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University of Tennessee College of Architecture and Design

# A Civic Design Study of the Tennessee State University Downtown Campus as a Service-Learning Engagement

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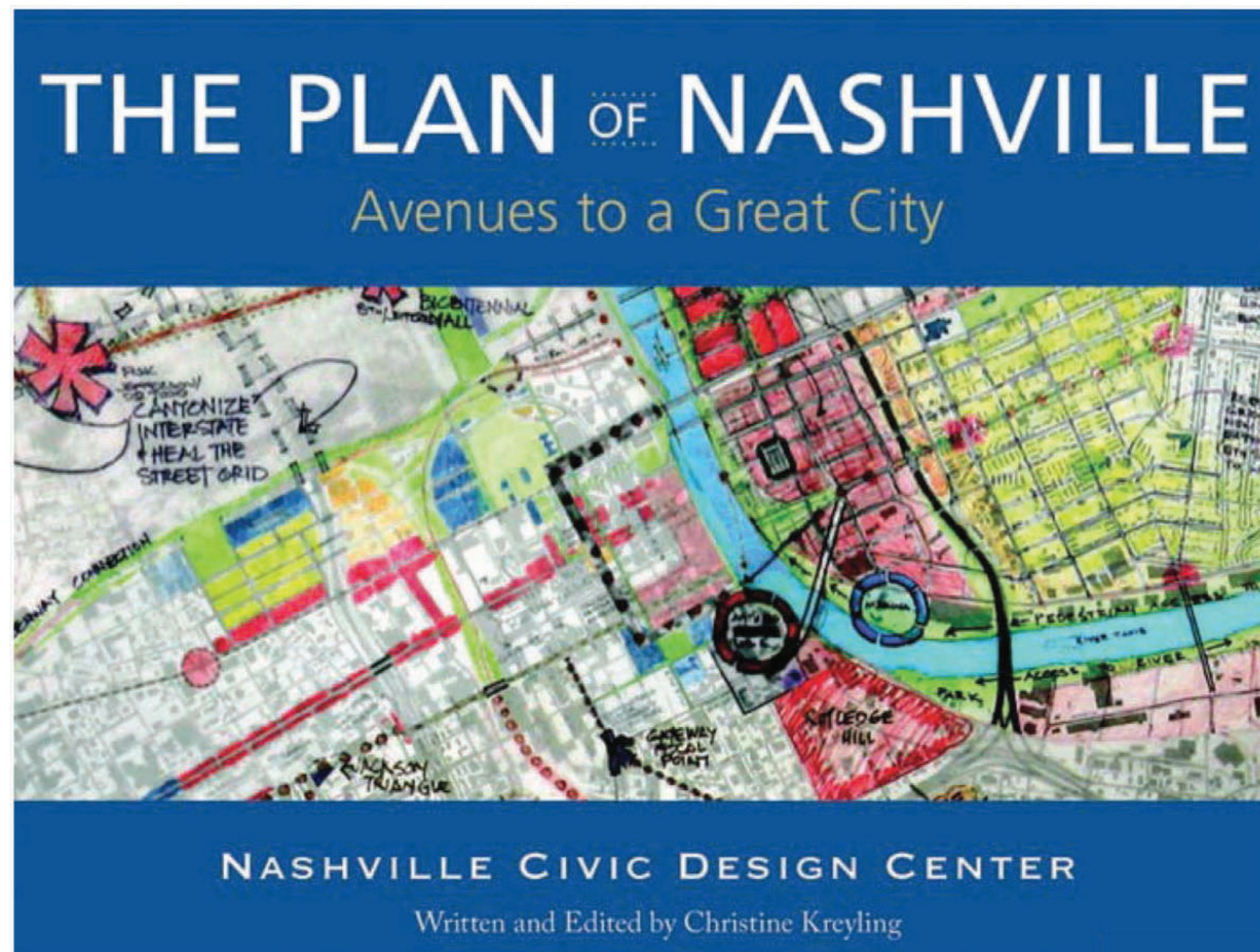
This presentation will discuss a three-way partnership between the University of Tennessee College of Architecture + Design, operating with a land grant mission, the Nashville Civic Design Center and Tennessee State University, a Historic Black College and University, within an academic outreach, service-learning, civic design studio course.



Nashville Civic Design Center on Second Avenue

The Nashville Civic Design Center is located in the heart of the historic and tourist district of the downtown on Second Avenue, one of the best streets in the city, overlooking the Cumberland River. Founded in 2000, Nashville Civic Design Center (or the NCDC), is a non-profit organization, whose mission is “to elevate the quality of Nashville’s built environment, and to promote public participation in the creation of a more beautiful and functional city for all.” It was founded in partnership with my University of Tennessee by concerned citizens who felt at the time that the Metro Planning Department lacked vision and public participation. I served as their Design Director from 2004-2008 on loan from the University.





Published by Vanderbilt University Press 2004

In 2004, the NCDC unveiled *The Plan of Nashville: Avenues to a Great City*, explicating Ten Principles and Related Goals to guide the future growth of the city. The Plan was the product of almost four years effort, including 56 public meetings and 800 different citizens.





This is one of our College's design studios. A professional undergraduate degree in architectural design is a highly structured five-year design curriculum. The course meets Monday, Wednesday and Friday for four hours each, totaling 12 hours per week in a studio setting. Outreach engagement is enhanced through class field trips for on-site reconnaissance and meetings, periodic design studio reviews, engaging the community at regular intervals throughout the semester, a final review event, and often a post semester exhibition and/or publication.





At the beginning and end of each four-hour studio, faculty meet with their dozen or so students around a table, discussing the hypothetical design problem, and then one-on-one typically at the studio's individual work stations. with a faculty member. Civic learning refers to the personalizing of learning in light of the student's role as a citizen architect, scholar, and professional. Students should understand the need for architecture and design to be environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable—the so called “triple bottom line”. Students are asked to describe their roles’ as future architects in addressing these imperatives.





This is a design review. Projects are to be carried to a high degree of resolution and presentation. Students are required to present drawing and models consistent with best practices, including the design process, relevant precedents, and a written component of their creative work, responding to faculty generated problems. Public reviews are held at intermediate intervals, and at the conclusion of the semester long design problems. Student work is regularly assessed by faculty throughout the semester, both as design process, and as a design product. Students receive continuous, immediate, and direct individual and group feedback on their work.





These studio-based methods of teaching architecture, have been most notably advocated in the 1996 Carnegie Report *Building Community: A New Future for Architecture Education and Practice*, as well as celebrated in Donald Schon's 1986 book *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*.

The beginning weeks of each semester typically incorporate site visits, problem analysis, as well as precedent research. Design studios are relatively unique in their format, combining both verbal, and visual, thinking and critique.





Students are required to make tightly organized, and outlined presentations of their design ideas. Major group design reviews, each semester, also publicly gauge group progress, to provide the opportunity for “course corrections” when necessary.





