

ARCE NEW

HEADQUARTERS IN CAIRO



Rendering of the remodelled south facade of ARCE Cairo House showing entrance with canopy, planting, and first floor terrace

In 2022, ARCE acquired the former Canadian Embassy in Cairo, which will serve as its **permanent base of operations in Egypt**. The building, located in Garden City close to ARCE’s existing rented premises, was completed in 2000 and occupied until 2011. It occupies a plot of 1,920 square meters (20,666 square feet) and has

a total built area of **3,500 m²** (37,674 square feet). The design features a basement running beneath the entire building for services/parking, a raised ground floor, and two upper levels. The floors are arranged in two blocks, facing north and south, that are separated by a large, full-height, glazed atrium and a courtyard garden.

Rendering of the reception area with niches containing historic survey equipment used by ARCE expeditions



The style of the building could best be described as “North American Brutalist”. The structure is a concrete frame and slab with grey granite cladding and aluminum frame strip windows. The atrium is framed by a steel space-frame truss to which glazed curtain walls are attached on the east and west sides, and a metal roof is positioned above. Many of the building’s components, including the space frame, were high-quality items imported from Canada. Another advantage of the building’s former use as an Embassy is that it has a dual power supply to minimize disruption from power cuts. One curiosity of the design is that all the air-handling units for air conditioning were located inside the building, rather than on the roof, occupying half of one entire floor.

In late 2023, the **Wassef Design Group**, which had overseen the construction of the building in the 1990s, was appointed as Design Architects and

Project Managers for the conversion to suit ARCE’s requirements. Following a needs assessment undertaken with ARCE staff in Cairo, the design for the new premises took shape. The **library** was a prime concern, and this was placed on the raised ground floor level on the south side, close to the remodeled entrance. This location was chosen to enable easy access for researchers as well as to avoid the need for costly structural modifications, which would likely have been required if the library had been placed on an upper floor. Additional book storage for expansion was also taken into consideration in the new design, as well as a small dedicated Rare Books room with a gas-suppressant fire-fighting system. Above the library two floors of offices, meeting rooms, and storage areas were configured to house existing and future staff as well as more specialist needs such as **archiving and a digital humanities lab**. The first floor also features a planted roof terrace facing the street, providing a benefit to staff.



Rendering of the reading area of the library

The north block of the building accommodates many of the more **public functions** of the building. These include a lecture hall for 75 on the ground floor, with overflow capacity in the atrium for an additional 25 individuals watching a parallel screen. The lecture hall is entered via a foyer suitable for temporary exhibitions. Another lecture hall for 50 is located on the first floor, along with two separate classroom spaces that serve groups of 35 and 25 individuals, respectively. These classroom spaces are primarily intended for capacity-building workshops but may also be used in combination with the larger lecture spaces for parallel

presentations during a multi-panel **conference**. The second floor of the north block, formerly occupied by air-conditioning plant, has been repurposed for new **guest accommodation**: eight generous single rooms and one double room (all with ensuite bathrooms) have been planned here along with a large communal lounge and kitchen for the use of fellows, visitors, and project staff on assignment in Egypt. A small gym is also provided on this floor. Residents will also be able to use the large **roof terrace** above the guest quarters, where they can enjoy the prevailing northerly breeze.



Rendering of the foyer in front of the ground floor lecture hall with capacity to hold temporary exhibitions

Rendering of the atrium showing the proposed timber cladding and traditional wooden elements



The two halves of the building are separated by a **full-height atrium space** ringed by cantilevered galleries at first and second floor levels. Currently, a rather unwelcoming environment with poor acoustics. It is planned to transform the space by introducing wooden lattice screens (mashrabiyya) and slatted timber cladding around the perimeter of the galleries, as well as a wooden floor. These interventions will dramatically improve the acoustics and allow for multiple uses ranging from musical performances to exhibitions. The screen around the atrium is a piece of specialist woodwork whose design and installation have been entrusted to the **Nadim Group**, the leader in traditional woodcraft in Egypt. To the west of the atrium is an **outdoor courtyard**, accessible from the foyer of the lecture hall. With planting and the installation of a possible water feature this area will be transformed into a place to relax. An adjacent kitchen will service receptions that can take place in all the open areas of the ground floor, including the courtyard.

