

Chronology of Accessibility & the Disability Rights Movement

Over the course of the last century, society has come a long way in terms of accessibility and disability inclusion. The work of disability advocates cannot be discounted, as their efforts have changed the lives of generations of people with disabilities. The laws and codes that were put into place, especially in the mid to late 20th century, had a huge impact on the public perception of people with disabilities.

The first trend is the direct impact of protests and activism on the advancement of policy. Many of the policies that were put into place were specifically protested for in advance. Such a trend illustrates the power of the people in influencing the law, and in turn, when the law changes, then the public perception of people with disabilities changes with it.

The second trend is the method of activism. Throughout many of the activism efforts, the method was simply making people with disabilities visible by taking up space in areas where they were previously excluded. Prior to the activism efforts, people with disabilities were caught in a loop; there was no accessibility, so they were not seen in public, and since they were not seen in public, accessibility was not something that was seen as needed.

Through this chronology, I have also seen the need for education. Universities have had a big impact on starting these movements. It is also seen in the experimental studio how the students' views of people with disabilities were changed as they interacted with consultants with disabilities. This demonstrates the power of education and the importance of including people with disabilities in architectural education. This is also seen more recently in the efforts of the Rick Hansen Foundation to educate architects and clients on the importance of inclusive design.

I argue that we cannot stop where we are today. There are next steps to take to continue the movements that started a century ago. This chronology reveals that progress is driven by activism, design innovation, and connection to those with lived experience. My thesis aims to build on this chronology by speculating on the next step is in designing with disability at the forefront.

- Policy and Legislation
- Architectural Movements
- Activism and Advocacy

Events Following WWII
With thousands of injured soldiers returning home with a wide variety of impairments as a result of the war, non-profit organizations (eg, the War Amps) were established to advocate on behalf of veterans.



Events Following WWII
Again, with many soldiers returning from war as well as many people left with impairments from the Polio Epidemic, there were improved rehabilitation efforts which pushed forward the accessibility movement.



(1950s - 1970s) - University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Imvised Accessibility
As there were no standards at this time, access solutions were made out of necessity, and were often temporary such as wooden boards laid across stairs. These improvised solutions were made based on the individual needs of the users. Although these solutions were a great first step, they operated under the medical model of disability, framed as a tool for resourceful people who had to "overcome" their disability.

(Early 1970s) - Four main disability advocacy groups in Canada: the Canadian National Institute for the Deaf, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Canadian Association for the Mentally Retarded (now known as the Canadian Association for Community Living), and the Canadian Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled.

Cross-Disability Advocacy
Prior to this point, disability organizations were treated as separate entities, because they were viewed under the medical model, and their goals were to "fix", "treat", or "cope" with their disability. Once organizations shifted to the social model, their focus was on the shared experience of exclusion, allowing for a more united voice of people with all types of disabilities to be heard.



(1976 - 1979) - The first cross-disability self-advocacy groups emerged in Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

(Mid 1970s - 1980s) - Shift towards the Social Model of disability within organizations dedicated to disabilities.

(1977) - National (US) protests of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Disabled Persons.

(1977) - Section 504 Protest.

(1979 - 1981) - "Architectural Design with the Physically Disabled User in Mind" at the University of Berkeley.



Lecher, Reinventing Architecture



Wu, "ADA Now"

(1985 - 1987) - Rick Hansen Man in Motion World Tour to raise awareness of the potential of people with disabilities.

(1988) - The Rick Hansen Foundation is founded.

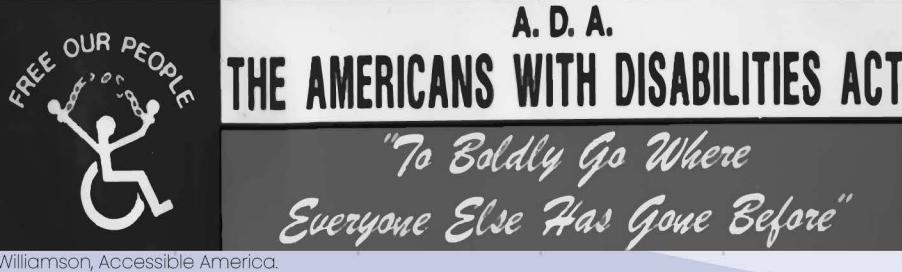
(1990s) - The Ontario Council on Disability (OCD) committee lobbied to advocate for a barrier-free society.