This is an opening day school picture, in our building shared with the Art Department, suggesting how open, and socially interactive an environment, we are fortunate to have.





Students Presenting at the Nashville Civic Design Center

Here are our students presenting their work at the Nashville Civic Design Center. Students are exposed to 36 different Nashville planning, design, development and civic leadership reviewers over the course of a semester. What is the service an urban design studio provides to a community? This service learning course occurred through a visioning process, with multiple, alternative program ideas generated, and six different site plans, emerging to promote interactive discussion, and critical thinking through outreach of engagement. An estimated total of over 4,000 hours of student creative energy was mobilized, not to mention the faculty contributions.





Reviews and Events at the Nashville Civic Design Center

This is a post-design review public reception at the Design Center. Service-learning as outreach engagement can create significant benefits for all the parties involved.





Reviews and Events at the Nashville Civic Design Center









This is an aerial view of Tennessee State University's (or TSU's) neo-traditional Main Campus located several miles from downtown, with almost 8,000 students.





In Fall of 2018, Tennessee State University expressed a desire to rethink their satellite campus in downtown Nashville, with a comprehensive, long term re-design, in partnership with the NCDC, and my University's Nashville Urban Design Program. TSU's downtown campus is currently comprised, of a "visually challenged" brutalist structure, with its only campus public space its vast surface parking lot. The timing is perfect, given the 5,000 jobs coming, in the near future, to the Amazon site for its Operations Center for Excellence, contiguous with TSU's downtown campus.





This proximity presents the broad and deep potential of synergies which are anticipated to emerge between TSU and Amazon. To underscore this potential, Amazon recently hosted 370 TSU students at their rollout event “Amazon: Live at the Ryman”, emphasizing their corporate search for high-skill employment opportunities, with an emphasis on diversity hires.





This view from the parking lot shows it drops thirty feet from east to west. The terrace plaza for the entry can be seen above the parking. Some of the Issues and Opportunities identified by TSU, the NCDC, and my studio were:



- To make the site more inviting to both students, faculty, staff and downtown visitors.
- To establish TSU as a gateway to downtown along Charlotte Avenue, particularly with strong branding and imaging along Charlotte.
- To acquire and remove the small, private sector building at corner of Charlotte Pike and 9th Avenue, to announce the TSU presence, and entry to the campus, with a plaza setback and to establish a new main entrance along Charlotte, responding to new, nearby developments.
- To propose a Union Street pedestrian bridge, to the TSU site and perhaps beyond, cognizant of TSU and the YMCA's excellent long-term relationship.
- To better knit the campus into downtown and the surrounding fabric, particularly with the Nashville Yards and Capital View projects
- To form a campus quad with a green roof, atop three, potential new levels of structured parking, tied horizontally to level three of the TSU existing building entrance.
- And to promote future, synergistic programming, and connections, with the two Amazon towers now under construction.



What non-quantifiable, but rather qualitatively “measurable” primary outcomes were to be assessed?

- One, how did we attempt to promote future, synergistic programming and connectivity with the forthcoming Amazon and their desire to partner with TSU to help develop their desired high-skill and diverse work force?
- Two, how did we attempt to better connect and knit the campus into the surrounding downtown urban fabric, particularly with adjacent new development now under construction?
- Three, how did we attempt to form a new campus quad, with a green roof atop three levels of structured parking, connecting to TSU’s existing 1973 building?





This is the flank of the building, and as you can see, it's a real concrete "bunker".





This depicts the main elevated plaza and entry facing the parking lot.





This shows a one-story, private office building, forlornly sitting on a corner of the site, while TSU fails to address Charlotte Avenue, a major entry with public transit, into the downtown.





This is the first-floor plan, showing the library, without any windows, in the basement.





This is the second-floor plan, exhibiting what we architects call a regrettable “congested plan”, with institutional corridors, and no social gathering spaces.





This is the third-floor plan, with an entrance plaza into a sky lit atrium space.





And this is the fourth-floor plan, with the upper two-story atrium, grand stair and elevator tower.





This is a billion-dollar, multi-block development, now under construction named Nashville Yards. What new programmatic elements did we propose for the future campus?

- A quad atop structured parking with amphitheater
- A joint Amazon / TSU Innovation Center
- A new library with art gallery
- A Culinary Arts and Hospitality Program with its own teaching restaurant and hotel
- A Residential College with dining for students and faculty
- And an Early Learning Center





This is a rendering of the Nashville Yards in a night view, showing the two towers being built to house 5,000 “Amazonians”.





This was my studio's earlier Amazon HQ2 proposal on the east bank of the Cumberland River, when Nashville was still a finalist city in the running.





This is the plan of the Nashville Yards project, now under construction.





Street level view of the two enormous Amazon Towers.





This view is from the Church Street bridge depicting the future gateway into downtown Nashville.



# Jack Ebbert + Alex Goedhart

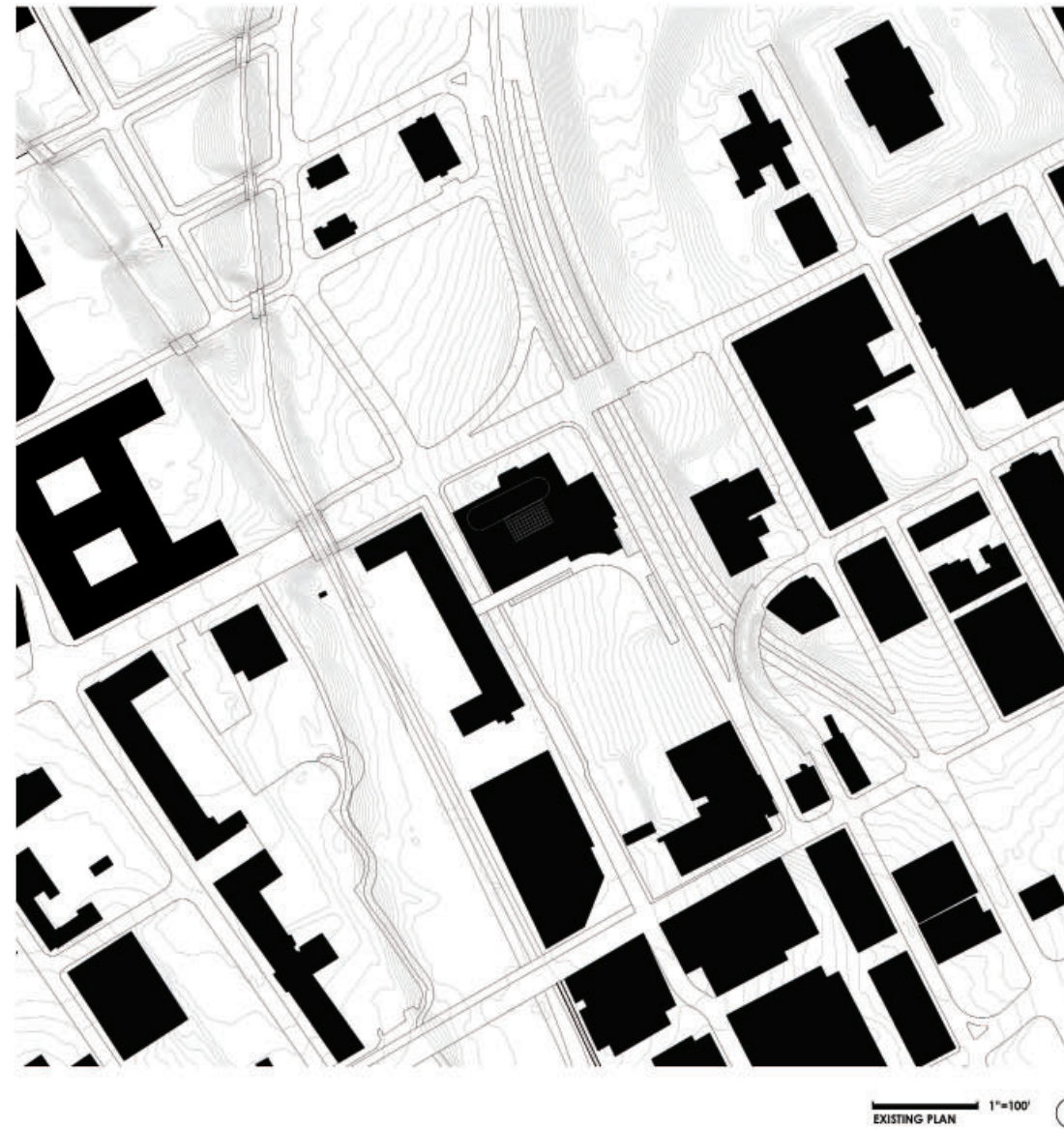
This is the proposal of students Jack Ebbert and Alexandra Goedhart depicting a 20 year build-out.





