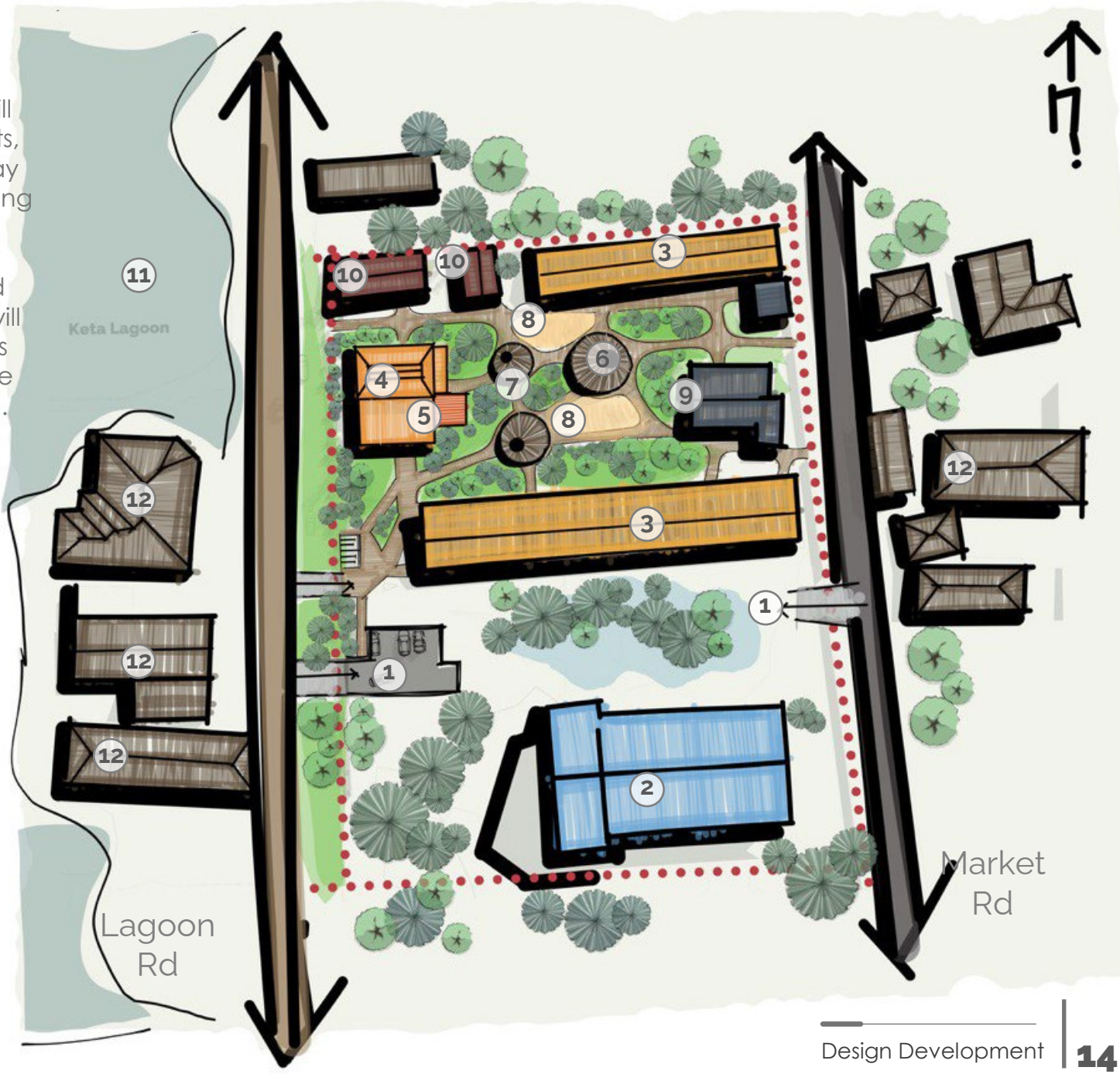
Opportunities

- Central location with good visibility and access.
- Open outdoor space for flexible outdoor design.
- Water proximity supports ecological learning.
- Historic building offers cultural reuse potential.
- Surrounded by church, school, and homes, creating consistent daily foot traffic and community presence.

Site Concept

outdoor interventions will add shaded reading huts, gardens, and a sand play zone, creating a welcoming community space.

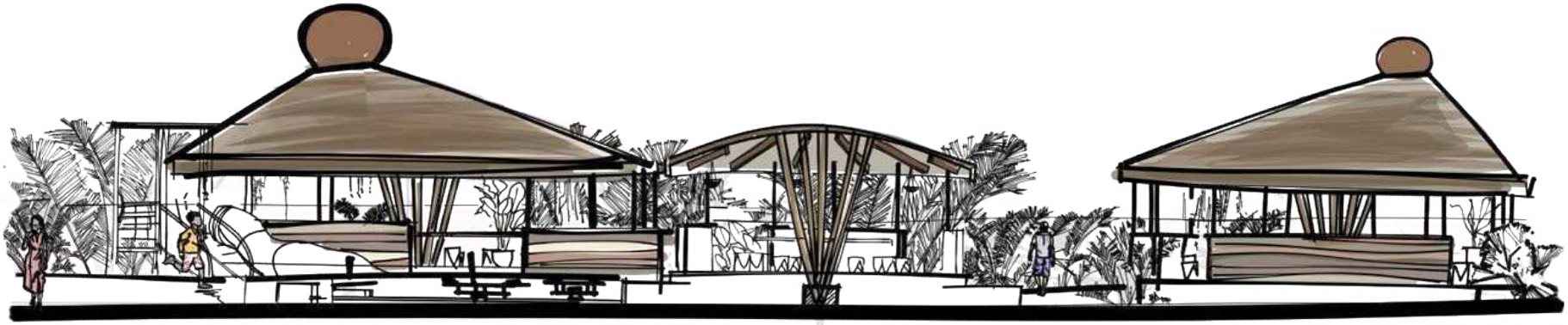
Elevated walkways and improved landscaping will connect the library to its surroundings and reduce disruption from flooding.



