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Access (the modern paradox): a student clinic law hub re-scripting the border between institutional infrastructure and the public realm, in Braamfontein, Johannesburg

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Design&Viability:StudentClinic Law Hub

Design and Viability

With a project of this scale on a site with such grand stature such as the University of the Witwatersrand, viability of the project naturally comes into question. The New Wits Law Clinic is not only a new building but an interchange where public and private interests can connect.

Viability

The University of the Witwatersrand is one of the 11 major Universities in South Africa, and is one of the oldest. The Department of Higher Education and Training is currently focussing on the development of two new universities in South Africa but is also involved in the re-development of the current universities in the country – Wits being one of them.



001. The future of Wits imagined by Philip Noyce in The Giver (2014) - modern, slick and elitist.



002. Wits Utopia/dystopia in The Giver (2014).



003. Sol Plaatje - Founding member of the ANC (SAANC)



005. Jacob Zuma - current President of South Africa

The government has highlighted 'post-school education and training' as a vessel for growth in South Africa – not only for learners but for the construction industry, as well as an opportunity to create jobs to boost the economy. The Department of Higher Education and Training declared in 2013 the creation of two new Universities – the University of Mpumalanga and Sol Plaatje University in Kimberly. The projects have been created to service a growing population of school-leavers, as well as to create greater access to tertiary education for South Africa's ever growing population. In July of 2013, President Jacob Zuma stated, in a press conference held in Pretoria, that;

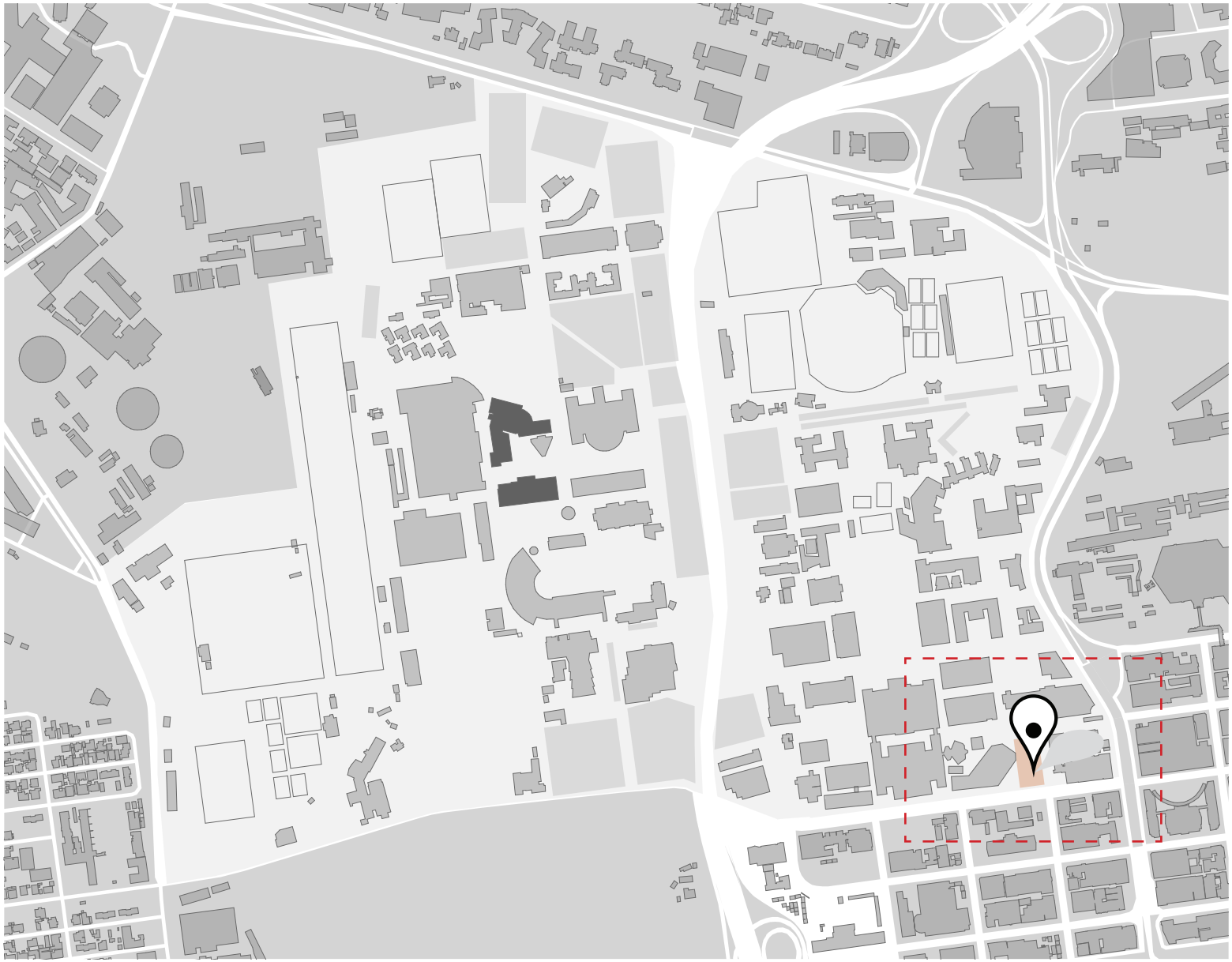
"In the last decade we have witnessed growth of over 50% in the number of enrolments . . . Numbers moved from 603 000 students enrolled in 2001 to 935 000 in 2012."[1]

Interestingly both of these projects – the University of Mpumalanga and Sol Plaatje University – are the first of their

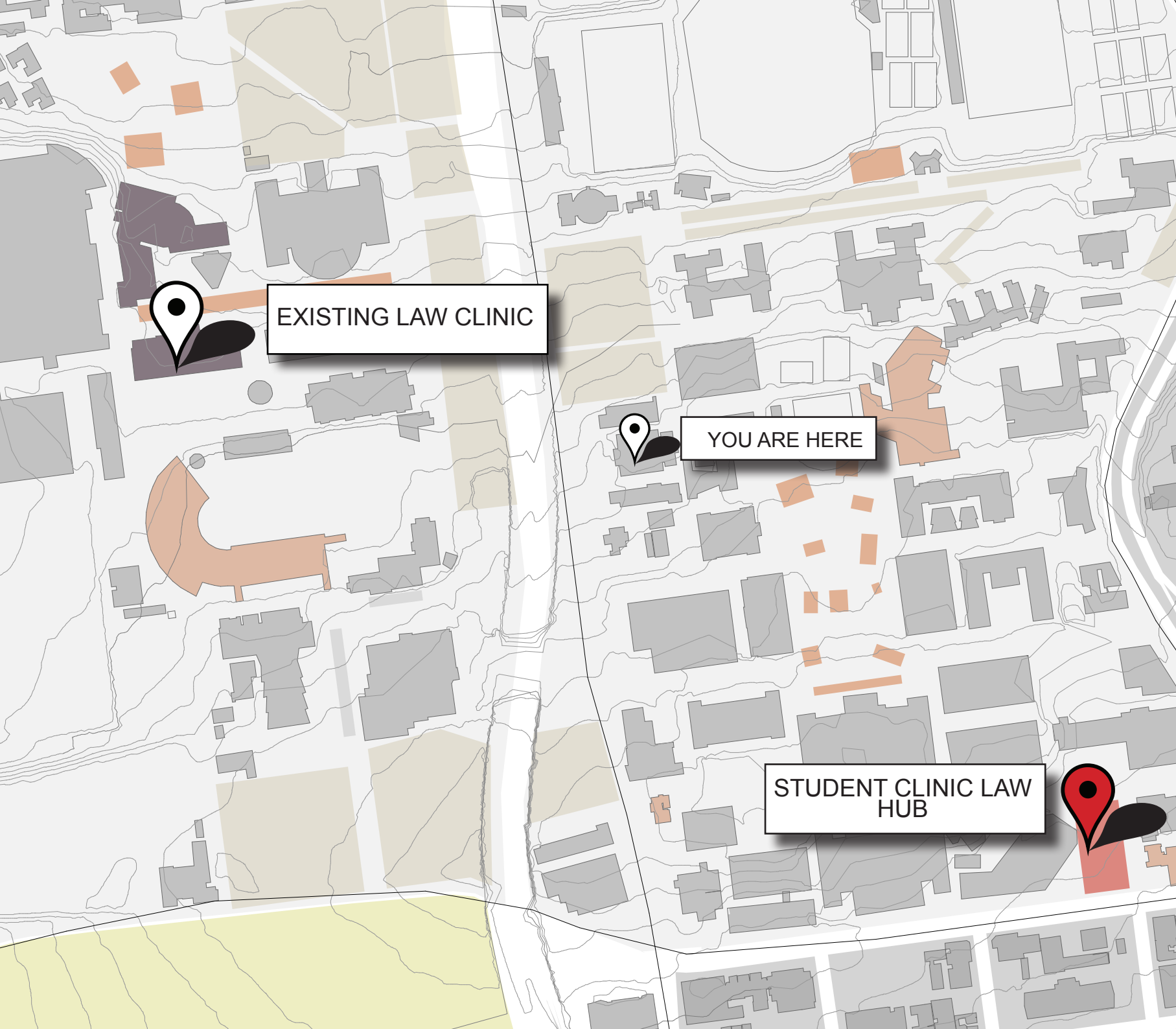
kind in South Africa since South Africa became a democracy. These two new projects offer a greater opportunity to stimulate the economies of the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga, while addressing deficiencies in education in the country. R2 – billion had been set aside in the National Budget set out by Pravin Gordhan, South Africa's Minister of Finance from 2009 – 2014, in September 2012[2] for the construction of the two newly planned universities. Yet why has there not been an attempt to challenge borders around existing Universities?