(1990) - Capital Crawl Protest (1990s - 2000s) - "Crip Design" arises from a self-aware disability perspective.

(1990) - CAN/GSA B651 Accessible Design for the Built Environment is standardized.

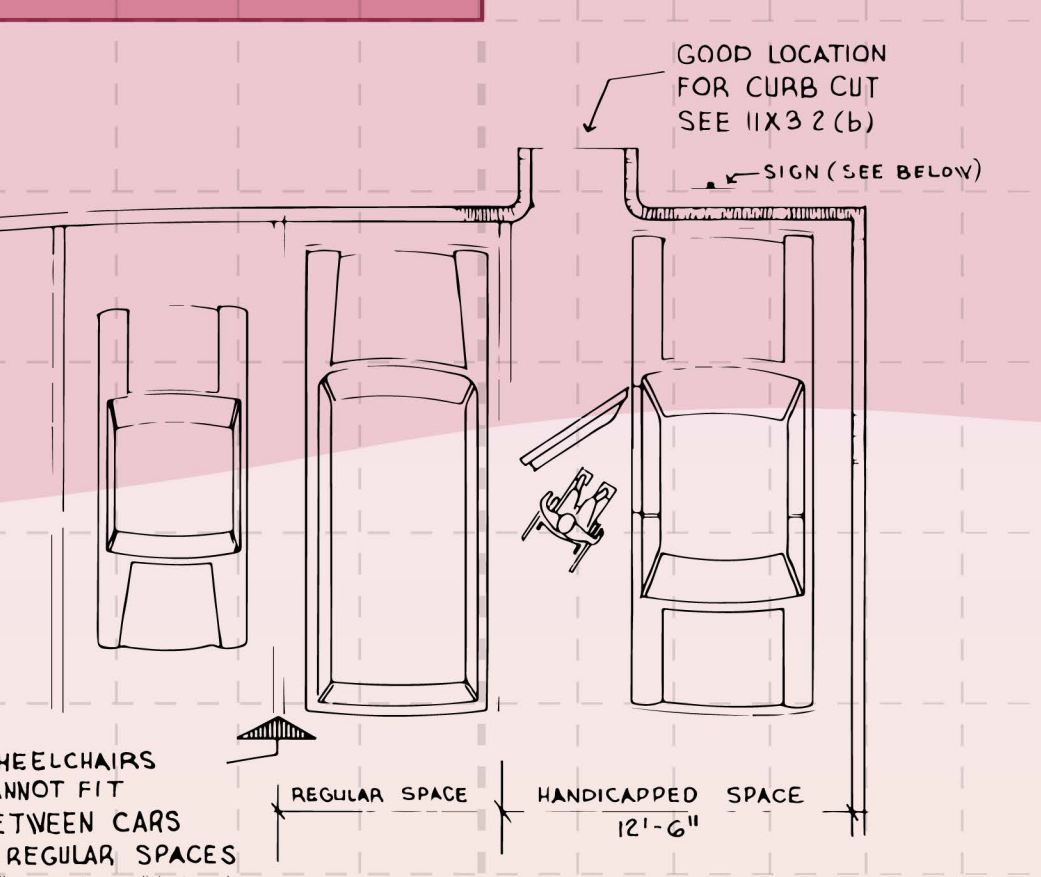
(1990s - 2000s) - The term "Universal Design" begins to lose its association with disability.



(1990) - The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is passed.

(1990) - The effects of the ADA and the challenges of enforcement.

Education on the Disability Experience
There have been several efforts throughout the decades to put in place programs or documents whose goal was to provide education to architects about the Disability Experience, to show why some of these standards are important, how they are used, and who uses them. This includes Ron Mace's *Illustrated Handbook*, Raymond Lifchez's experimental studio, and most recently The Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHAC).



(2017) - The Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification (RHAC) is launched.