Legend

1. Main entrance
2. A.M.E Zion Church
3. Classroom Block
4. Main Library Block
5. Out-door Lounge Extension
6. Out-door Learning Huts
7. Garden
8. Play Area Sand Pit
9. Convenience Store
10. Abandoned Structures
11. Keta Lagoon
12. Houses

Form Development



- Rammed earth walls provide durable, climate-responsive structures.
- Multiple openings improve light and airflow.
- Traditional seating supports familiar community use.
- Built-in flower pots bring vegetation into the space.
- Thatch roofs offer shade and cooling.
- Forms and materials reflect Eʋe coastal traditions.

Bamboo and steel oil-painted poles will be used for structural support, ensuring durability in coastal weather conditions.



Site Layout

Site Plans & Sections

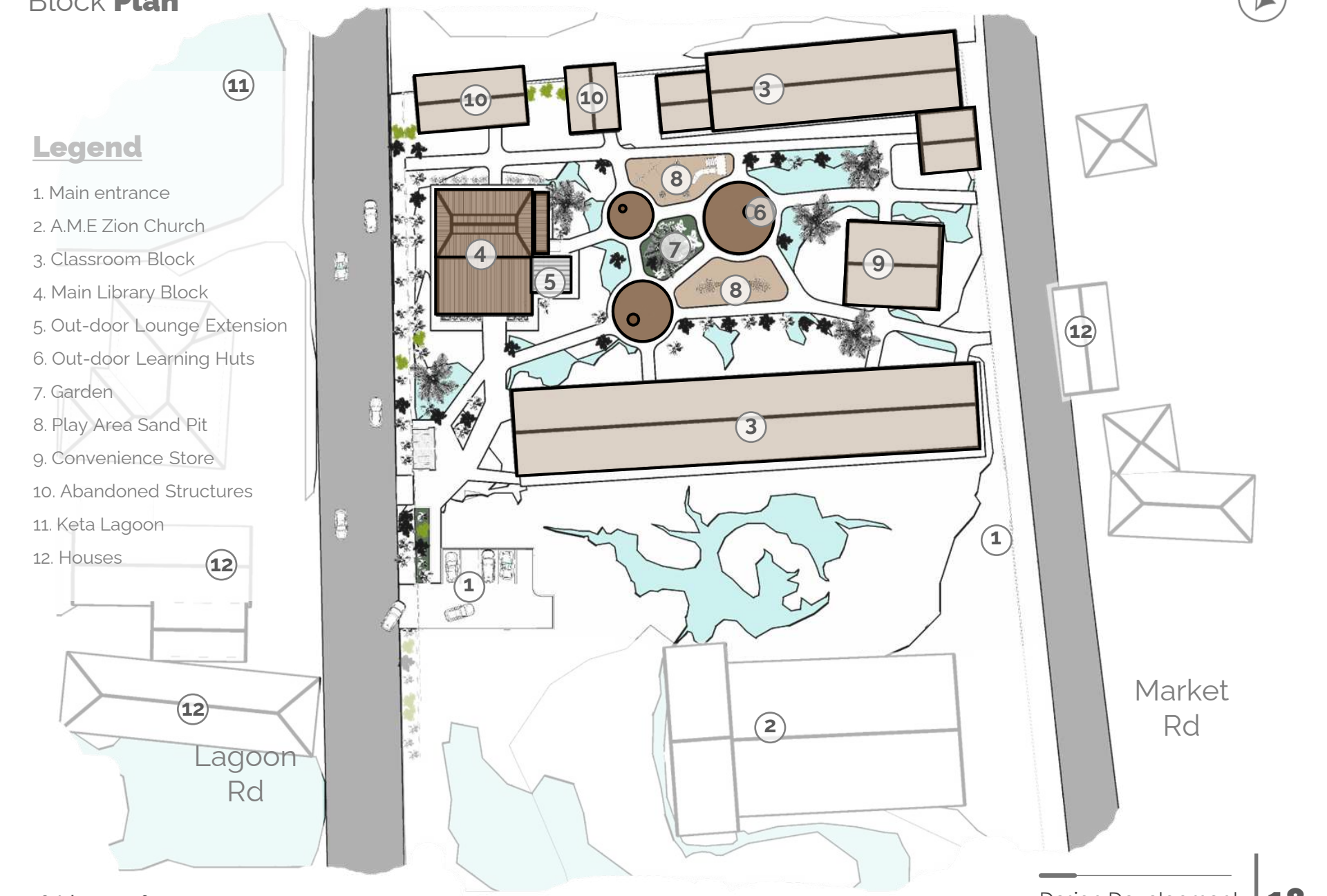
Site **Plan**



Legend

1. Lagoon Road
2. Market Road
3. A.M.E Zion Church
4. A.M.E Zion Primary School
5. Main Library
6. Proposed Outdoor Learning Huts
7. Surrounding Buildings
8. Keta Lagoon
9. Keta Beach

Block **Plan**



Legend

1. Main entrance
2. A.M.E Zion Church
3. Classroom Block
4. Main Library Block
5. Out-door Lounge Extension
6. Out-door Learning Huts
7. Garden
8. Play Area Sand Pit
9. Convenience Store
10. Abandoned Structures
11. Keta Lagoon
12. Houses