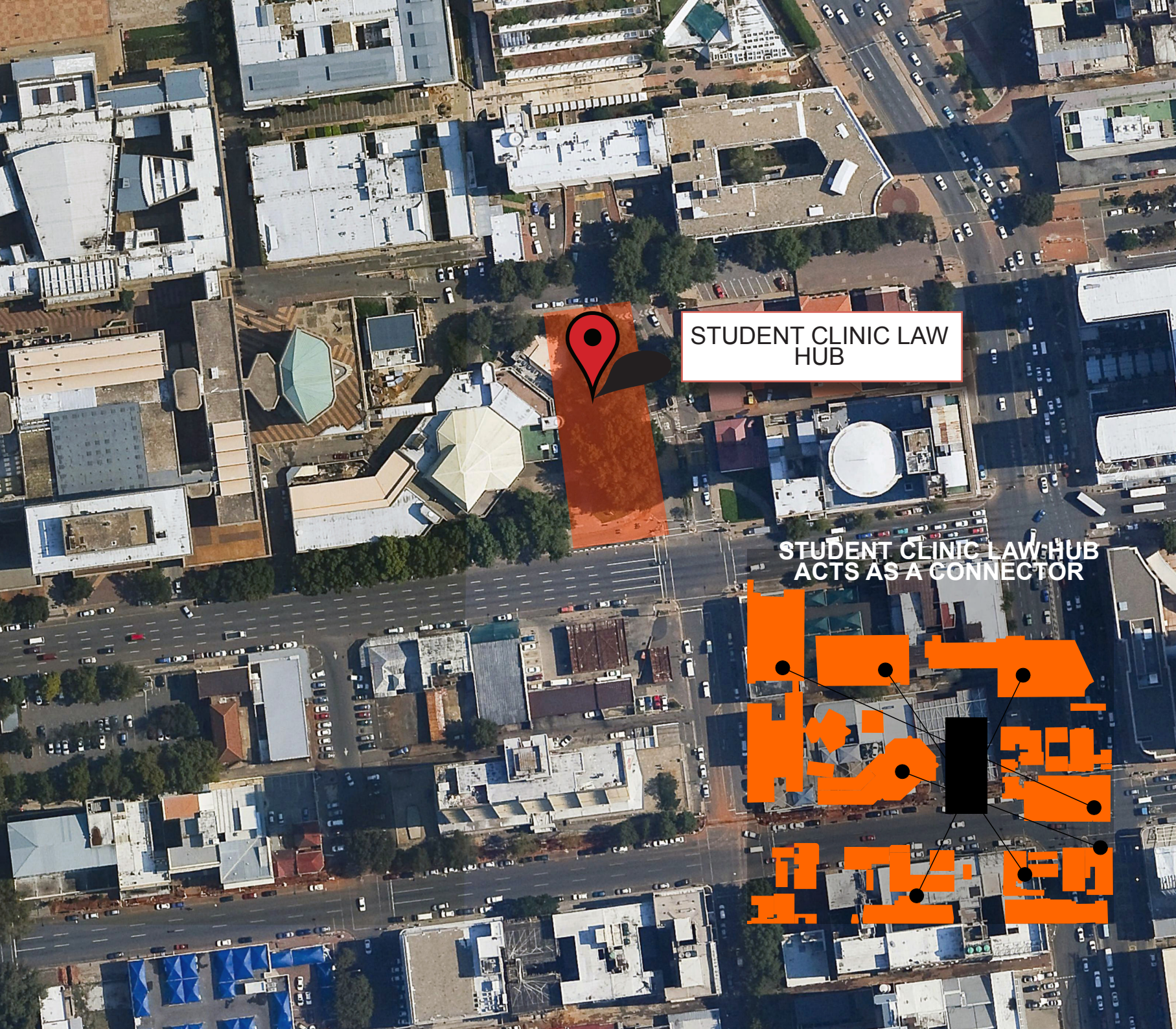


006. Urban Design Framework for the University of the Witwatersrand by Ludwig Hansen Architects and Urban Planners.



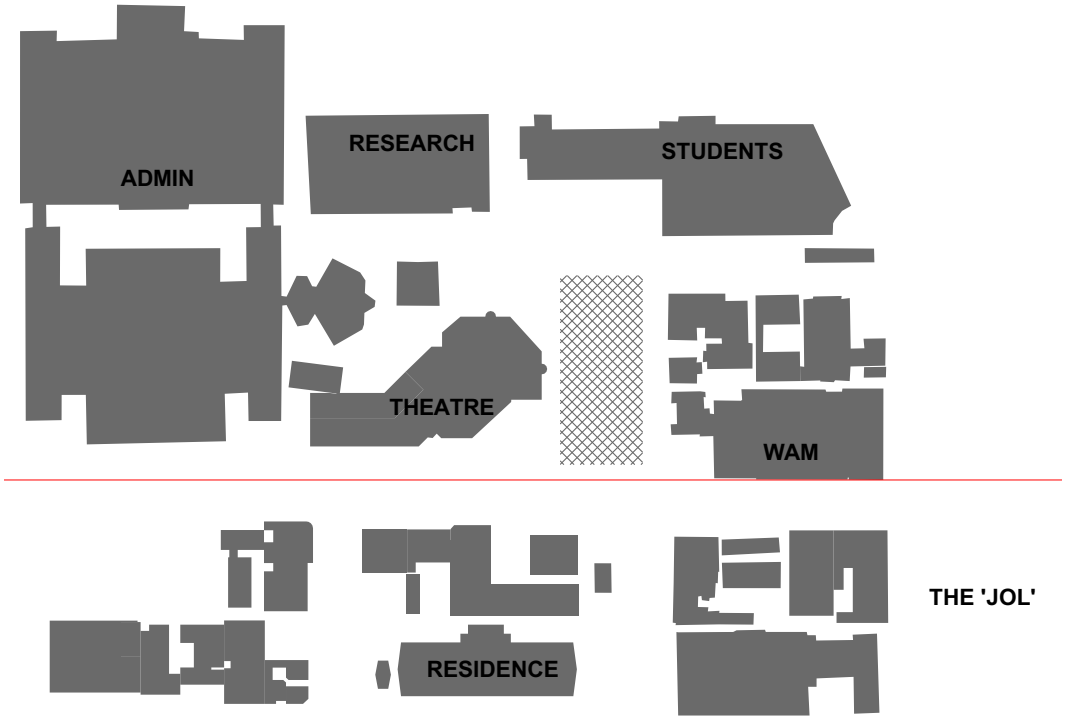
007. WITS's most urban edge allows for ease or access and a greater connection to Braamfontein.


EXISTING LAW CLINIC
YOU ARE HERE
STUDENT CLINIC LAW HUB

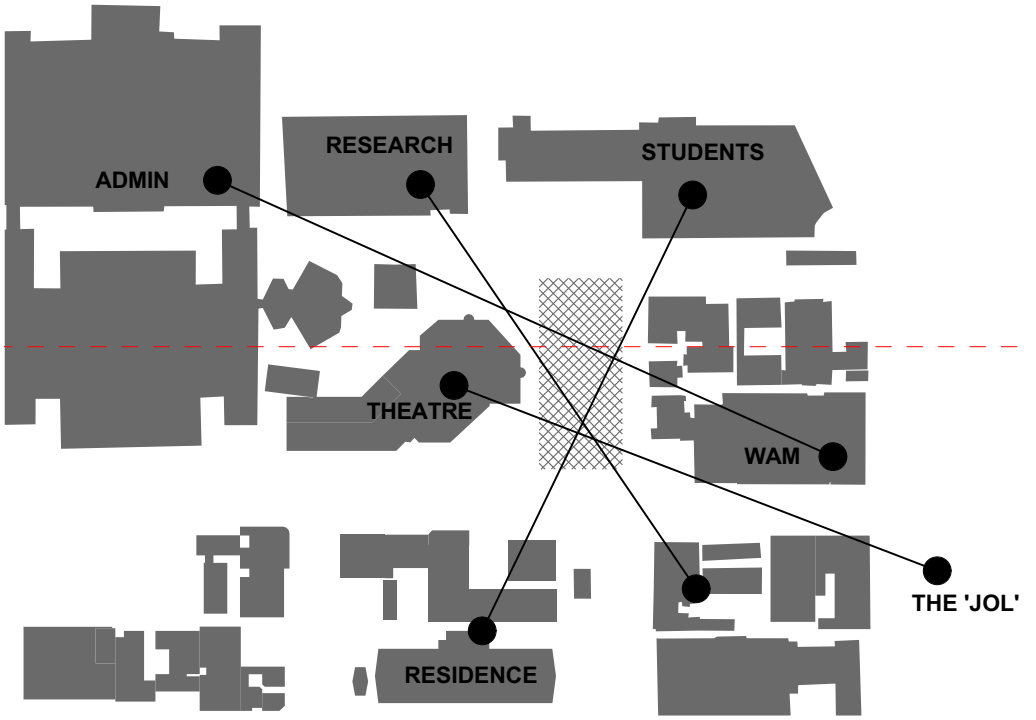

STUDENT CLINIC LAW HUB
STUDENT CLINIC LAW HUB ACTS AS A CONNECTOR

Access:

Wits and Ludwig Hansen Architects and Urban Planners have set an Urban Design Framework to connect all of the Universities satellite campuses in Braamfontein. The University's Medical and Education Campuses are located off-site, as is the Wits business School – all of which are in Parktown. The proposed Technology Precinct on Juta Street is located on an axis south of the Wits Theatre and the proposed site for the Student Clinic Law Hub. Part of the viability in the design is that the building forms part of a route students' can take to the Technology Precinct, if leaving main campus, by foot or by bicycle. The Student Clinic Law Hub acts as a gateway for students as well as potential clients of the Law clinic.