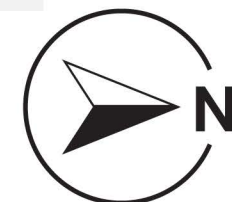
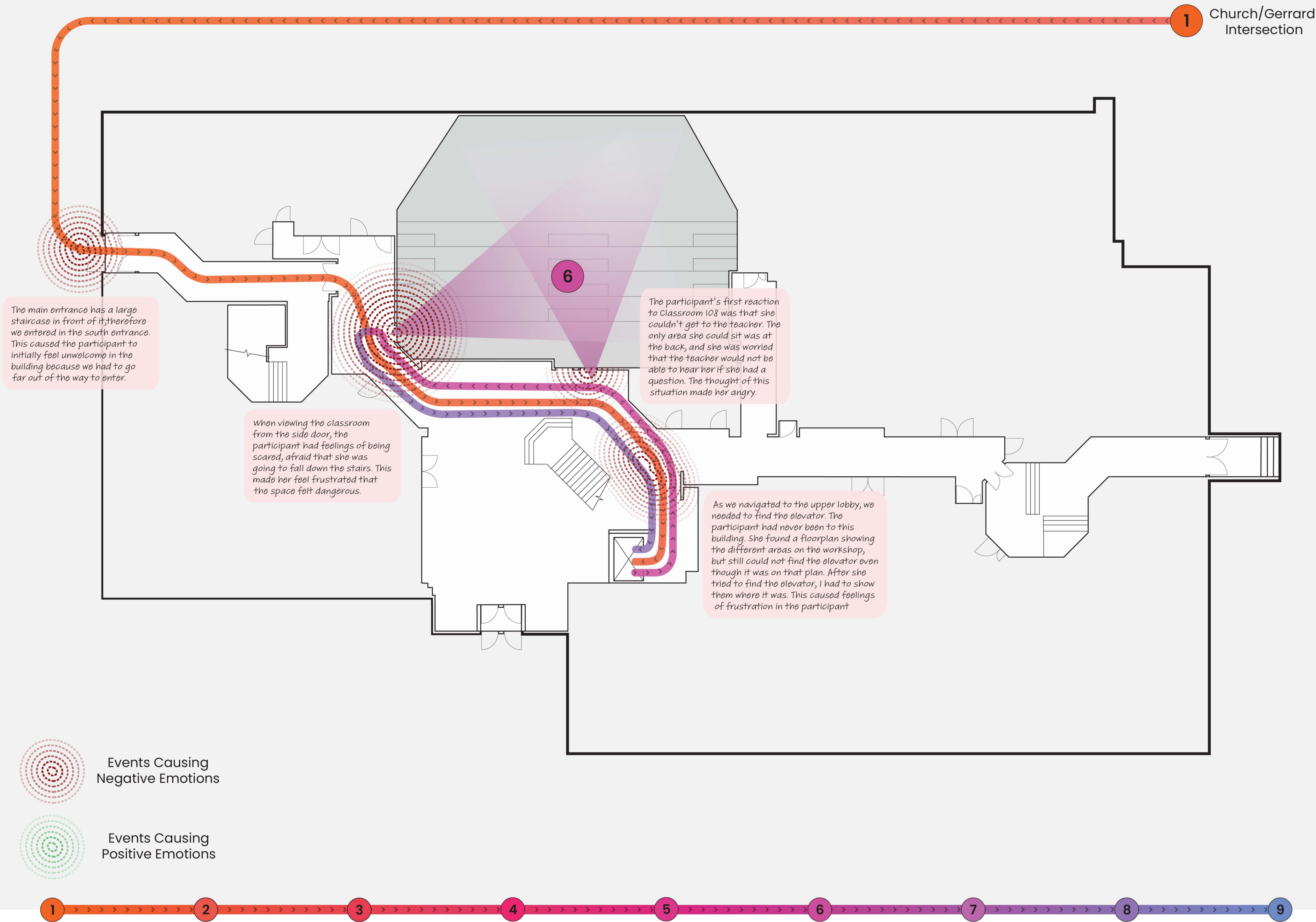


"Get Well Accessibility Certified" Rick Hansen Foundation

(2025) - The deadline to achieve accessibility for Ontarians has passed, and the goals of the AODA have not been fully fulfilled.