Block **Plan**



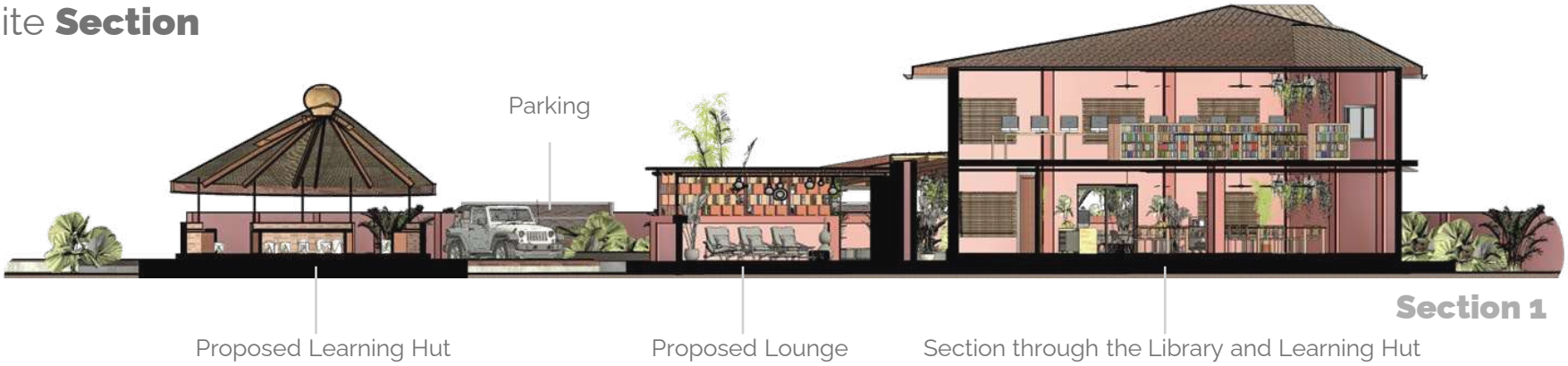
Legend

1. Main entrance
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6. Out-door Learning Huts
7. Garden
8. Play Area Sand Pit
9. Convenience Store
10. Abandoned Structures
11. Keta Lagoon
12. Houses

Site **Layout**


Legend
1. Main entrance/Parking
2. A.M.E Zion Church
3. Classroom Block
4. Main Library Block
5. Out-door Lounge Extension
6. Out-door Learning Huts
7. Garden
8. Play Area Sand Pit
9. Convenience Store
10. Abandoned Structures
11. Keta Lagoon
12. Houses
Lagoon Rd
Market Rd

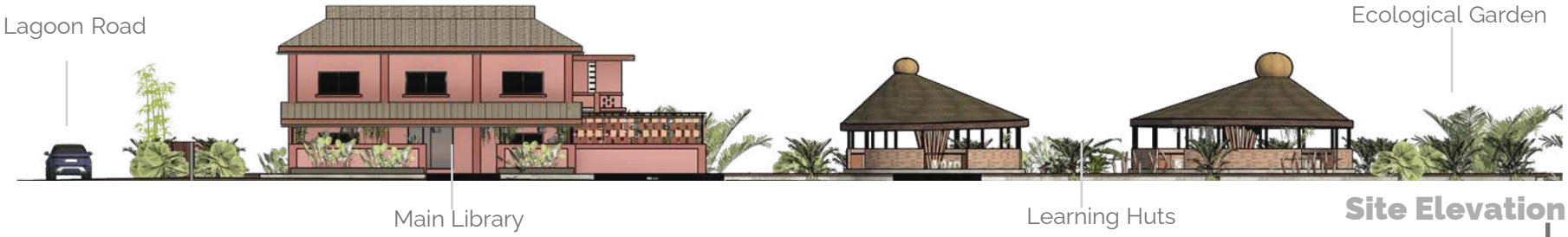
Site **Section**



Section 1



Section 2



Site Elevation

3D Views _ Aerial Images

Exterior & Interior Impressions

3D Views—Plan View



Aerial View of the Library showing surrounding Periphery

3D Views —Aerial View



Aerial View of the Library showing the Keta Lagoon

3D Views —Aerial View



Aerial View of the Library showing Main Access from the Lagoon Road, Parking and Connecting Walkways