008. Current Condition on Jorissen Street - The Univesity has not connection to the city outside.

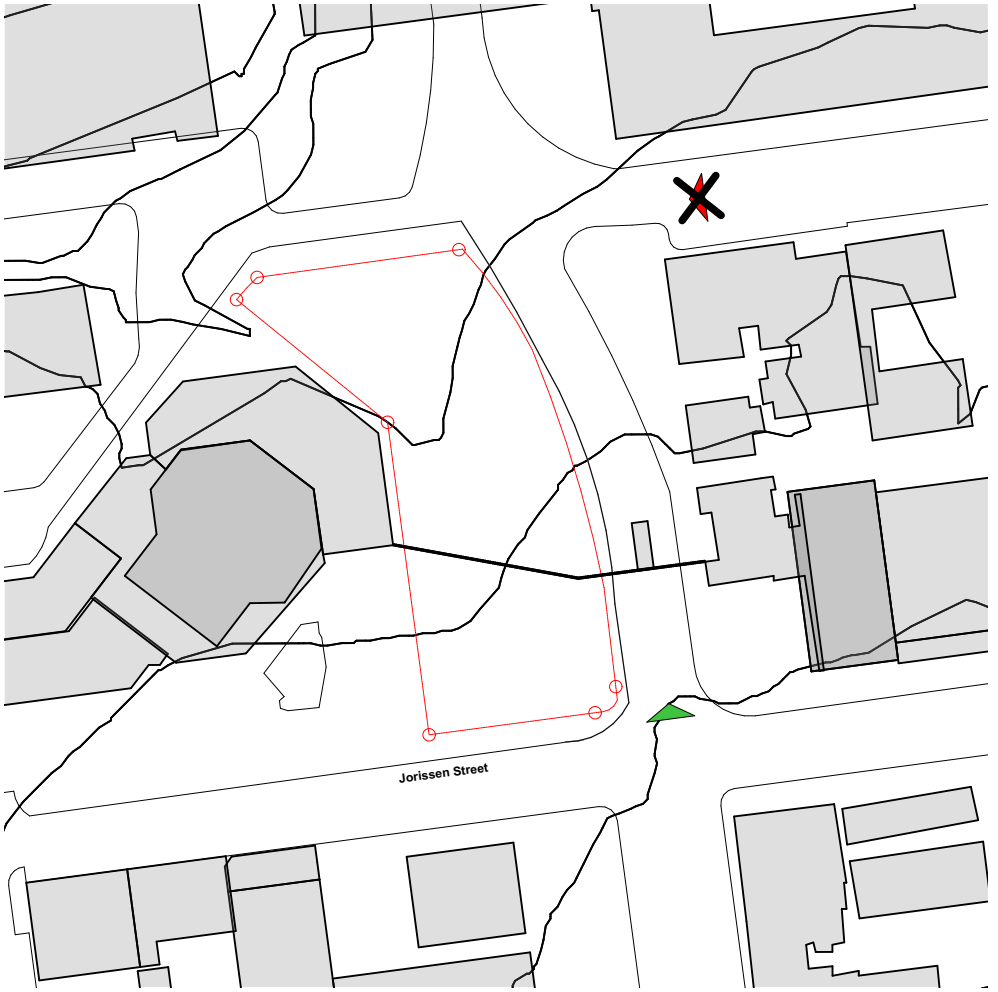


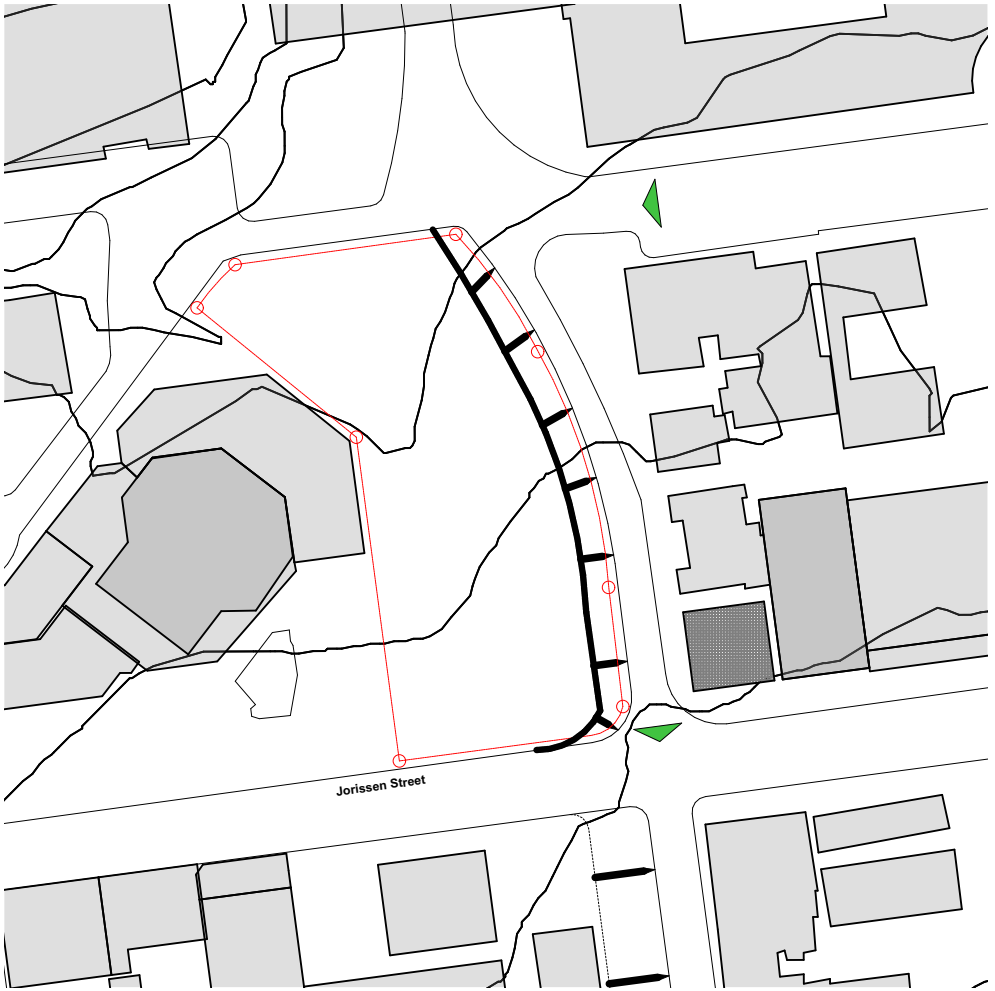
009. The Student Clinic Law Hub becomes a social mixers as well as urban connector.

Viability through Design:

The site currently is a not-so-public space that was initially designed to act as a public space between the existing Wits Theatre and the Nunnery and Brewery (sadly not functioning as a brewery). The space is dominated by a palisade fence that runs from east to west and the entry road off of Jorrisen Street. My proposal is to cut into the street – turning it in to a two lane road rather than four – and return space back to the pedestrian through the creation of cycle lane and greened footpath with ample space to stop and socialise. To amend traffic issues the entrance adjacent to the church will be reinstated. The site itself offers access to the University of the Witwatersrand's most urban and public edge. This allows for ease of access to the clinic and creates a new axis in and out of the University.

The buildings on the edge of Jorissen Street are under used and there is a potential to add both financial value





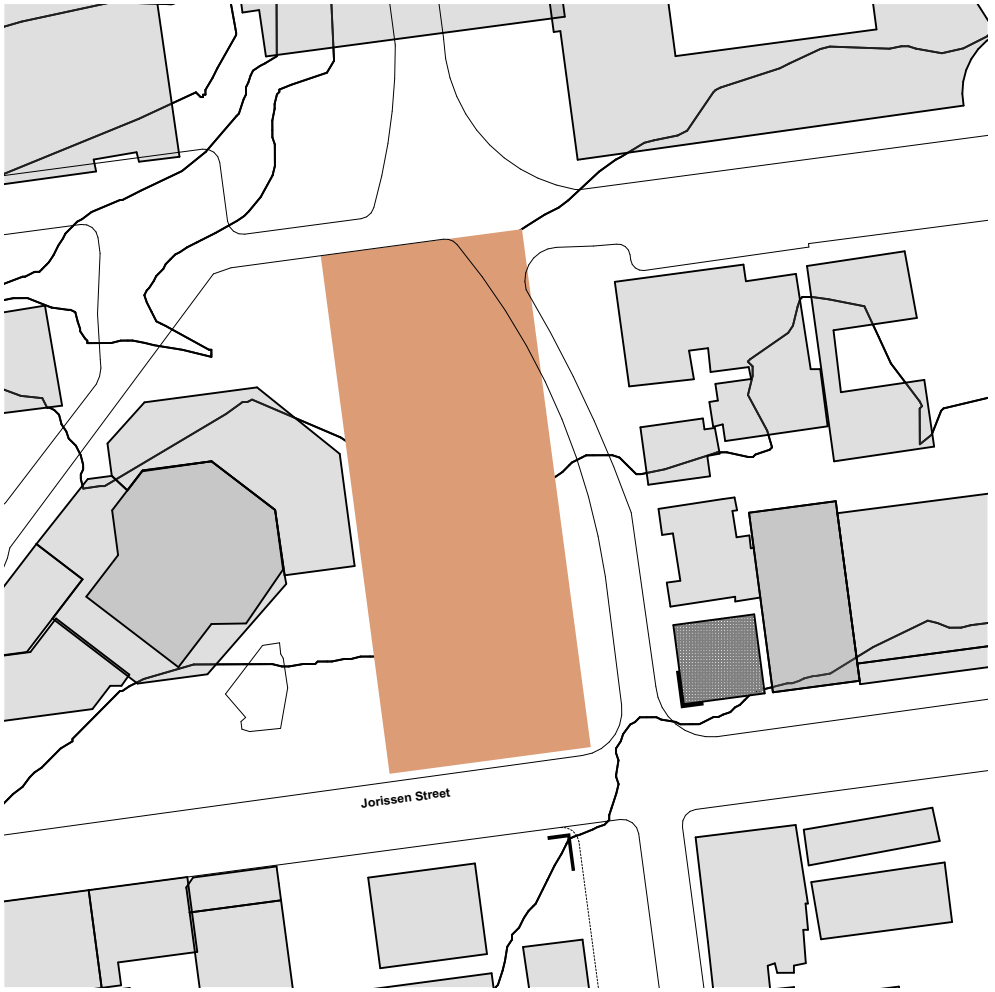
010. (Opposite page):

011 :

and create an enticing public street through adding program to the streets edge. The false logia created by the WITS Theatre could be reinterpreted into shops run by street vendors – like the 1 meter deep shops along Louis Botha Avenue. A bus stop placed in front of the theatre could tie in to the current bus and taxi routes that dominate the flow of Jorissen Street. As mentioned previously the Nunnery and Brewery sit adjacent to the proposed site for the Student Clinic Law Hub and aren't in use. By turning theses buildings in to public and private amenities the street edge could be activated to attract both students of the University and pedestrians.