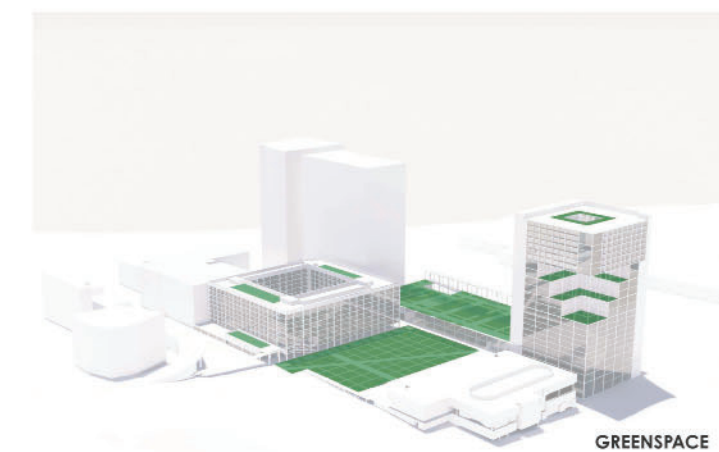
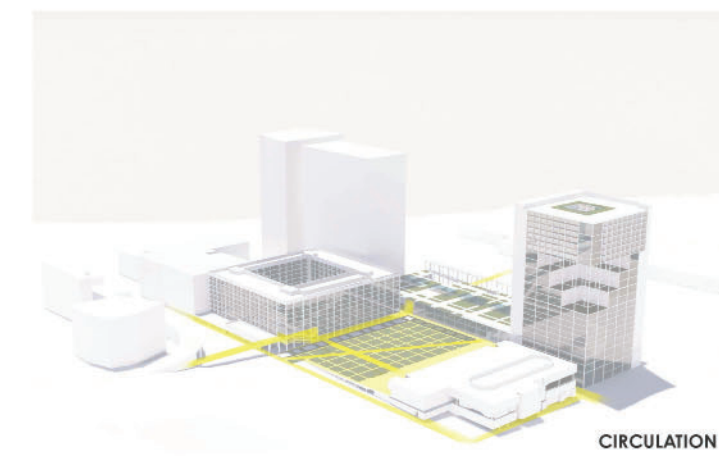
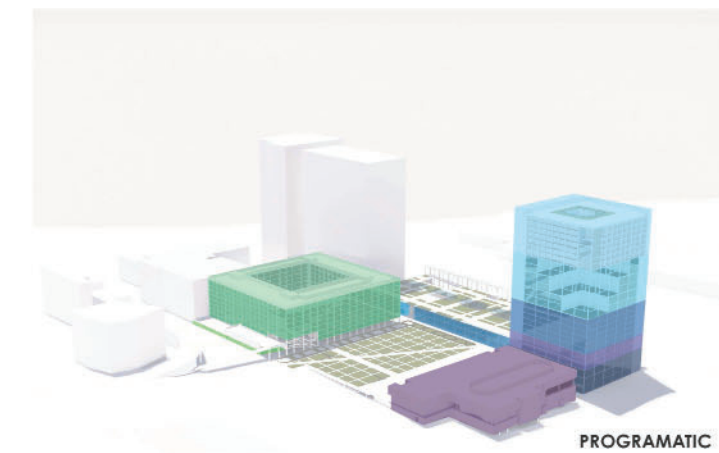
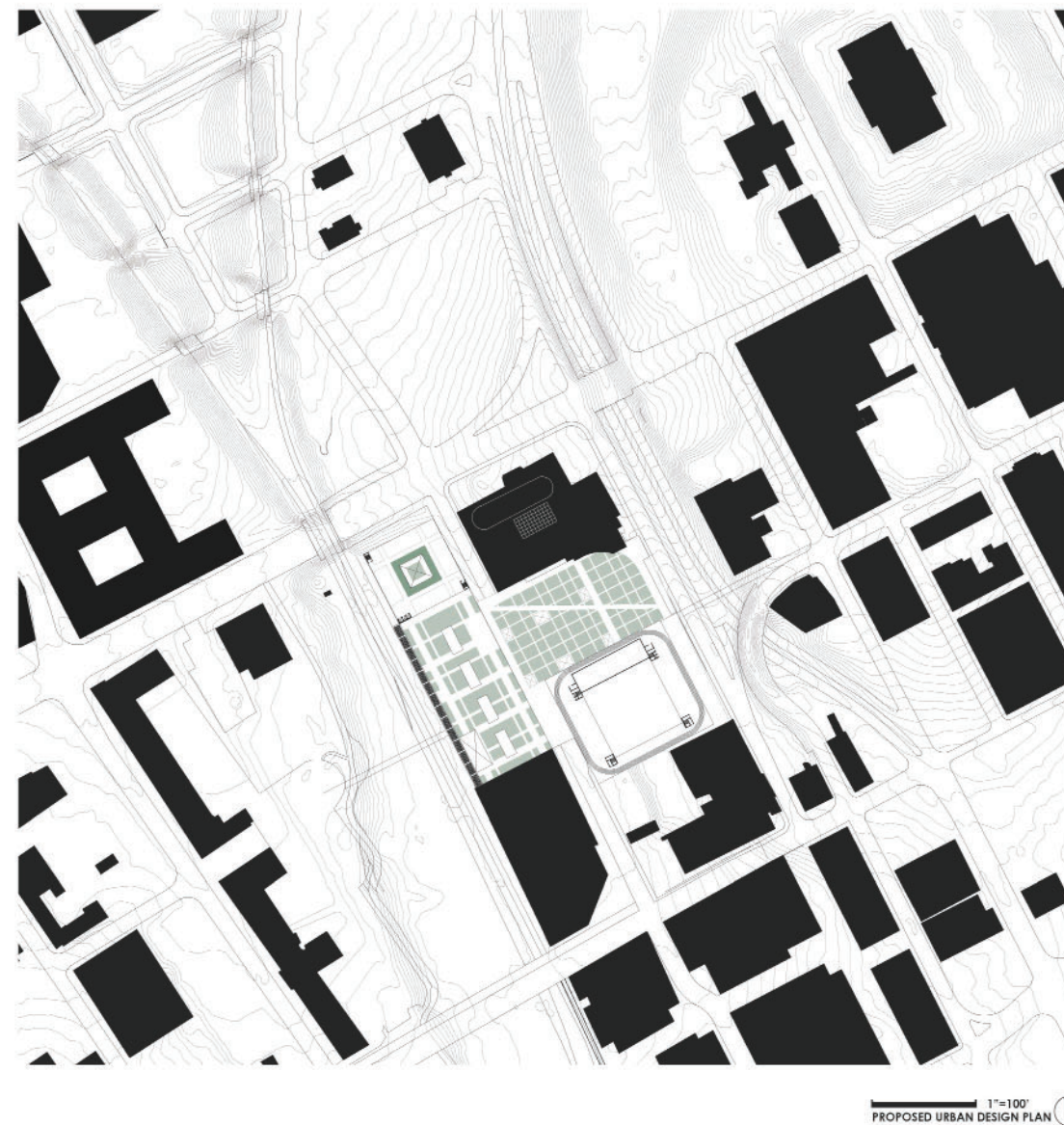
Their new campus quad rests atop the three-level parking structure, Here we are looking at the new residential hall beyond.