Main Library Renovation

Architectural Design / Concept

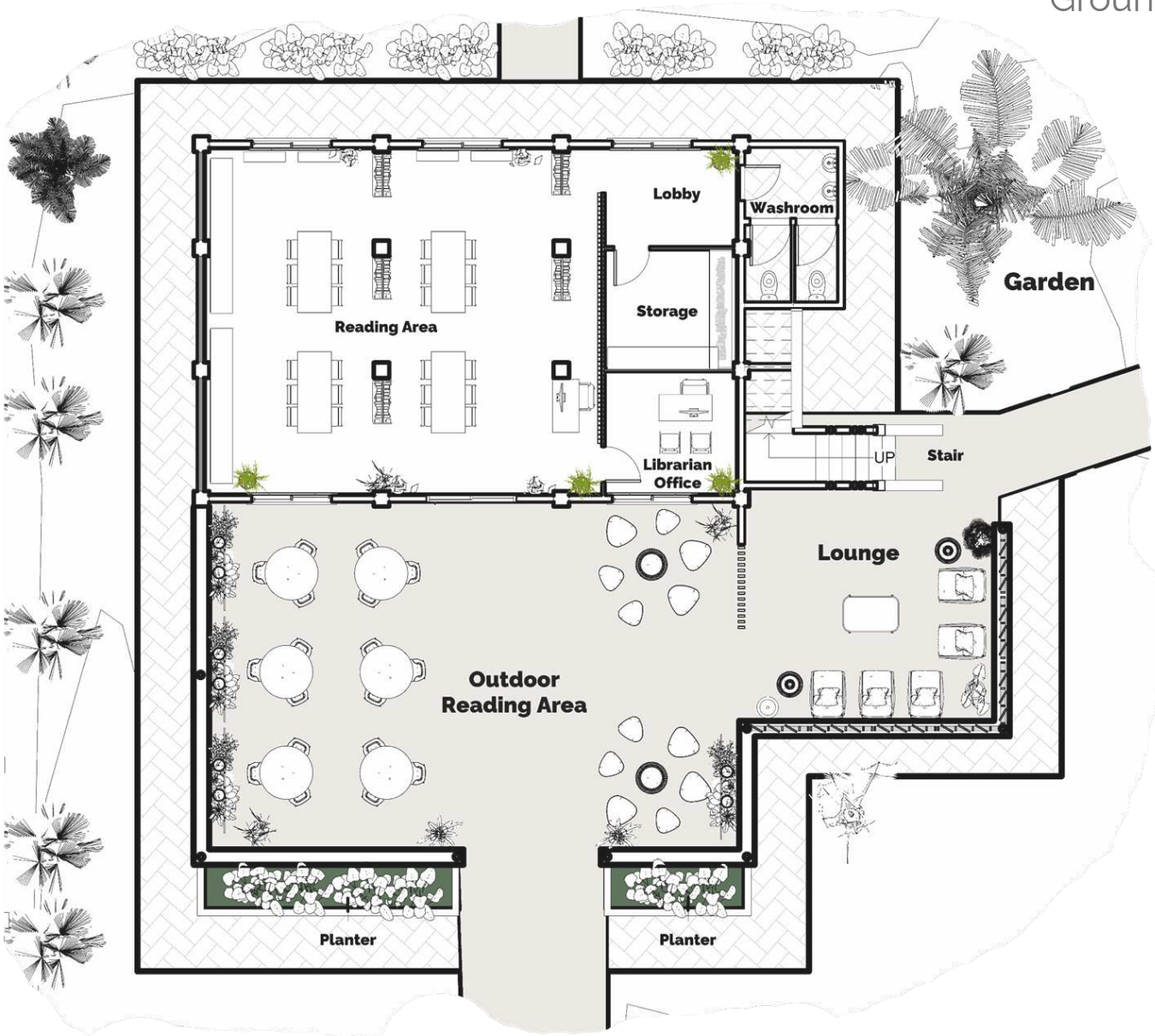


Front View of the Library showing the main entrance

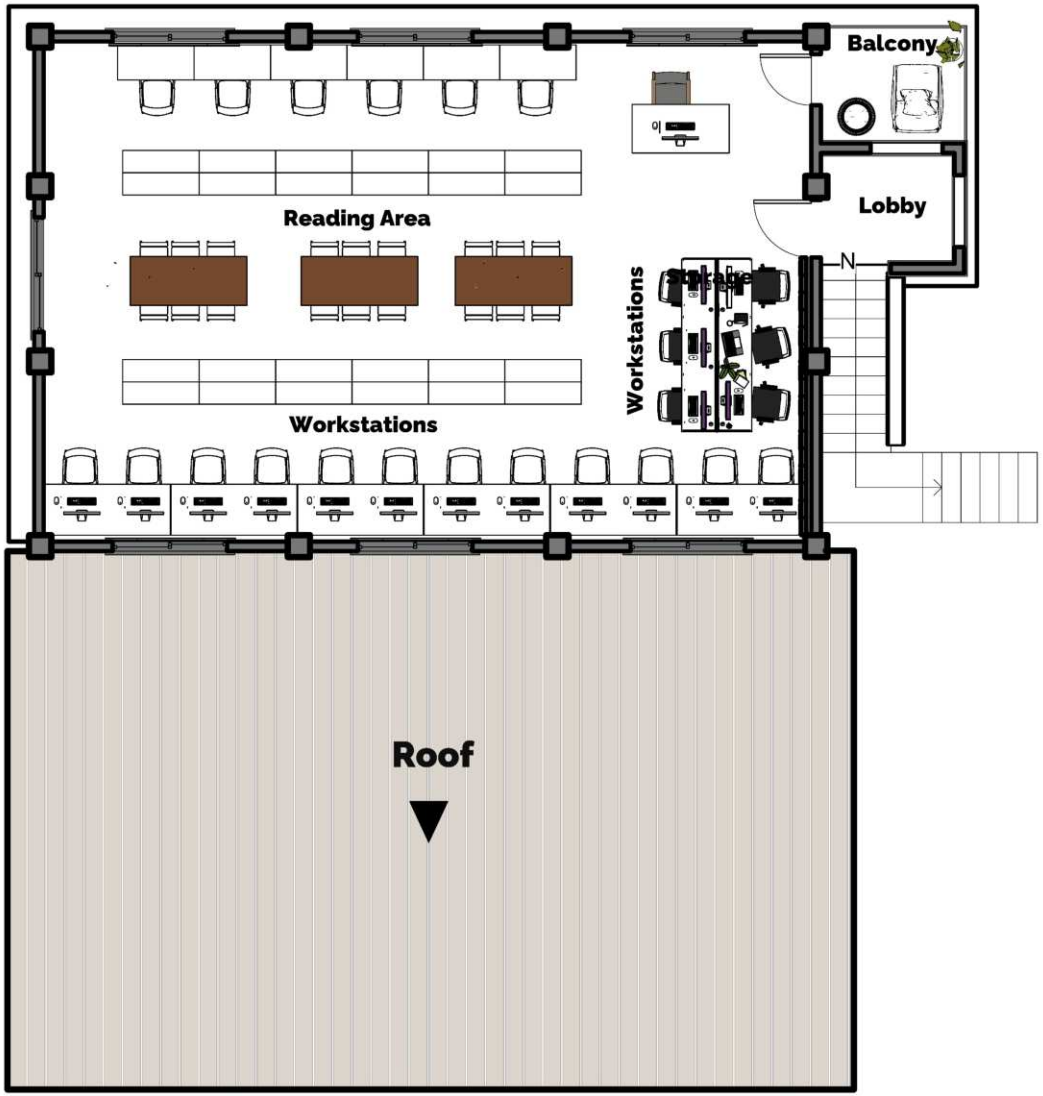
Architectural Drawings

Floor Plans, Sections, &Elevations

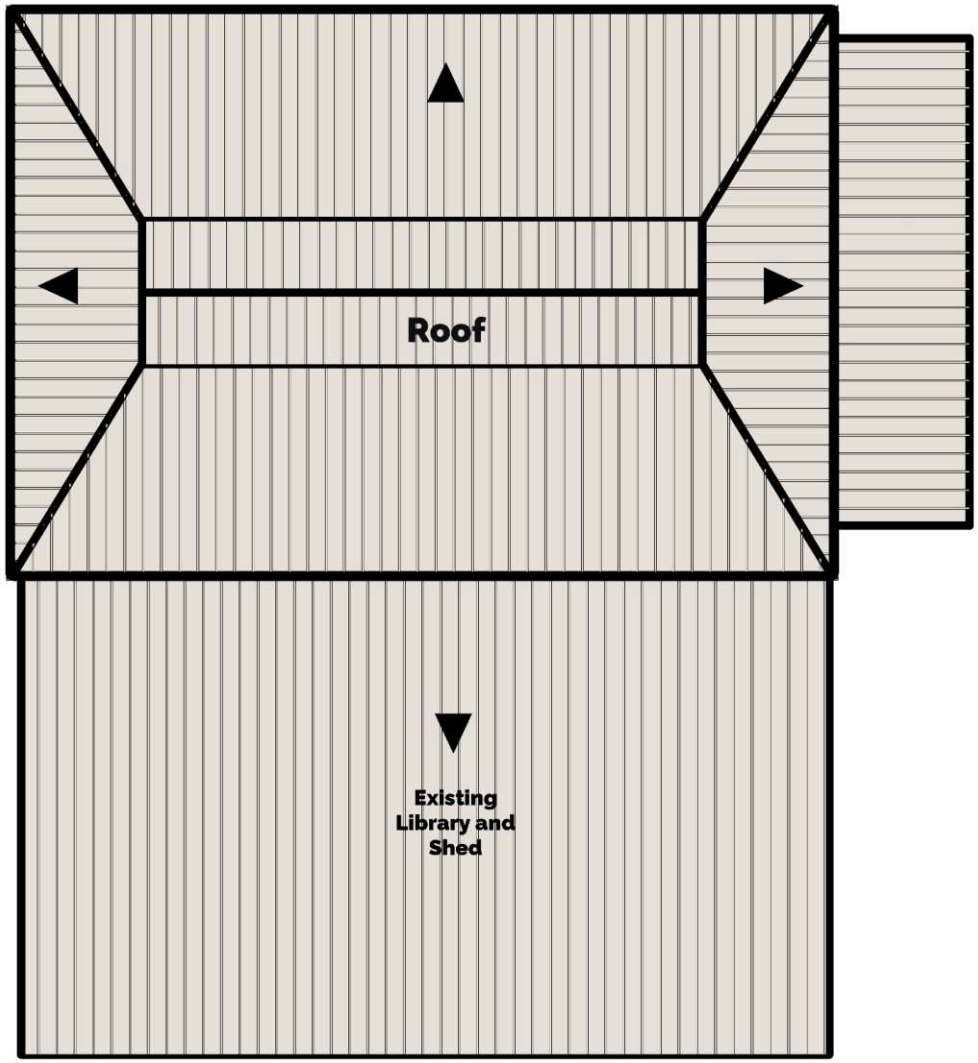
Ground **Floor Plan**



First **Floor Plan**

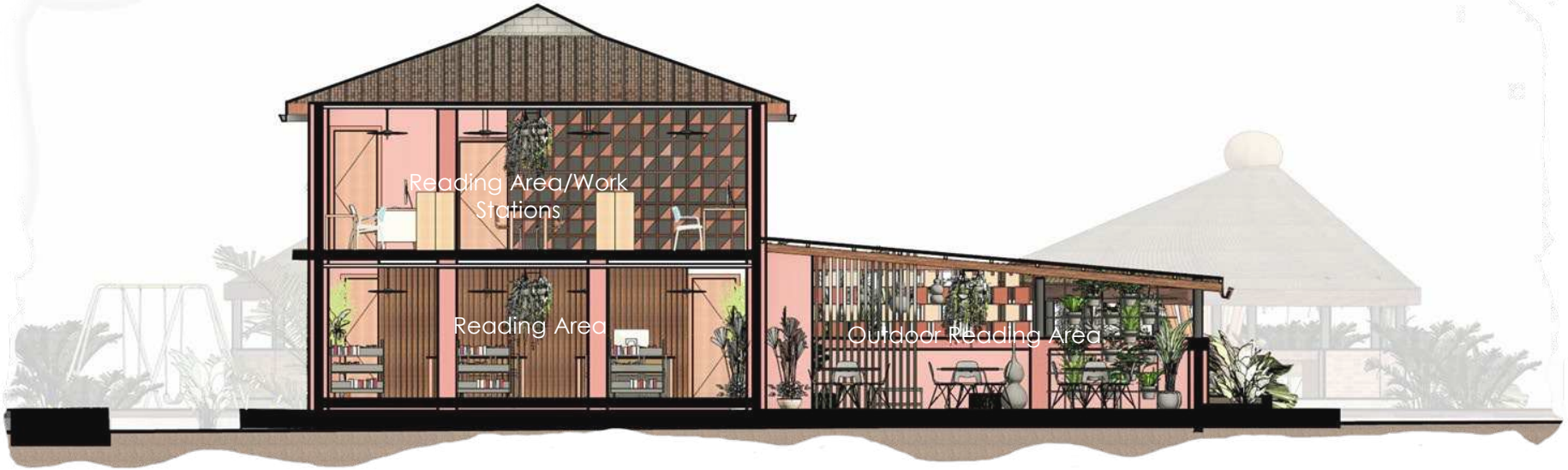


Roof **Plan**





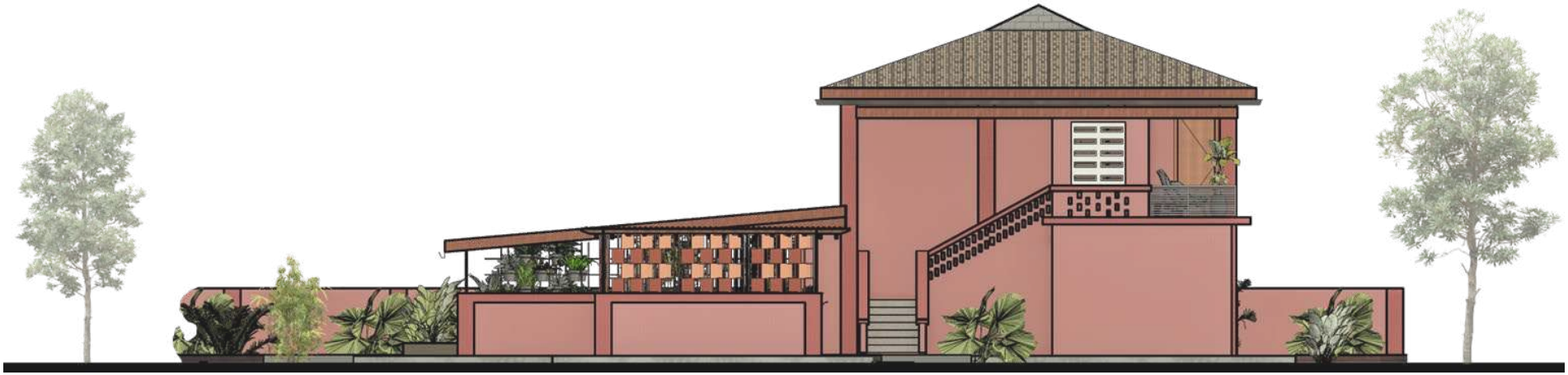