The building mass responds to the urban edges of the built environment so as not to disrupt the order of the street. The edge that cuts away offers an opening for a public forum adjoining the Student Clinic Law Hub and the Theatre. Unlike the Teatro Groco (precedent study) and spaces of engagement (visual analysis) the forum has a





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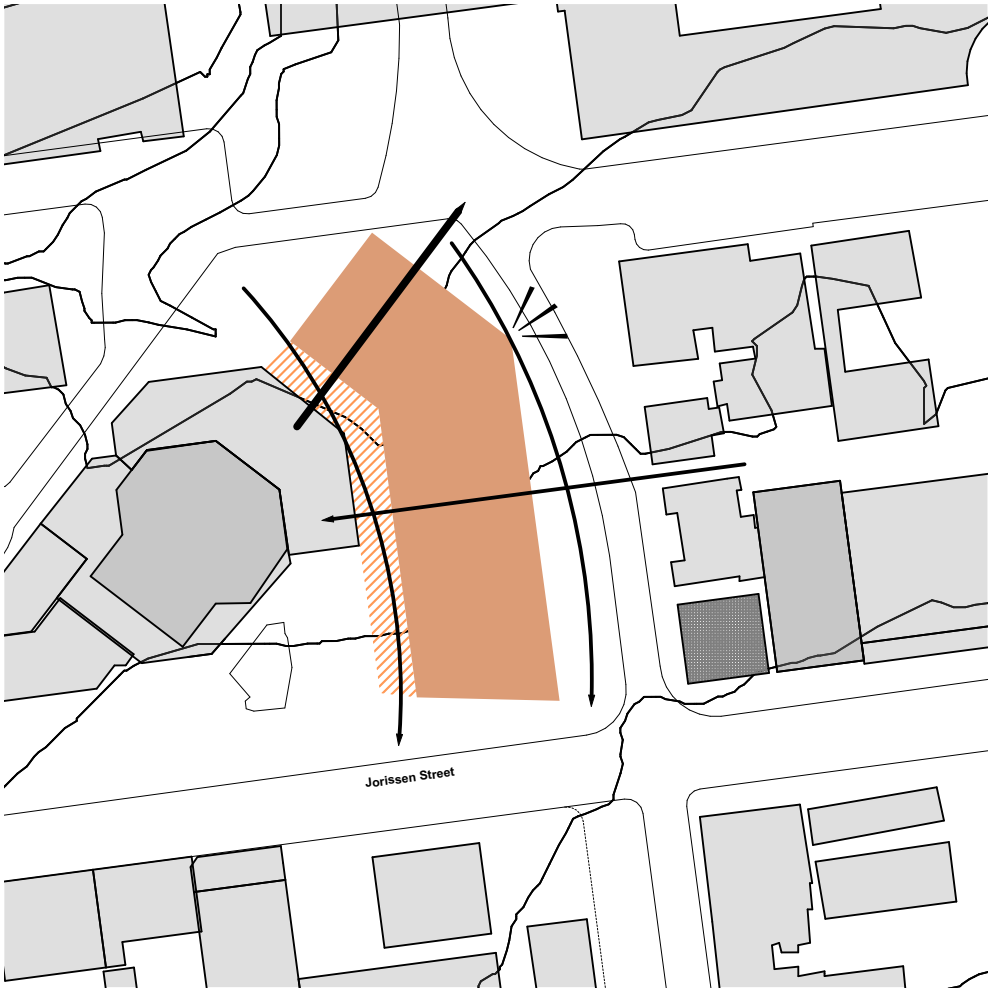
dual purpose, forum and staircase.

By responding to the context the building creates a connection between the Theatre and the Art Faculty, acting as a interface between the two. A direct route between the Theatre and Wits Art gallery cuts through the building allowing for ease of access between the two. An arcade is carved out between the Wits Theatre and the Student Clinic Law Hub to create a breakaway space for both buildings as well as another access route for students to new activities on Jorrisen Street. The built form of the Law Clinic staggers and steps down to allow natural sunlight to flood the arcade so that students and visitors, of the clinic and theatre, alike can enjoy a place to relax and interact. The arcade also offers the Student Clinic Law Hub two entrances, one perpendicular to the street and slightly more open to public display.

By pulling the building in, in places and pushing out in others different forms of public forum are created. The previ-





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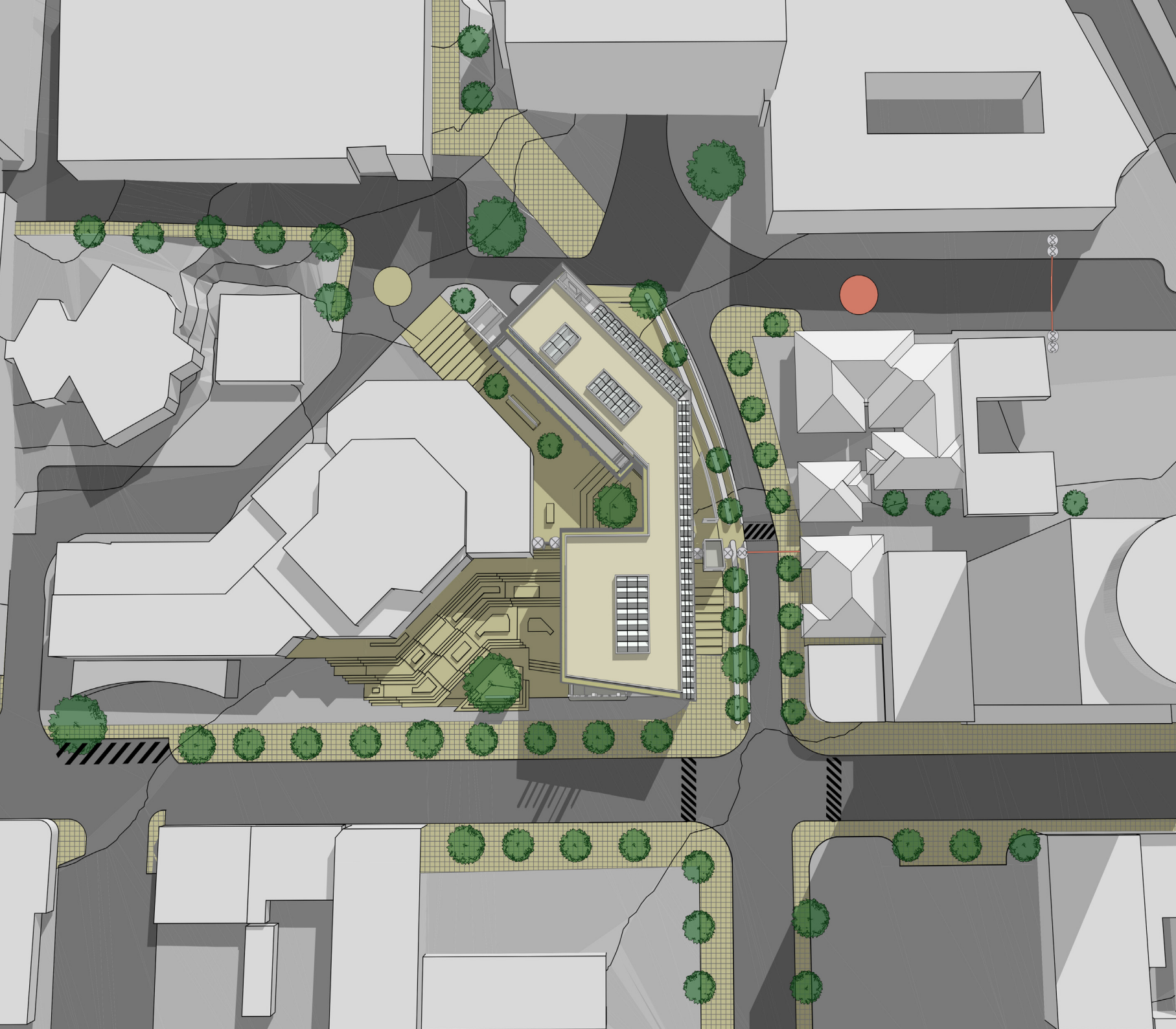
ously mentioned street forum services both the Law Clinic and theatre while an open courtyard tucked in to the "elbow" created by the building mass offers a dwell area for users of both the clinic and theatre, but allows people a view to actual justice taking place. Another forum is created north of the building mass, facing in to the building. Public forums offer the opportunity for chance interactions as well as protest, street theatre, avant-garde art and public play.