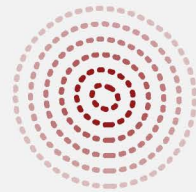
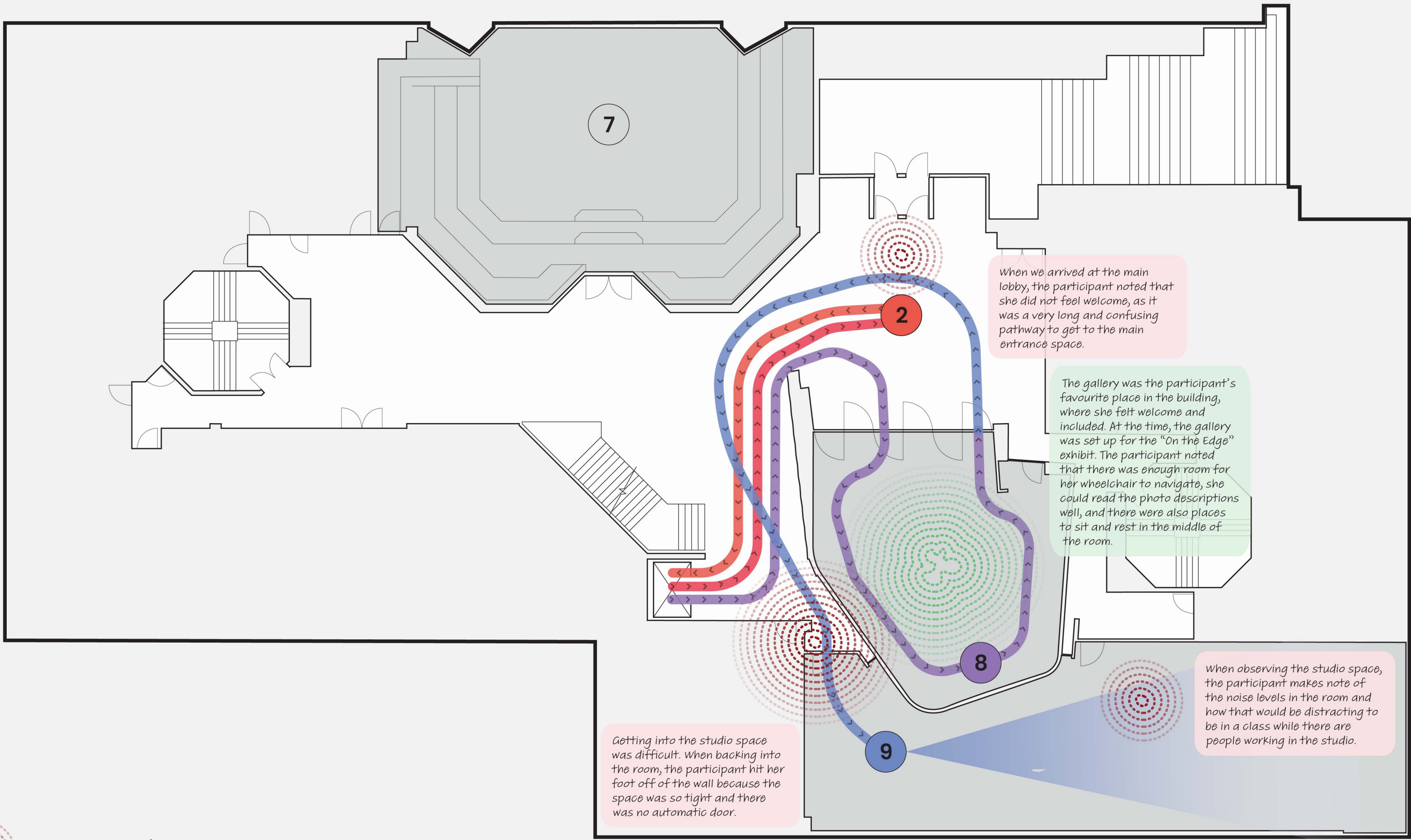
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Participant A