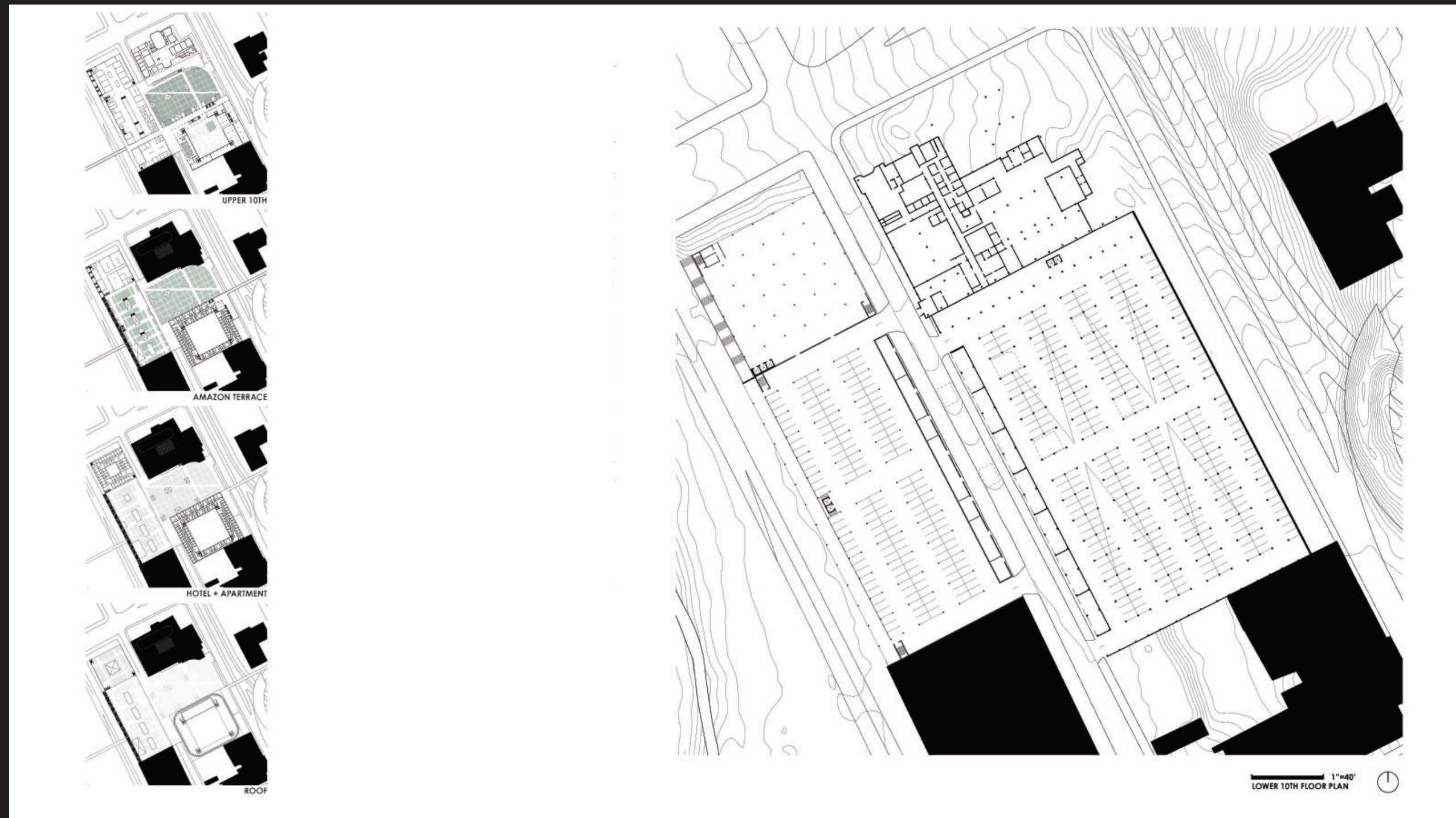
This is the plan of the existing site condition.





This is the plan of the quad level. These three-dimensional diagrams depict the programmatic, circulation and green space strategies.