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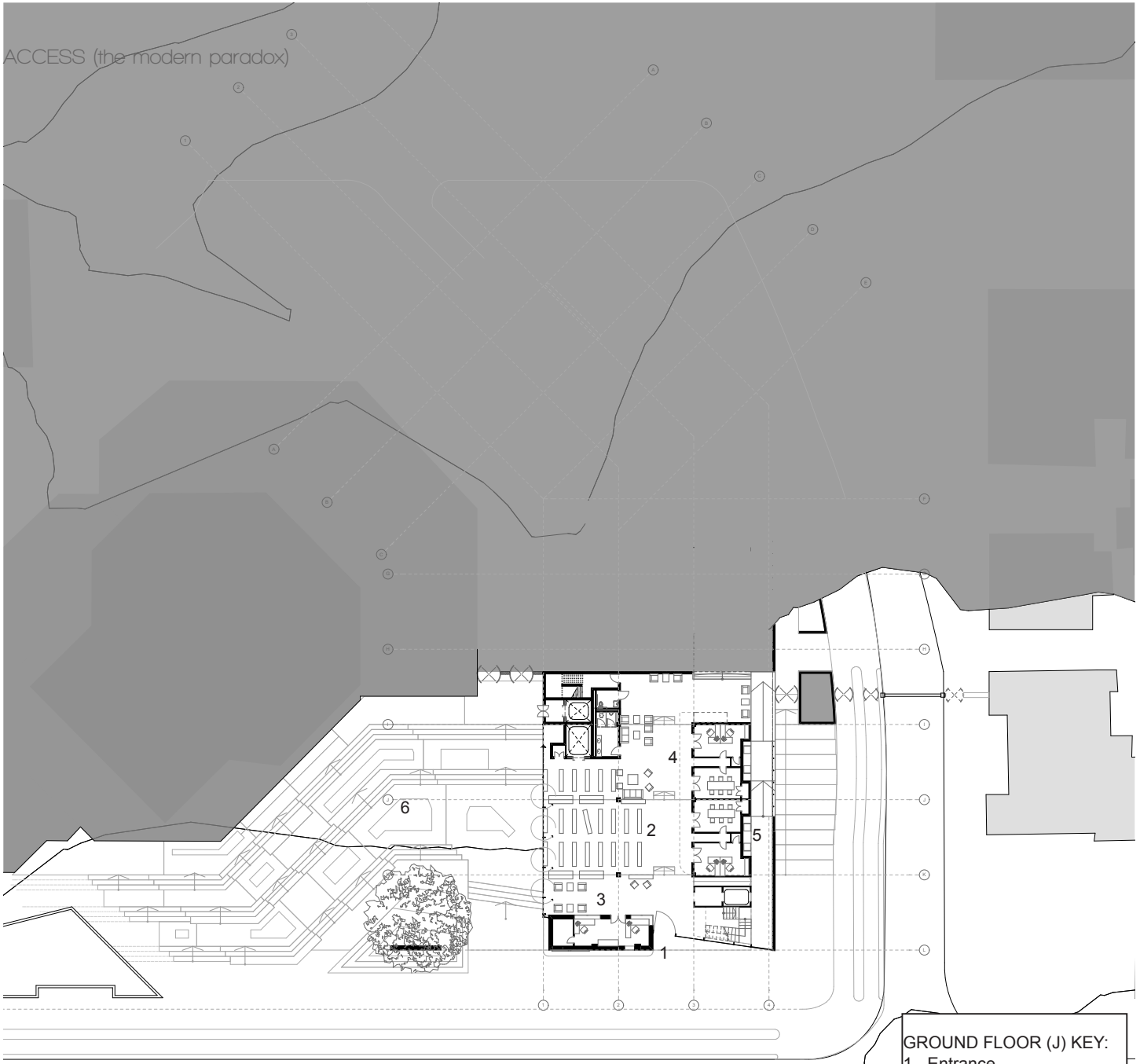

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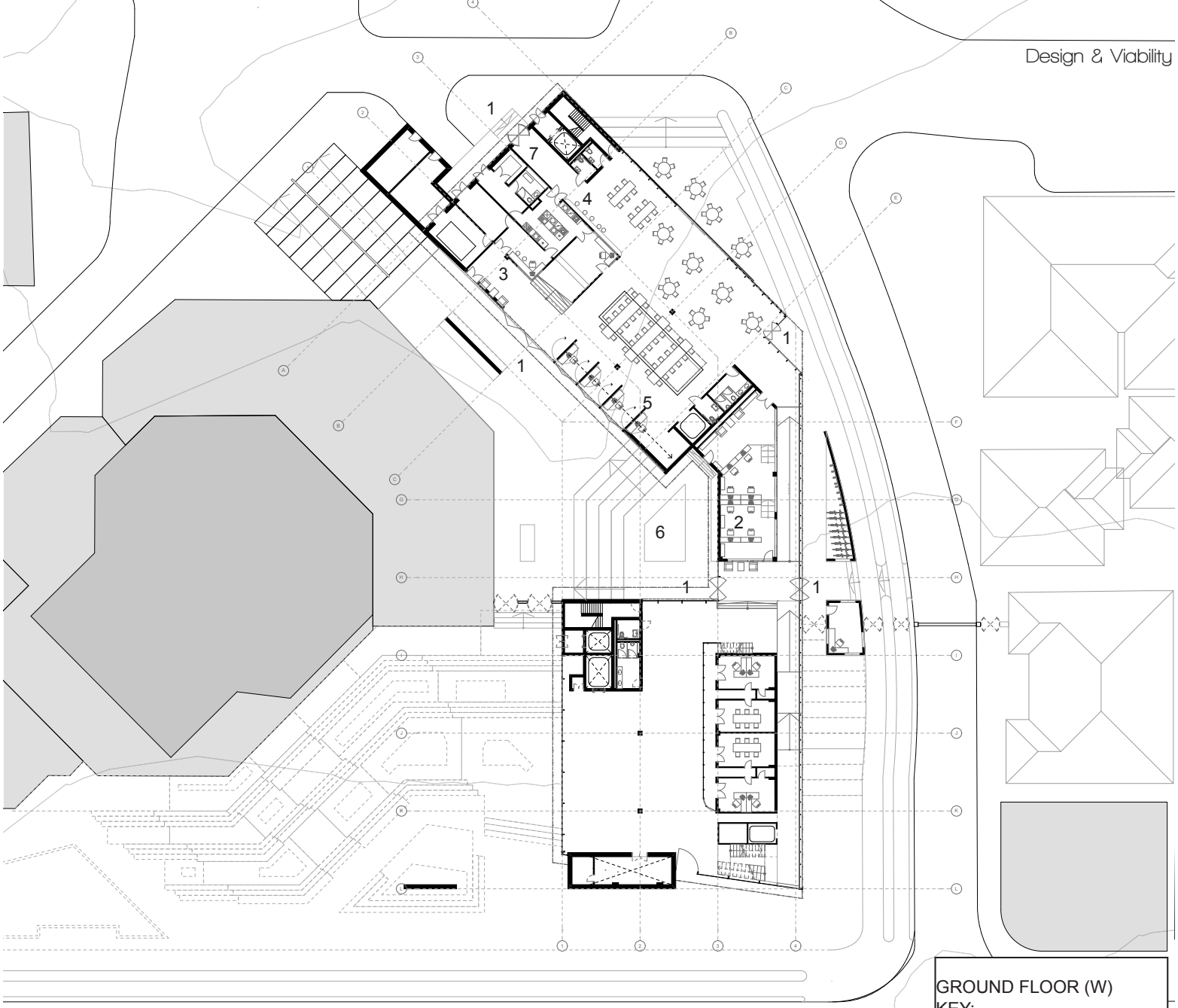
ground floor plan (Jorissen)
1:200

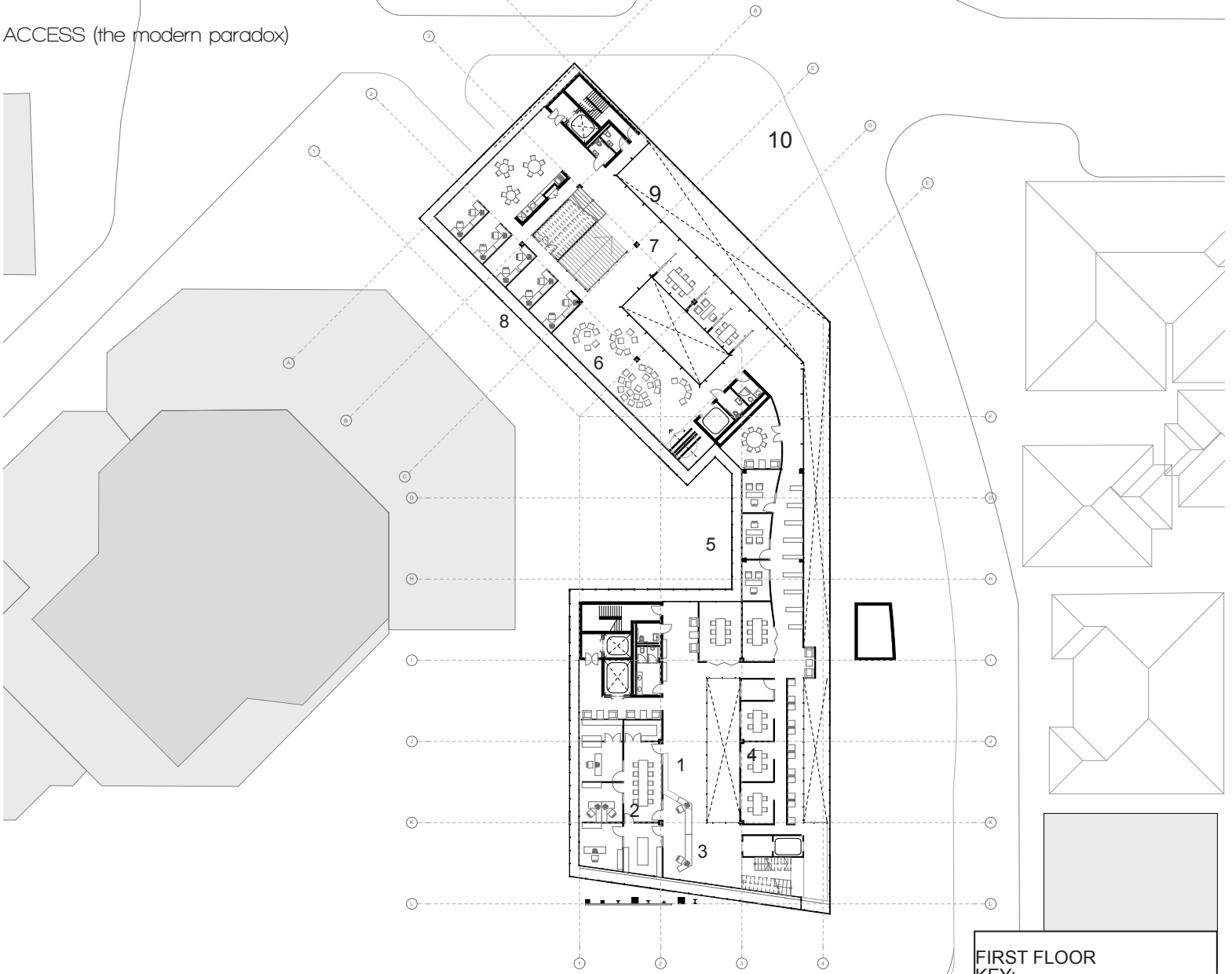
GROUND FLOOR (J) KEY:
1 - Entrance
2 - Precedent Library
3 - Reception
4 - Private Reading Rooms
5 - Discussion Nook/ Gallery
6 - Public Forum