Once a layout had been agreed, it was possible to approach the local authorities and request a permit for internal modifications to the building. This was granted in March 2025. Still to receive are additional permits for the installation of a second lift to serve the north block and modifications to the façade. The latter includes a large area planted with trees and shrubs beside the remodeled entrance.



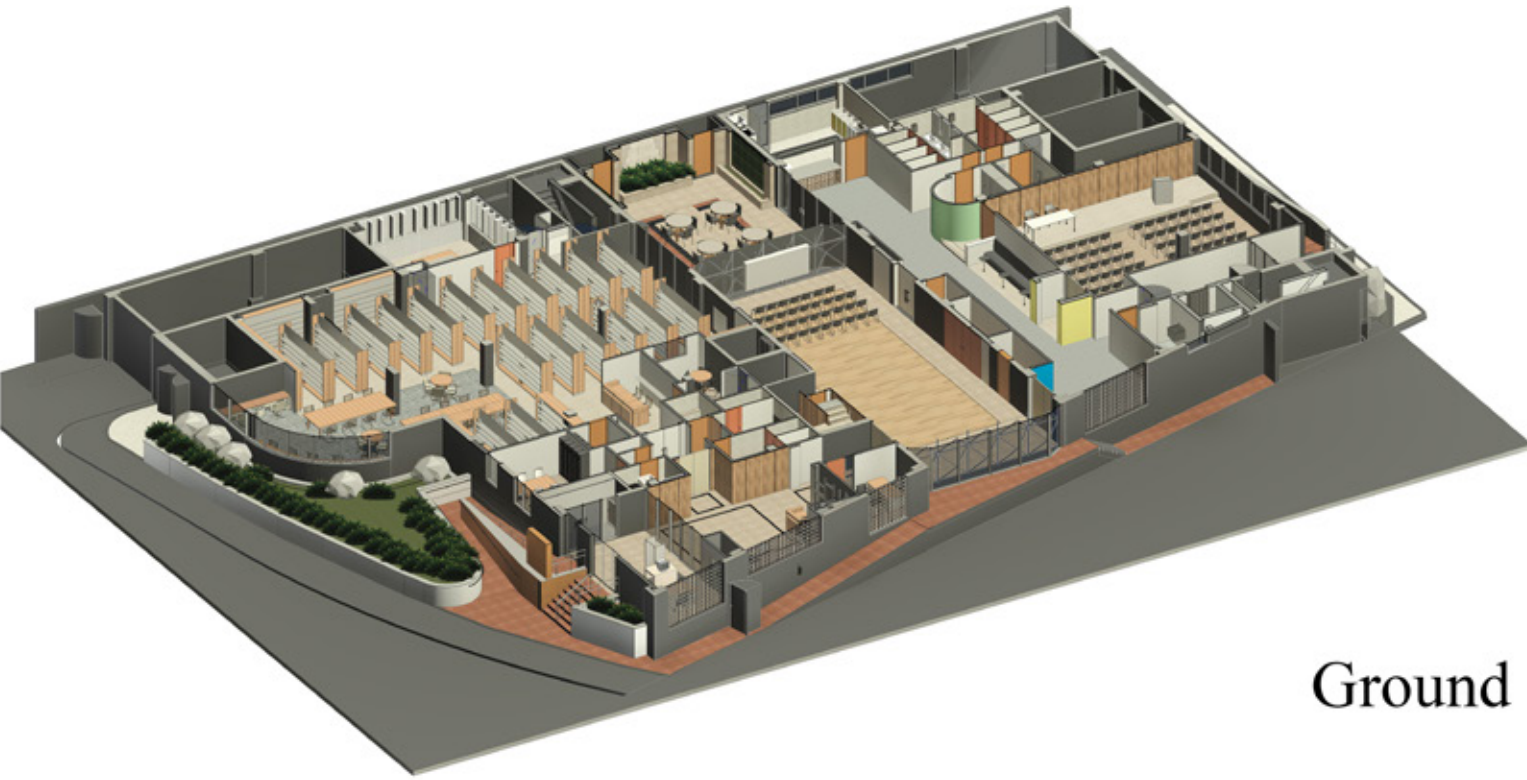
Ground



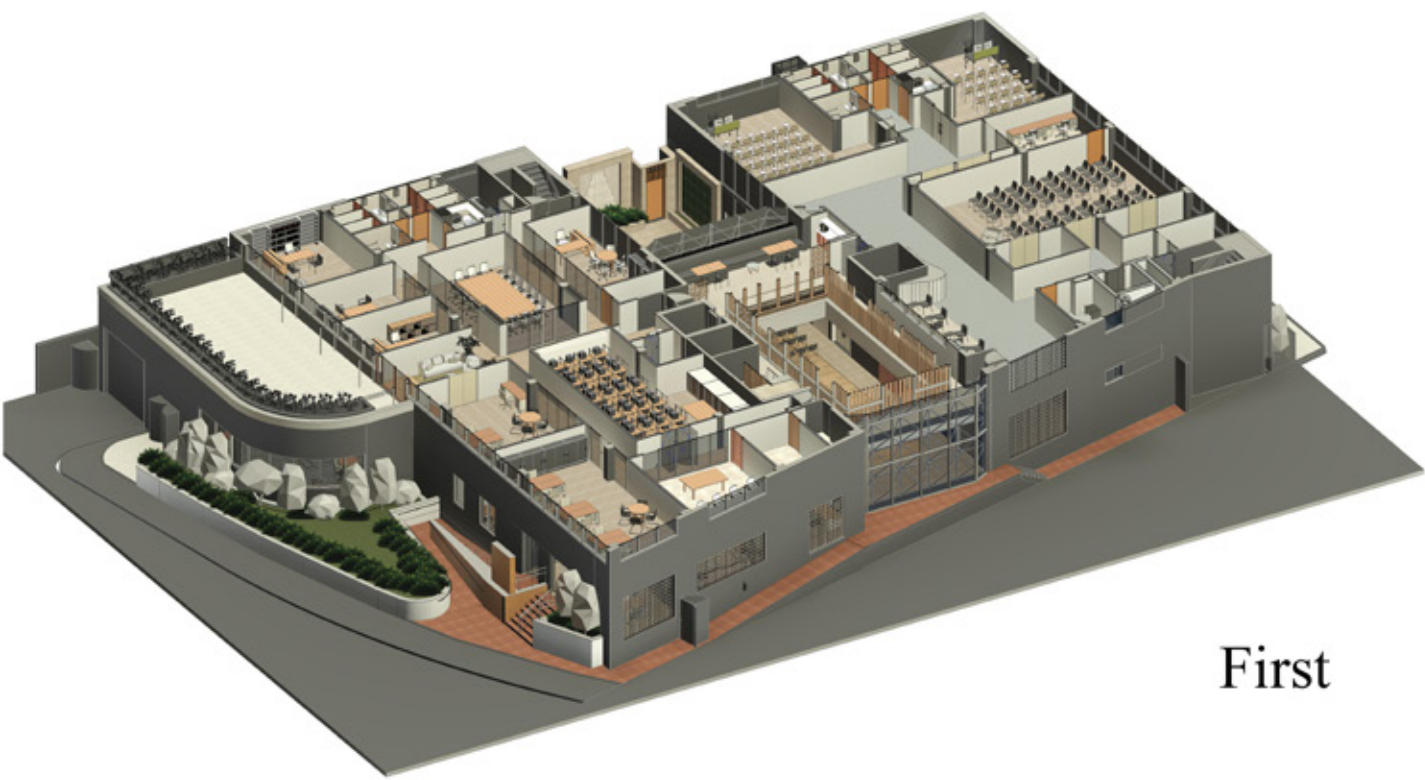
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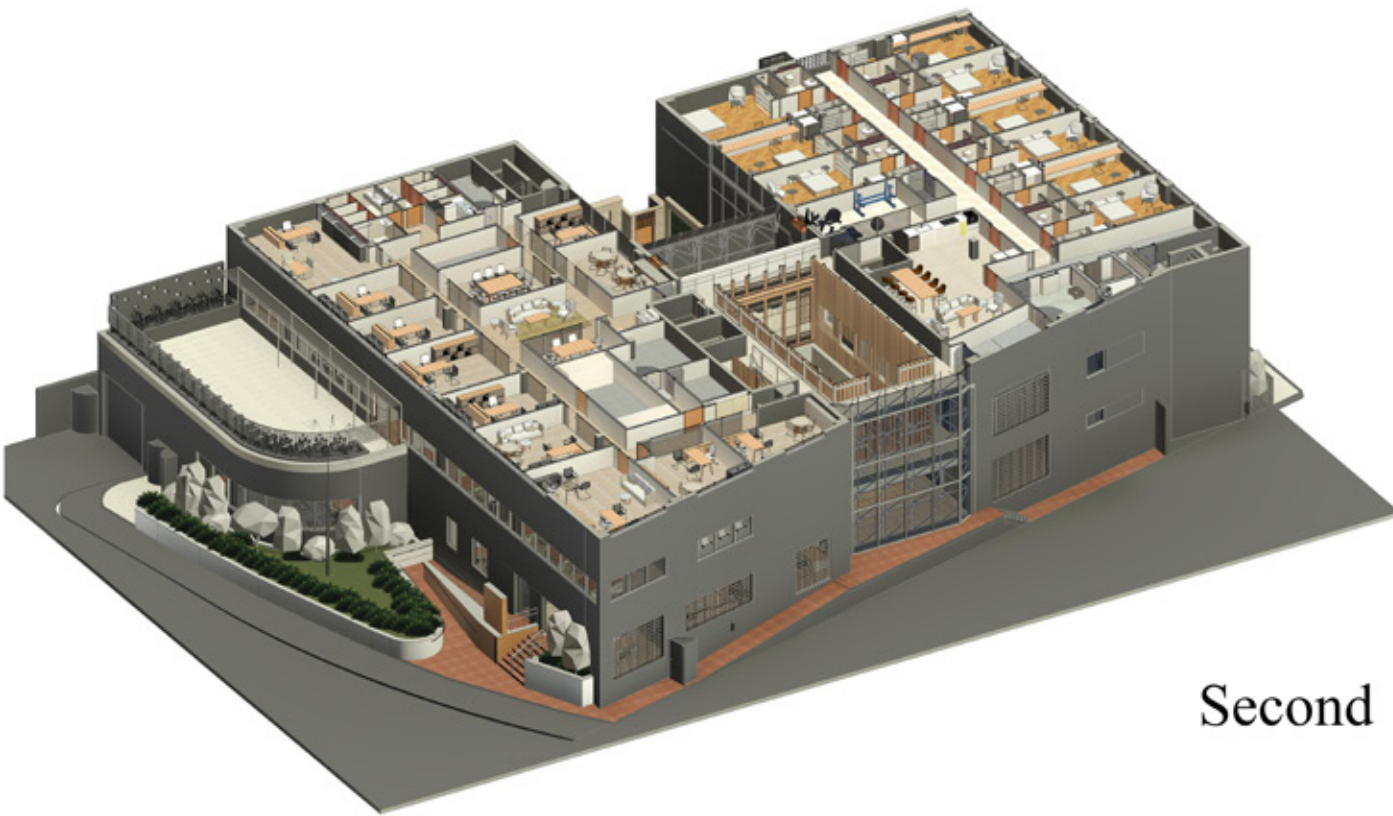
Second



Ground



First



Second

Computer modelling and plans of the new building at ground, first, and second floor levels. The first floor on the north side is designed to accommodate two different configurations.

We look forward to working with our talented team to ensure the delivery of a high-quality new home for ARCE by the end of 2026. All those who are interested in joining the ranks of donors to the project should contact Dr. Melinda Hartwig, Executive Director of ARCE at **mhartwig@arce.org**.



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