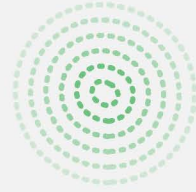


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Participant A



Events Causing Negative Emotions

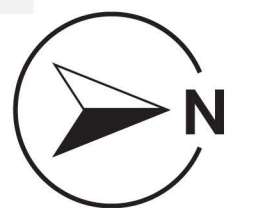
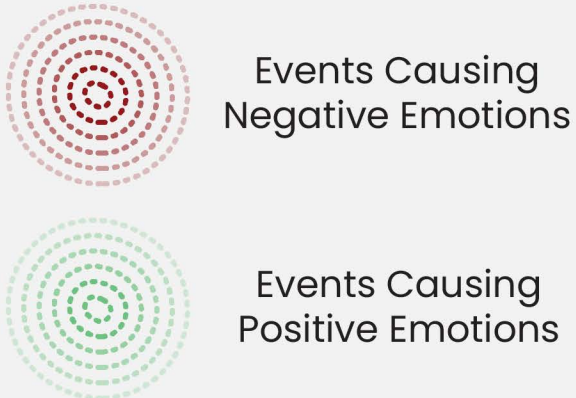
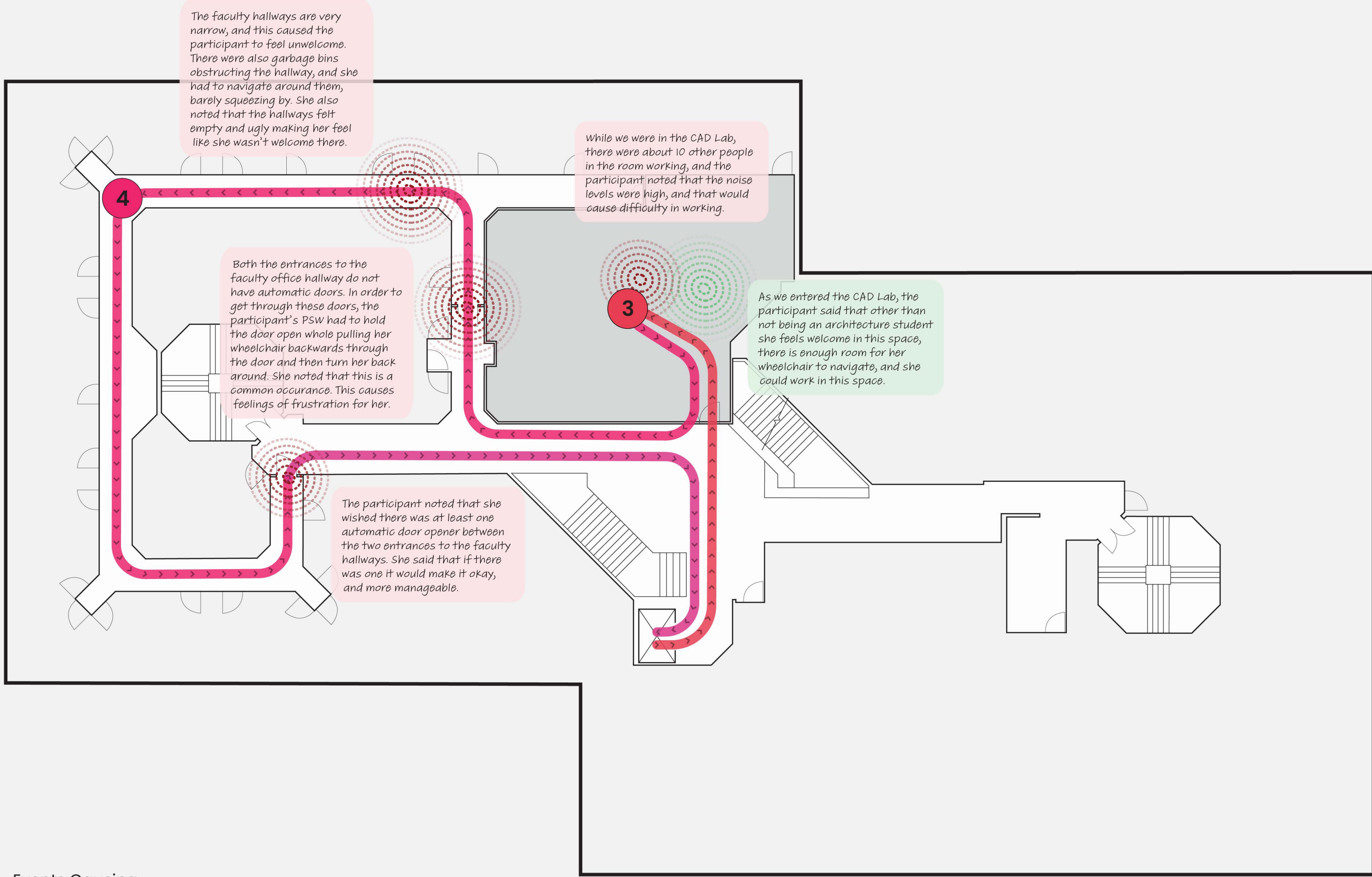


Events Causing Positive Emotions



Architecture Building – Third Floor

Participant A



Architecture Building – Fourth Floor

Participant A