GROUND FLOOR (W)
KEY:
1 - Entrance
2 - Digital Library
3 - Reception
4 - Restaurant
5 - Tactile Work Area
6 - Public Forum
7 - Building Services

N

ground floor plan (WITS)
1:200



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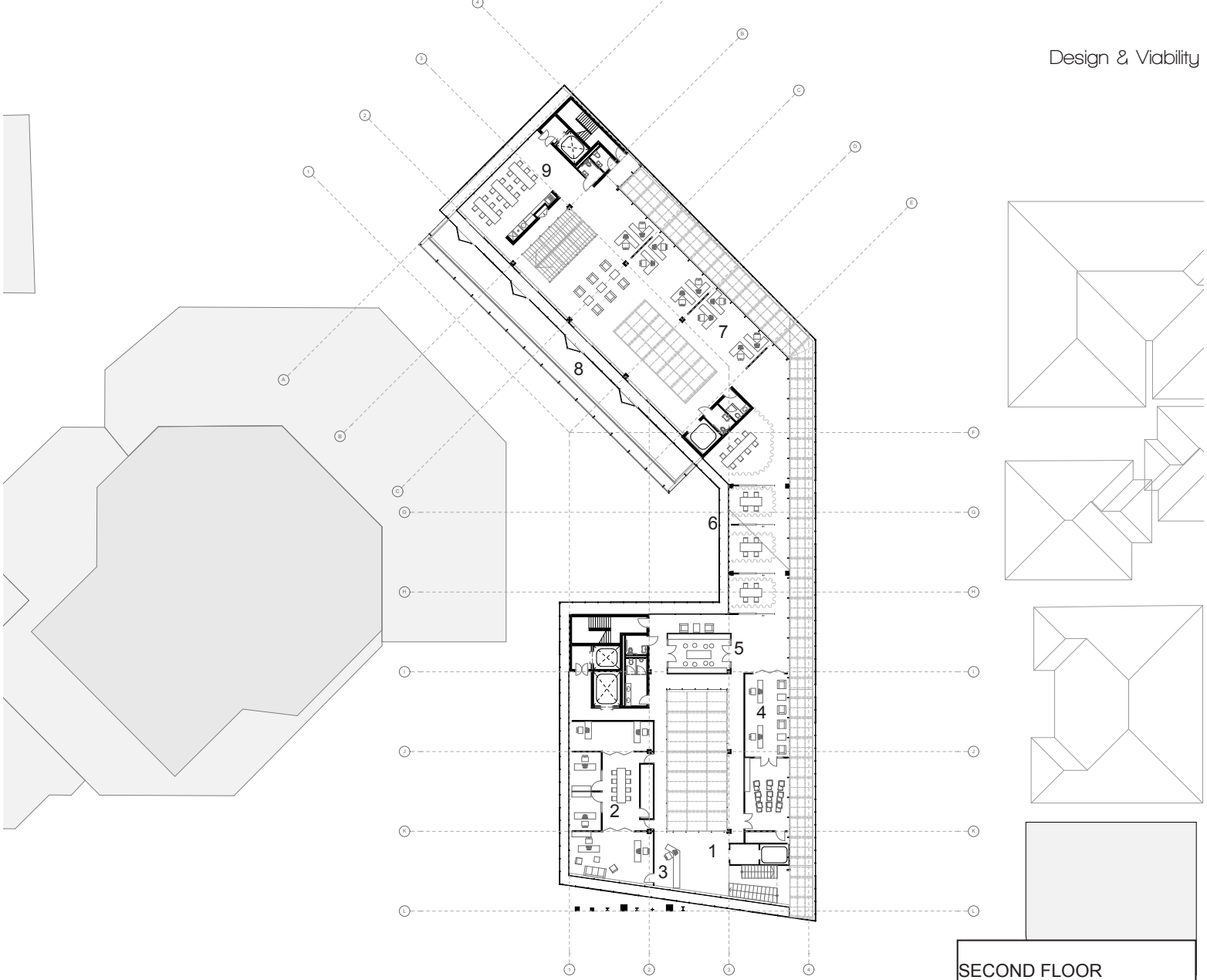
first floor plan
1:200

FIRST FLOOR
KEY:
1 - Waiting
2 - Law Clinic Admin
3 - Reception
4 - 'Means Test'
5 - Listen
6 - Public Forum
7 - Question
8 - Work Unit
9 - Open Kitchen
10 - Service Core



5.020

SECOND FLOOR
KEY:
1 - Waiting
2 - Lecturer Offices
3 - Reception
4 - Candidate Offices
5 - Open Storage
6 - Discussion Spaces
7 - Open Plan Office
8 - Balcony
9 - Open Kitchen