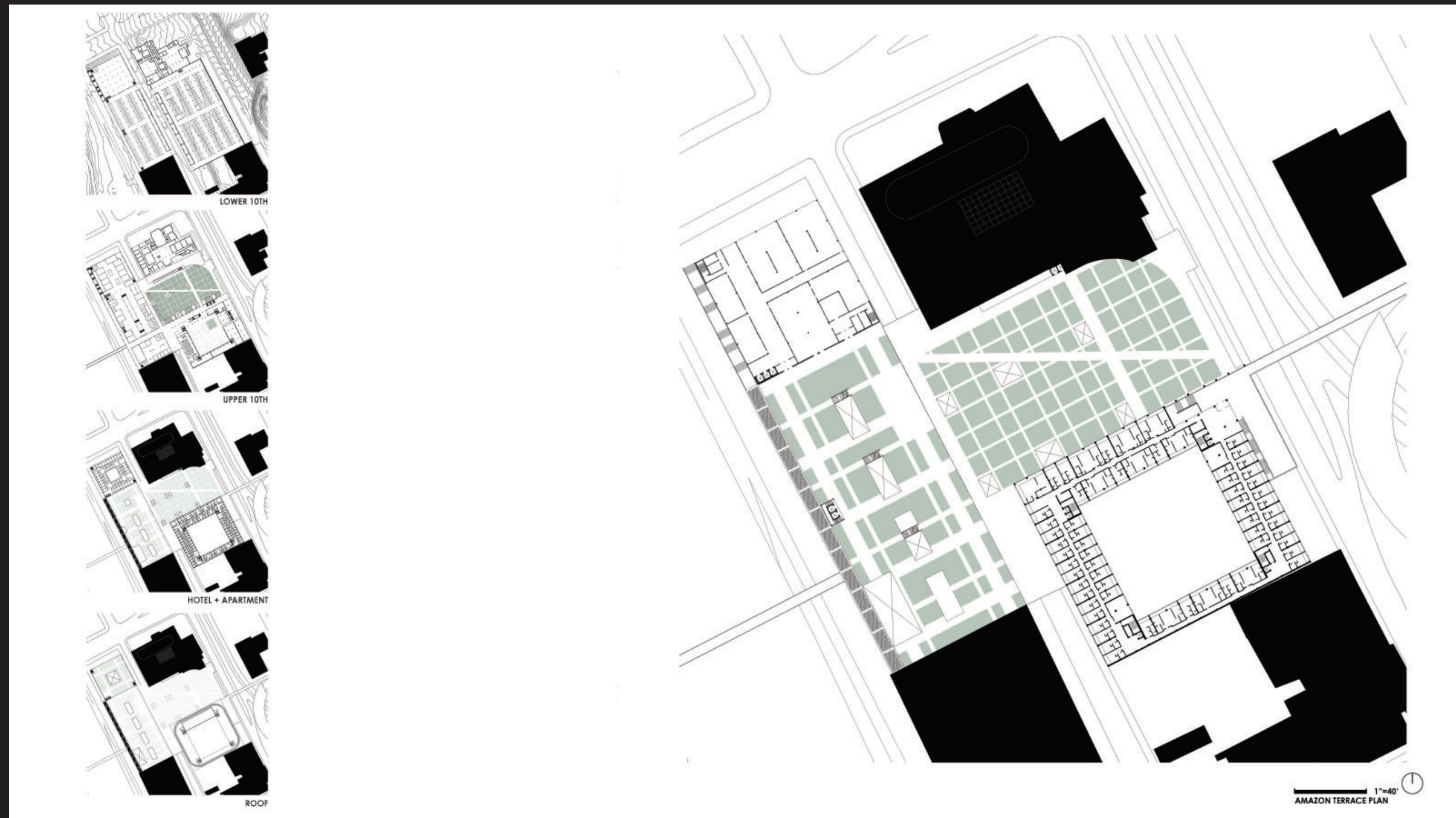
Here is shown the green roof over the new Innovation Center, imagined to be a public private-partnership between TSU and Amazon.





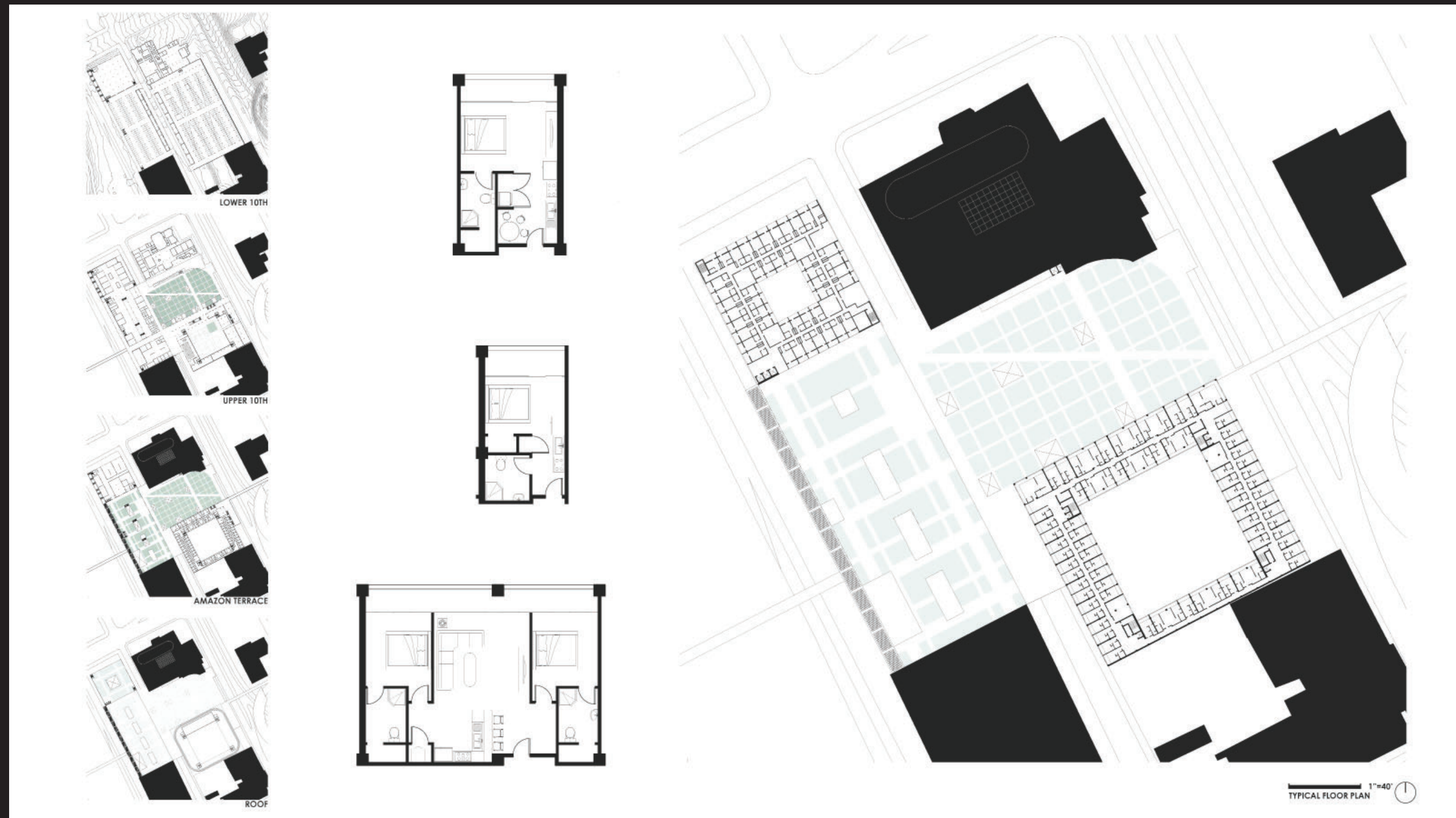
This section drawing shows the pedestrian route as the topography, falling away east to west, from the ridge of downtown onto the new quad, and then bridging over the railroad tracks to adjacent new development beyond.