Section 1



Section 2



South Elevation



East Elevation

3D Views _ Exterior

Exterior & Interior Impressions

3D Views—Parking



A view from the proposed parking space of the Library

3D Views—Garden



A view from the Proposed Central Rock Garden

3D Views—Outdoor Lounge



A view showing the Exterior of the proposed Lounge

3D Views—Entrance Terrace



A view of the Entrance Terrace/Outdoor Reading Area

3D Views—Entrance Terrace



A view of the Entrance Terrace/Outdoor Reading Area

3D Views—Outdoor Lounge



A view showing the Interior of the proposed Lounge

3D Views—Outdoor Lounge



A view showing the Interior of the proposed Lounge

3D Views _ Interior

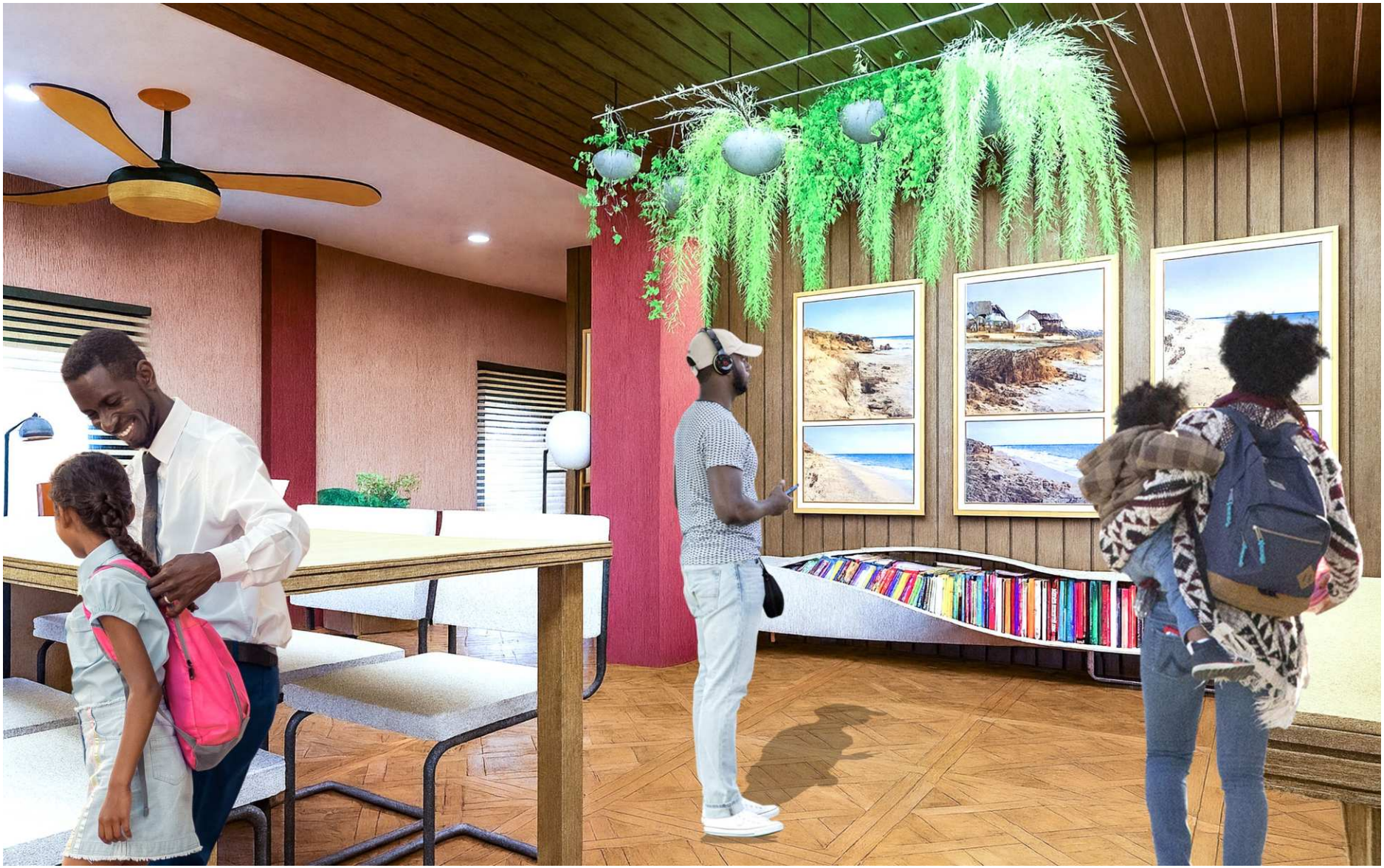
Exterior & Interior Impressions

3D Views—Gound Floor



Visitors stand viewing historical images of Keta's coastline displayed along the interior wall.