N

second floor plan
1:200

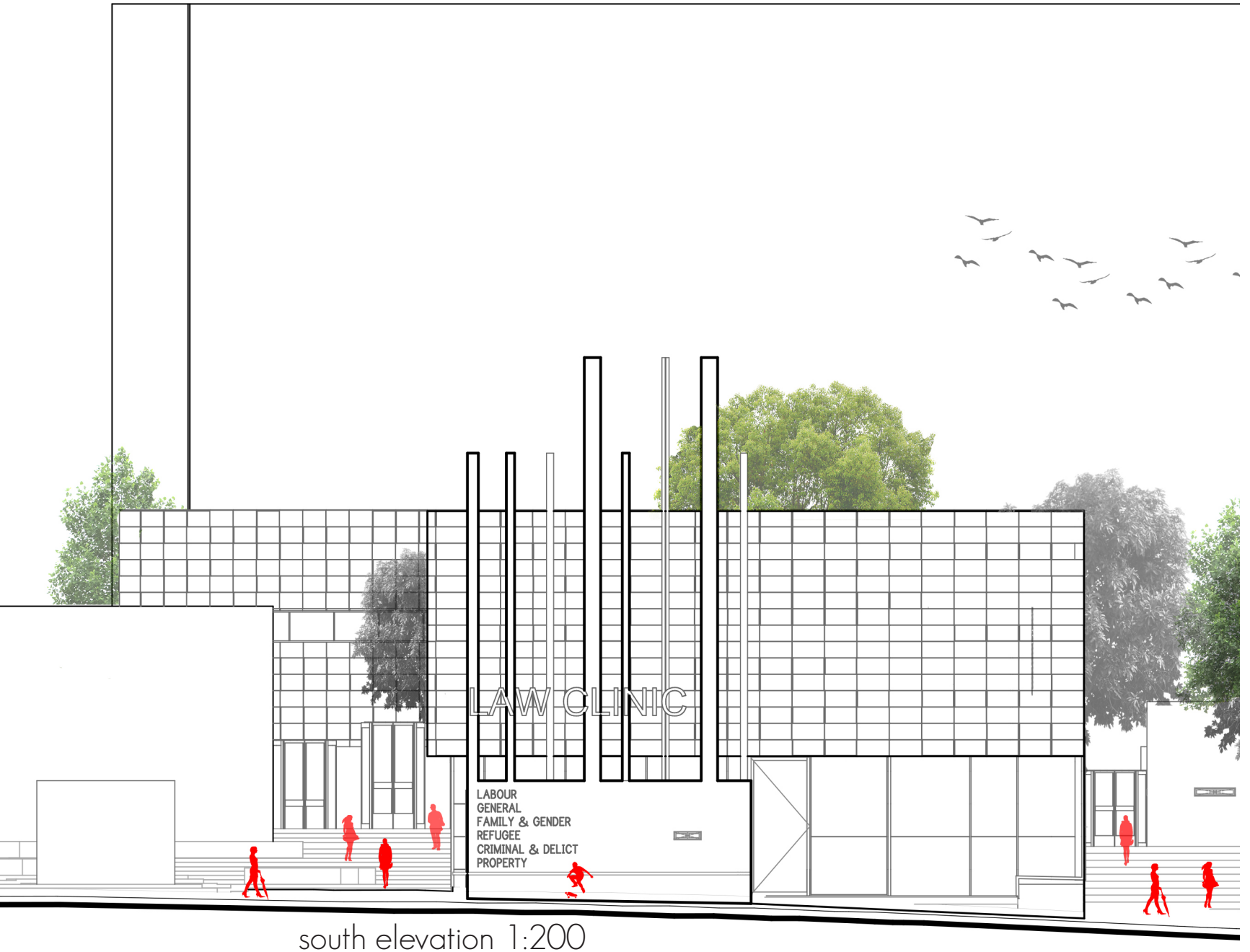


5.021

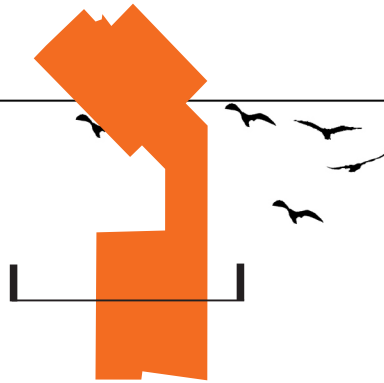


5.022

CAFÉ BECOMES A PLACE TO MEET



south elevation 1:200





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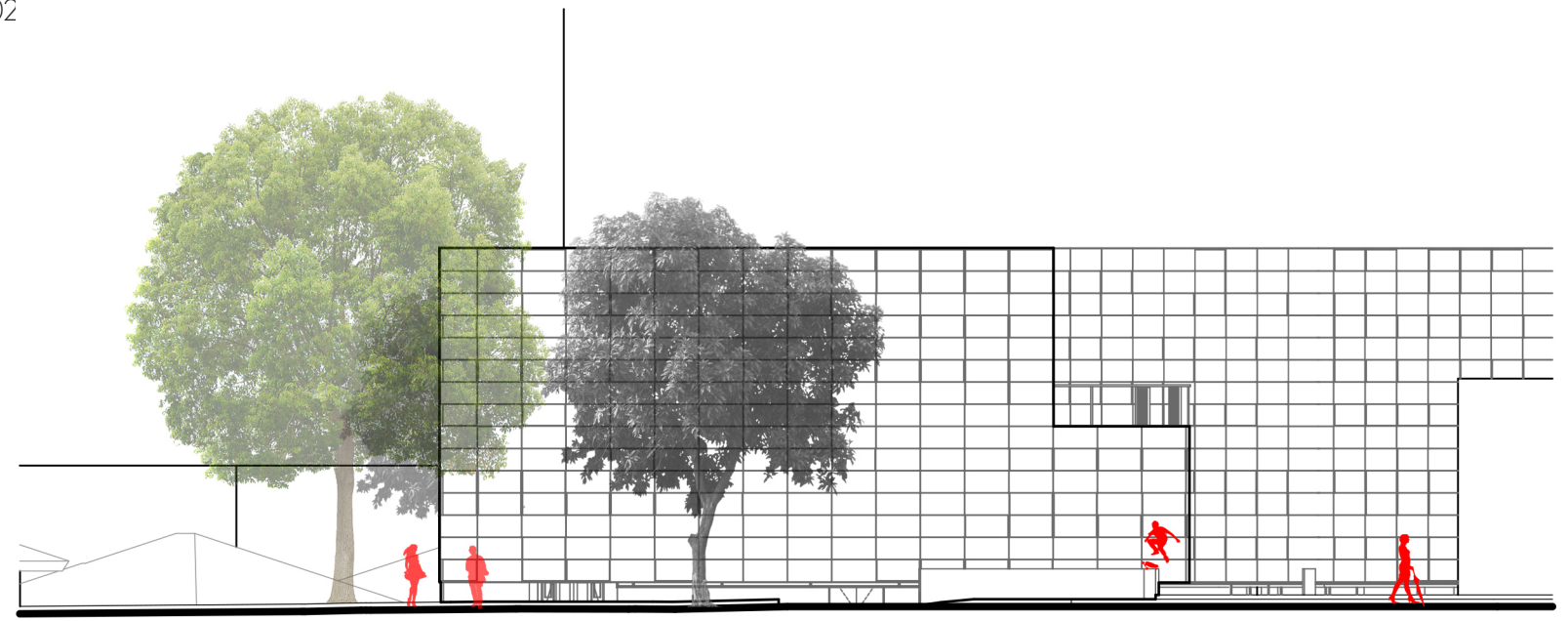
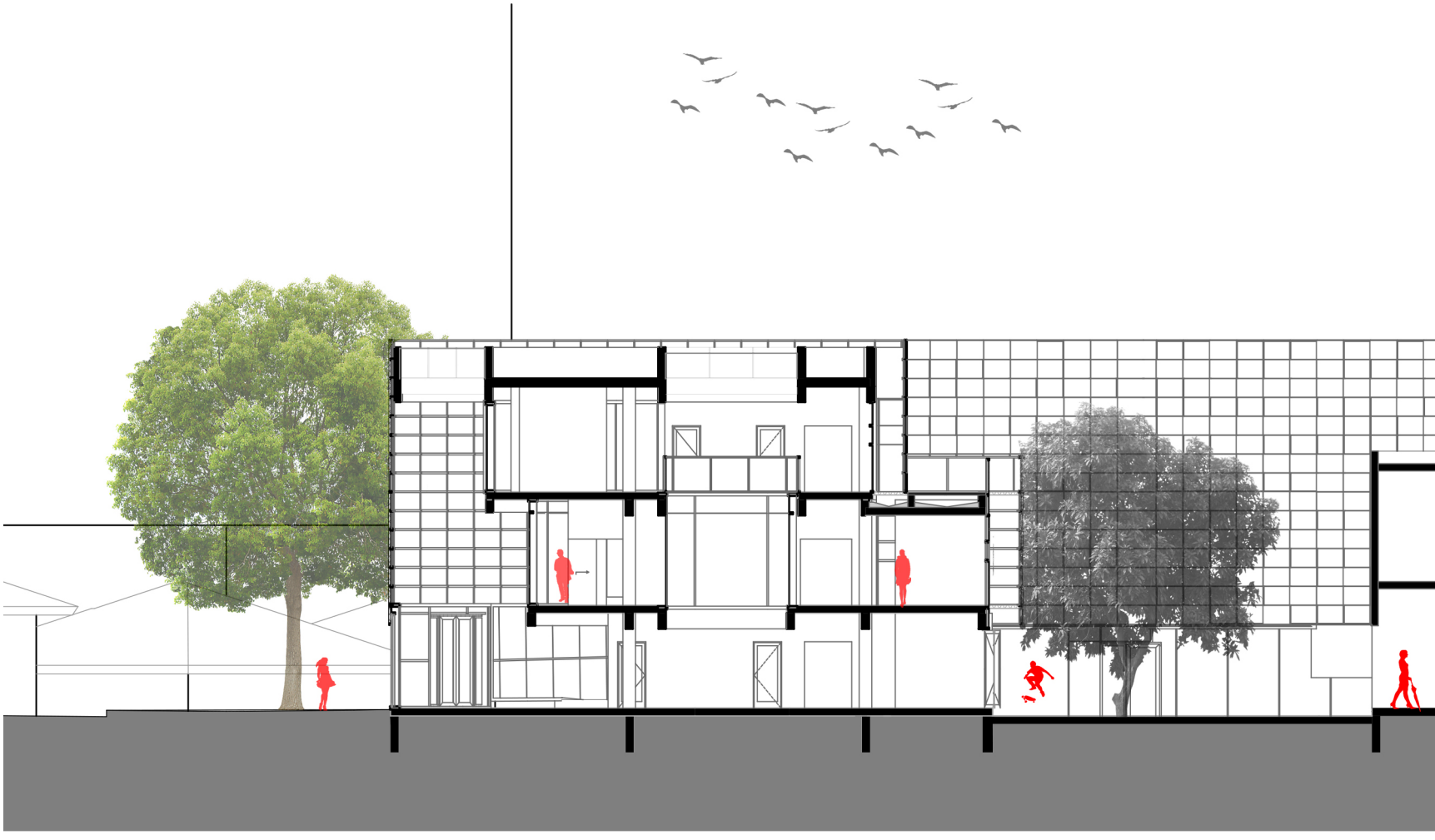