This is the upper level of the residential college.





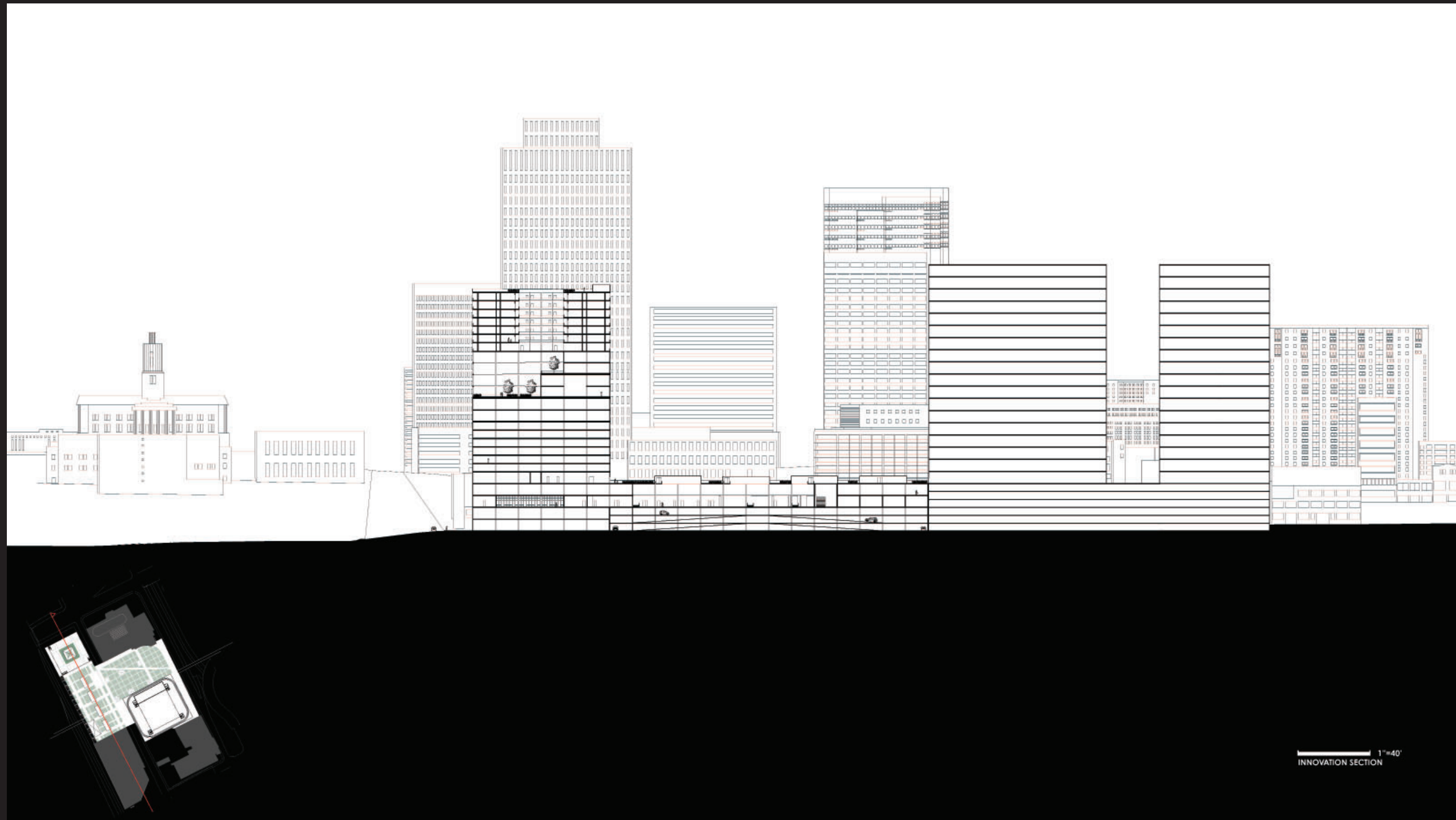
This is showing the typical residential dorm room layouts.





This is a night view of the quad above the new parking garage.





This is a longitudinal section looking east.



## Nadin Jabri + Breanna Williams

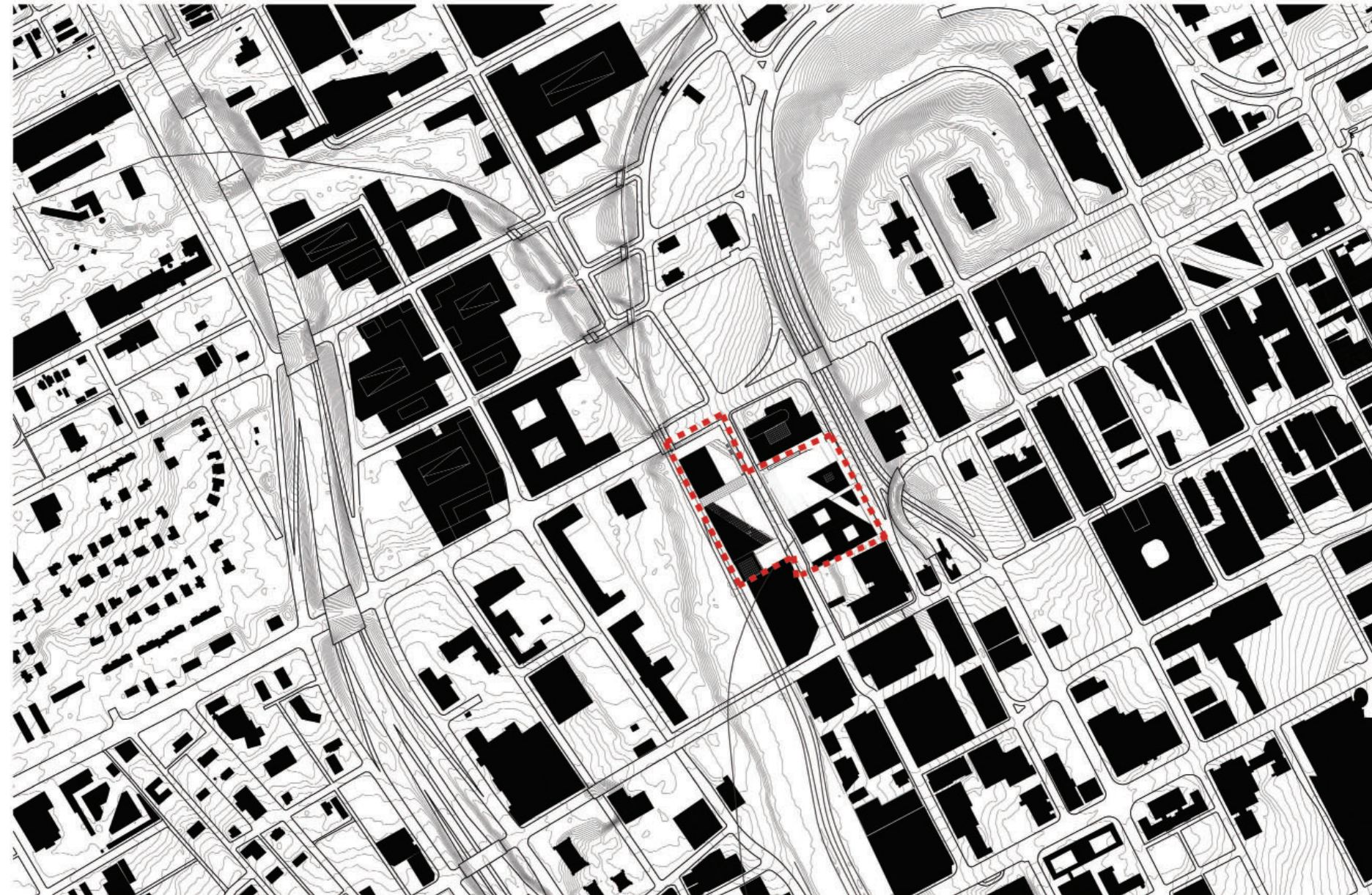
Next is the proposal of Nadin Jabri, a student from Syria, and Breanna Williams.