3D Views—Gound Floor



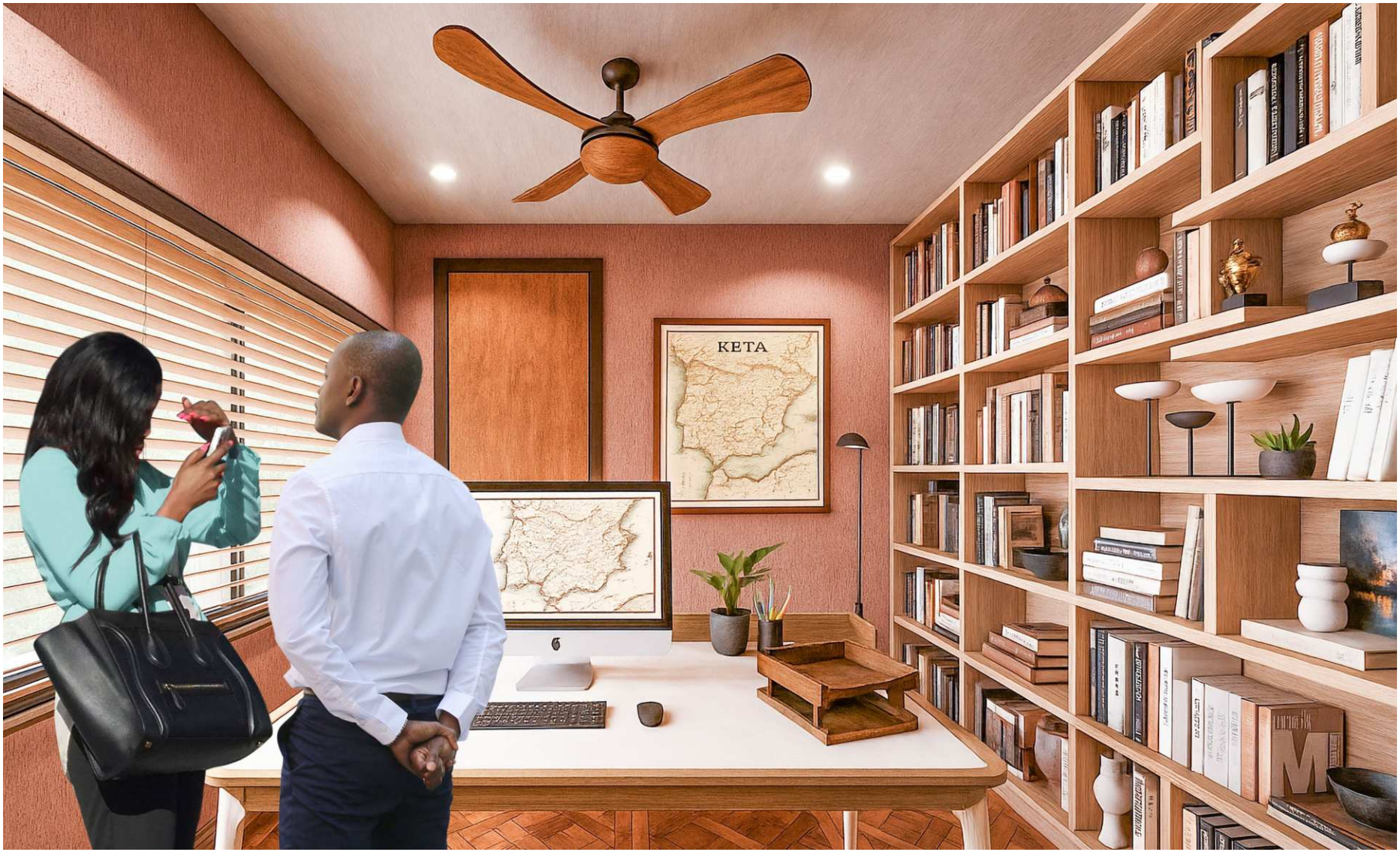
Visitors stand viewing historical images of Keta's coastline displayed along the interior wall.

3D Views—Gound Floor



A small librarian's office contains archival images, shelves of books, and storage for historical materials.

3D Views—Gound Floor



A small librarian's office contains archival images, maps, shelves of books, and storage for historical materials.

3D Views—First Floor



Visitors on the first floor discuss images showing Keta's ecological heritage and Challenges

3D Views—First Floor



A librarian explains the images to visitors, highlighting key moments in Keta's ecological and cultural history.