north elevation 1:200





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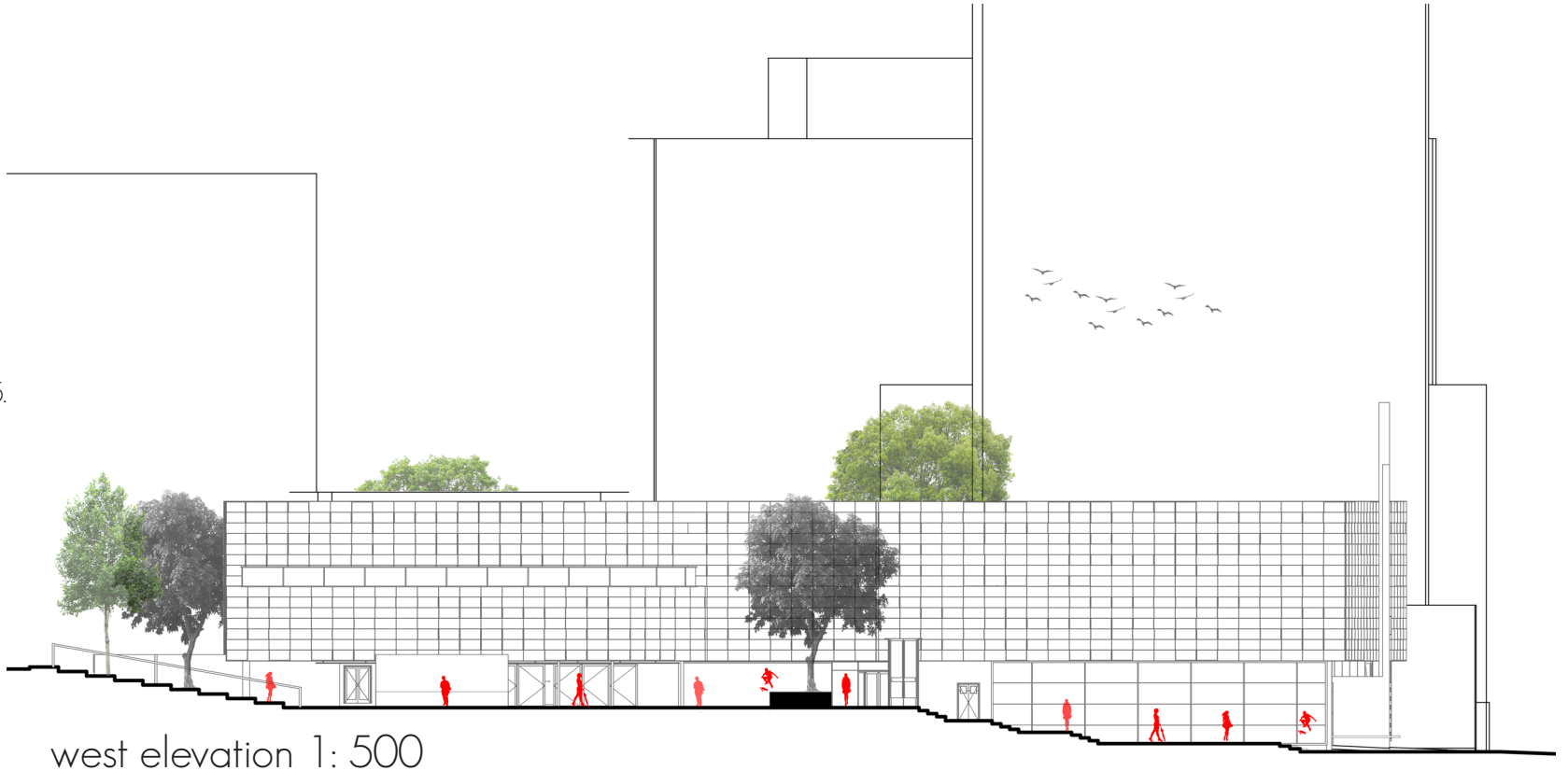
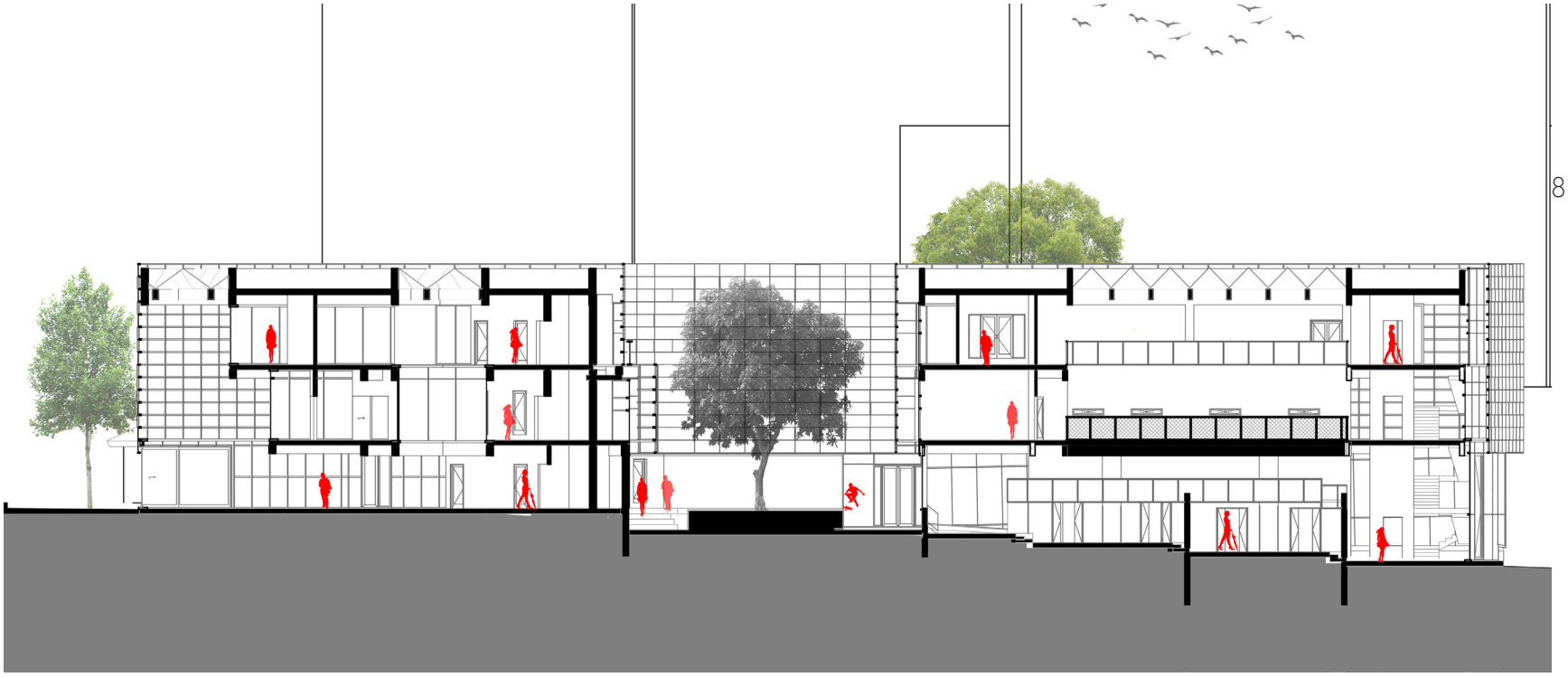


west elevation 1: 500





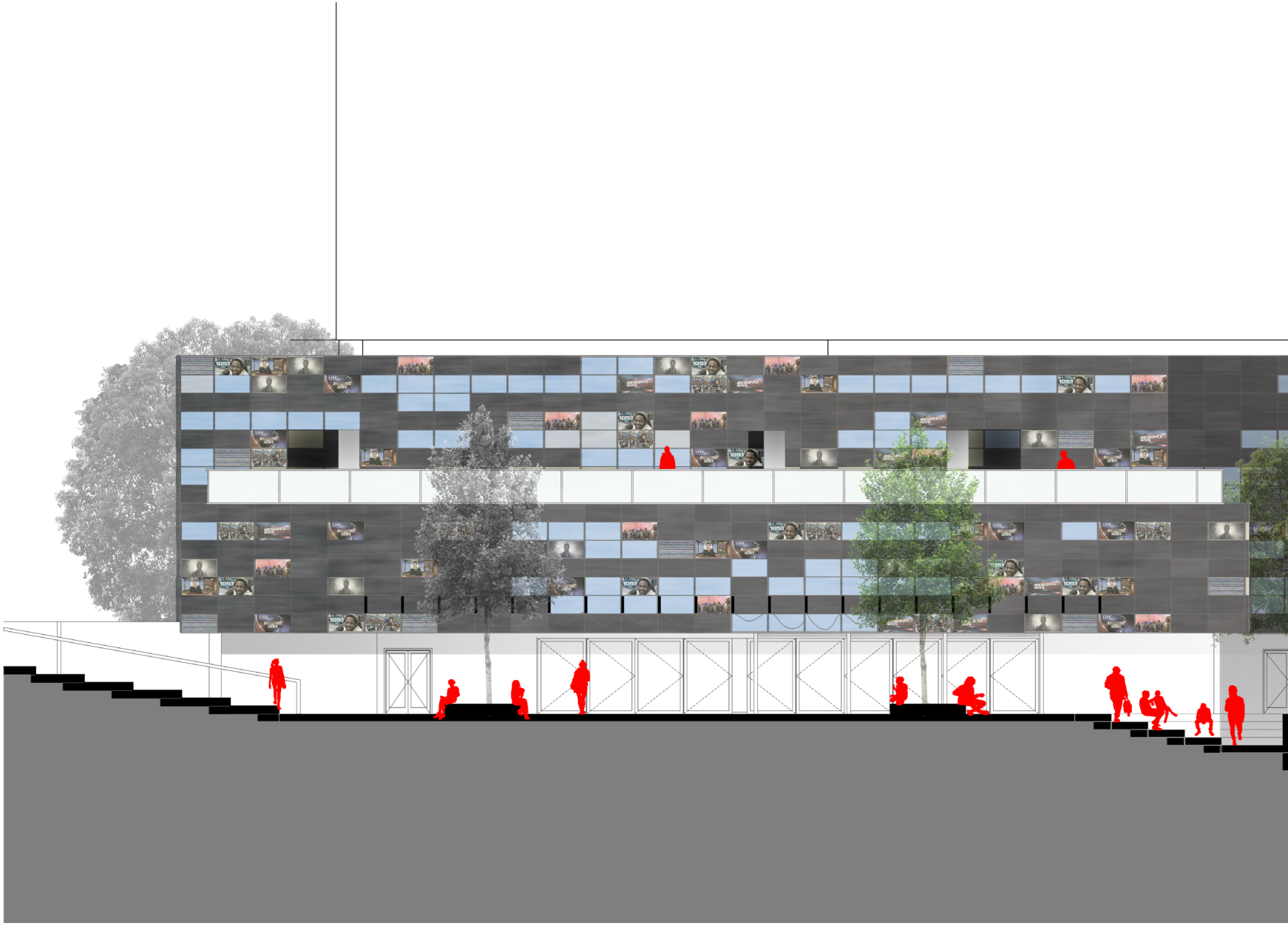


east elevation 1:500



5.030

CAFÉ BECOMES GALLERY



section 1:200






BREAKING NEWS
BREAKING NEWS
BREAKING NEWS

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CIRCULATION SPACE BECOMES DISCUSSION SPACE:

References:

1 South Africa universities.com [WWW Document], n.d. URL http://www.southafrica.info/about/education/universities-250713.htm#.Vf7GMZeRZio (accessed 9.20.15).

2 South Africa universities.com [WWW Document], n.d. URL http://www.southafrica.info/about/education/universities-250713.htm#.Vf7GMZeRZio (accessed 9.20.15).