Here is a night view of their massing around their new quad, when the campus comes alive with evening classes.

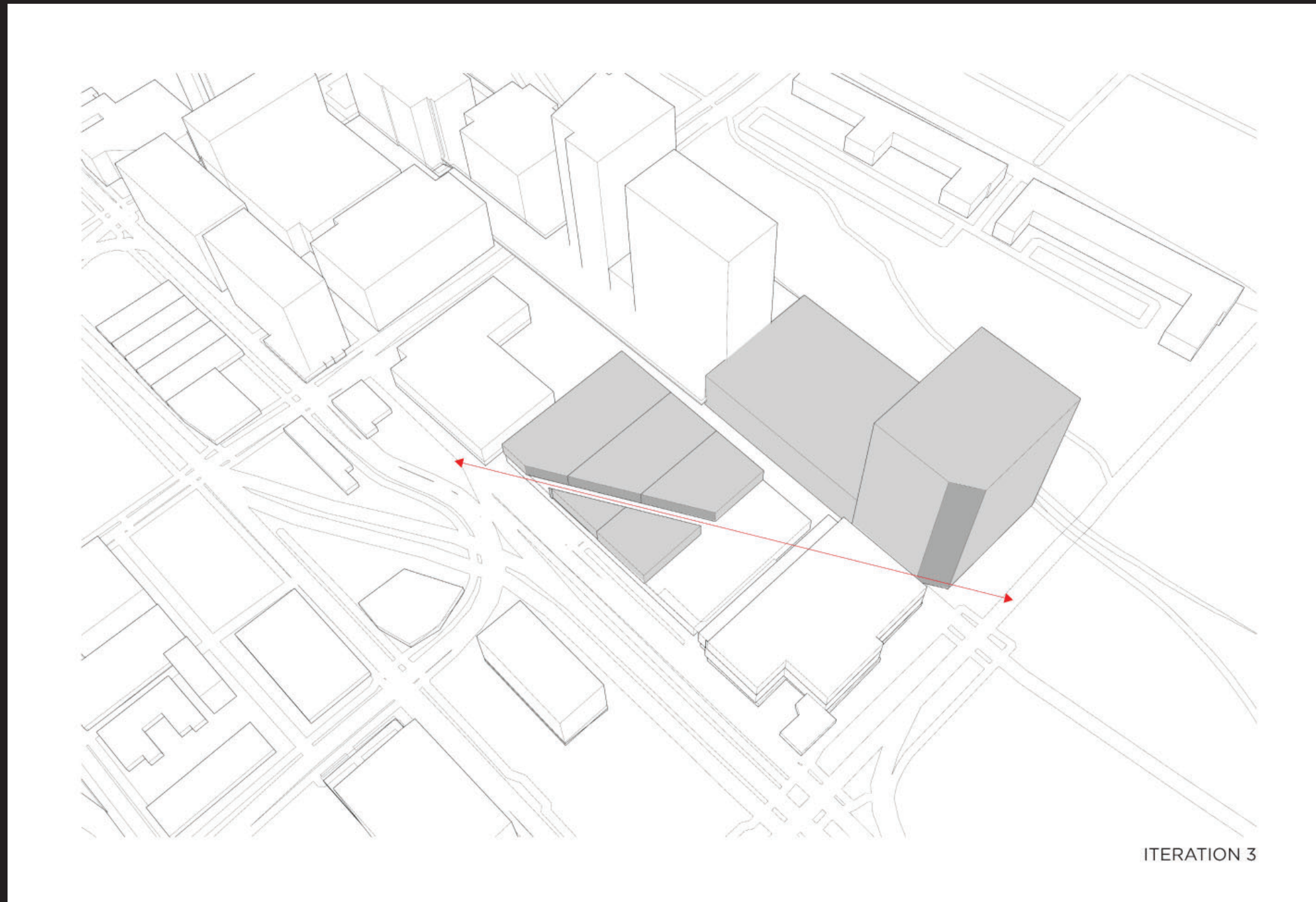




PURPOSED PLAN

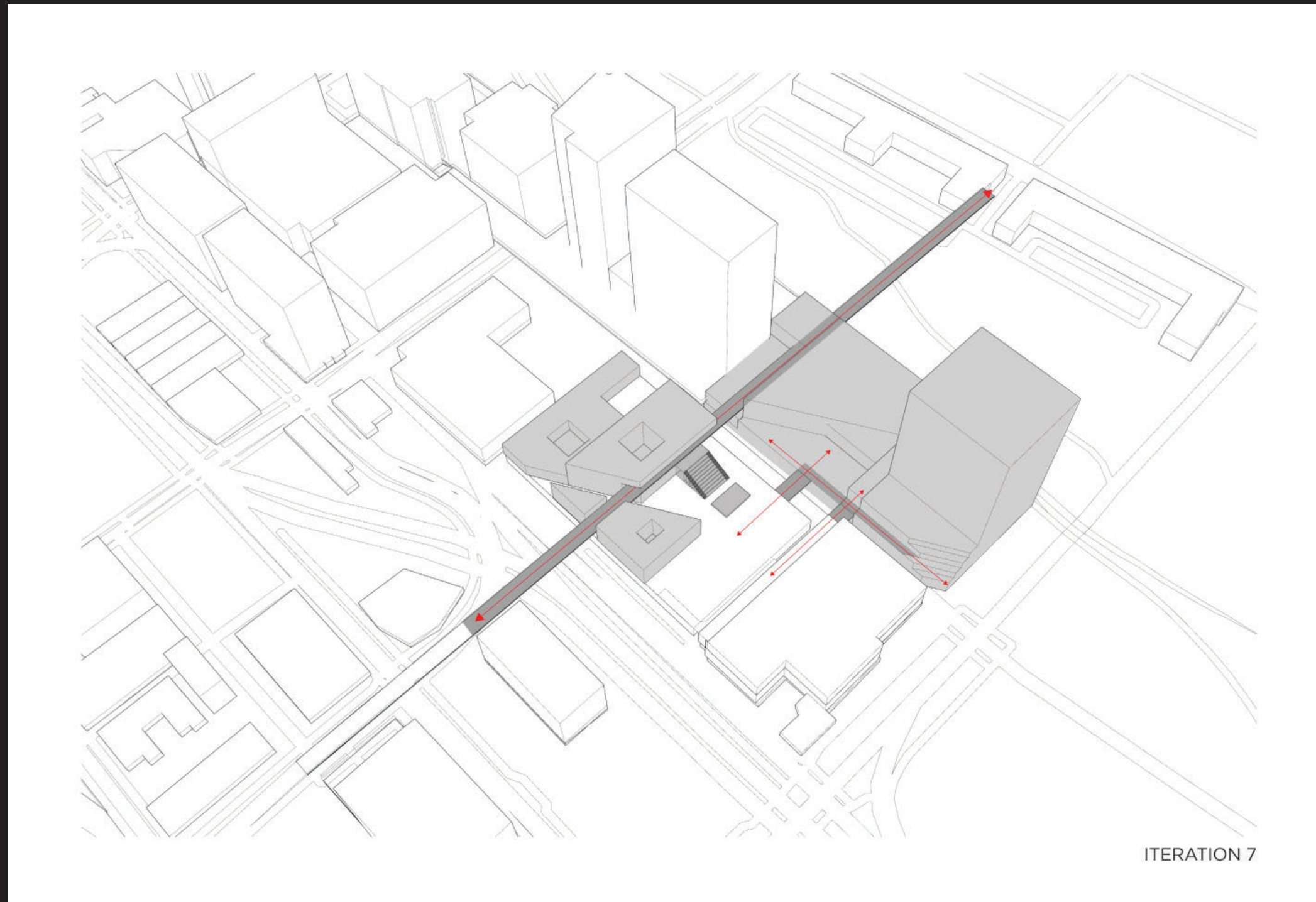
This is showing the existing site condition as a 20 year build-out.





This proposal introduces a diagonal of pedestrian movement through the site.