Learning Huts

Architectural Design / Concept

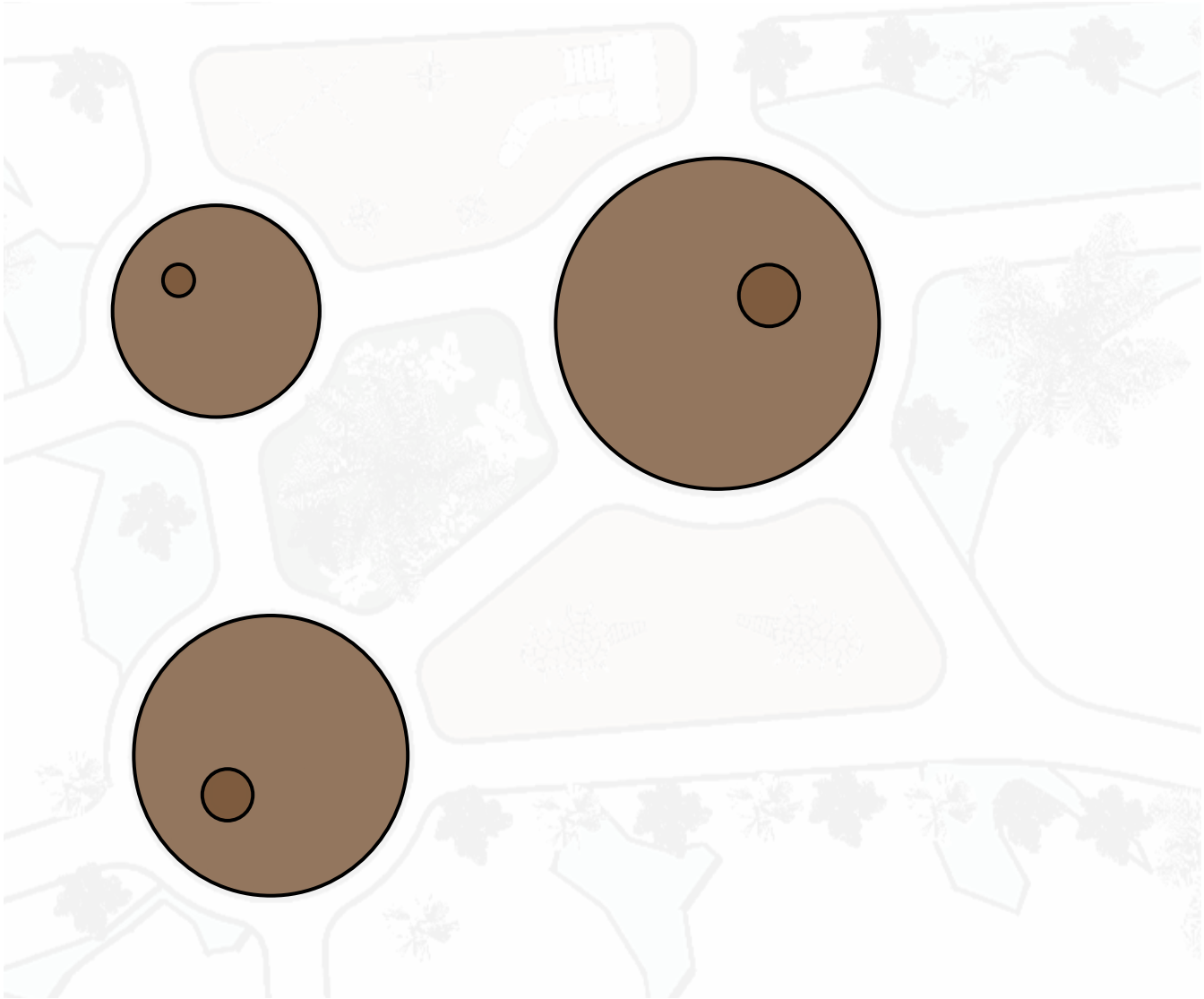


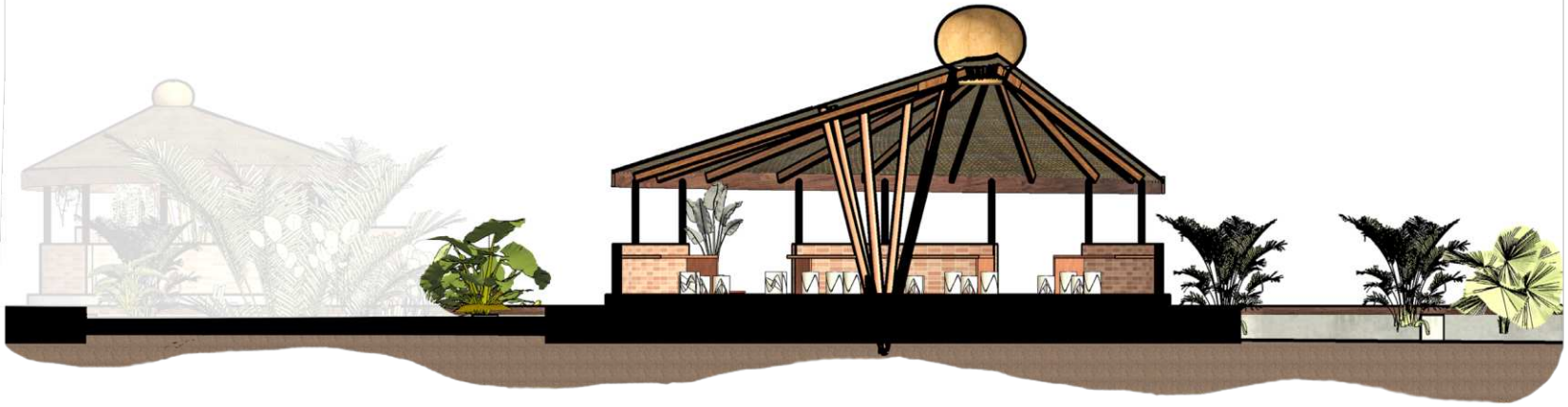
A view showing Kids playing in the Sand Pit

Architectural Drawings

Floor Plans, Sections, &Elevations


Playgound Sand Pit
Hut_2
Central Garden
Hut_3
Playgound Sand Pit
Hut_1





Section 1



Section 2



South Elevation



East Elevation

3D Views

Exterior & Interior Impressions

3D Views—Learning Huts



Elevated walkways connect outdoor spaces, keeping paths accessible during flooding.

3D Views—Sand Pit Play Area



A shallow sand pit provides a safe play area for children beside the outdoor reading spaces.

3D Views—Sand Pit Play Area



The play area offers an open, child-friendly space with simple outdoor activities adjacent to the reading huts.

3D Views—Rock Garden



A rock garden features native stones and plants, creating a quiet ecological display area near the outdoor reading spaces.

3D Views—Interior View of Hut



The hut interior has rammed earth walls, traditional stools, built-in planters, and open views to the surrounding gardens.

Project Contacts: Fowota Mortoo (fmortoo@gmail.com) and Michael Mawuena Baccah (michaelmawuenam@gmail.com)

Thank You!



Reimagining the Keta Library

Project Owner: **Keta Library**

Location: **Keta, Volta Region - Ghana**

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