The dark line is a pedestrian way, from downtown through the campus, over the railroad tracks, and beyond to North Gulch new development off Charlotte Avenue.

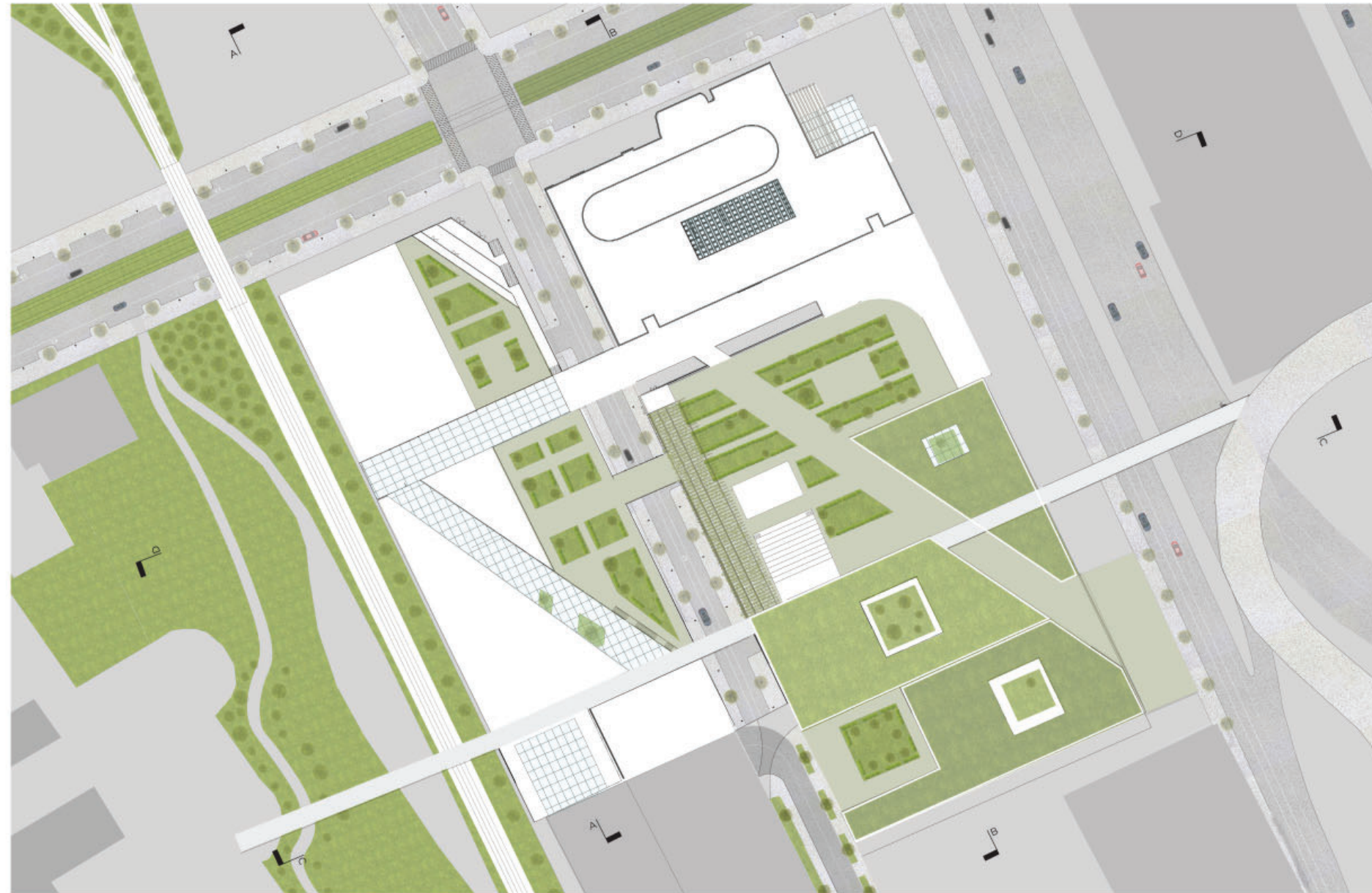




NORTHEAST AXON

Here is a axonometric view of the new campus massing.





MASTER PLAN  
0 40

This plan shows the entire future campus ensemble.





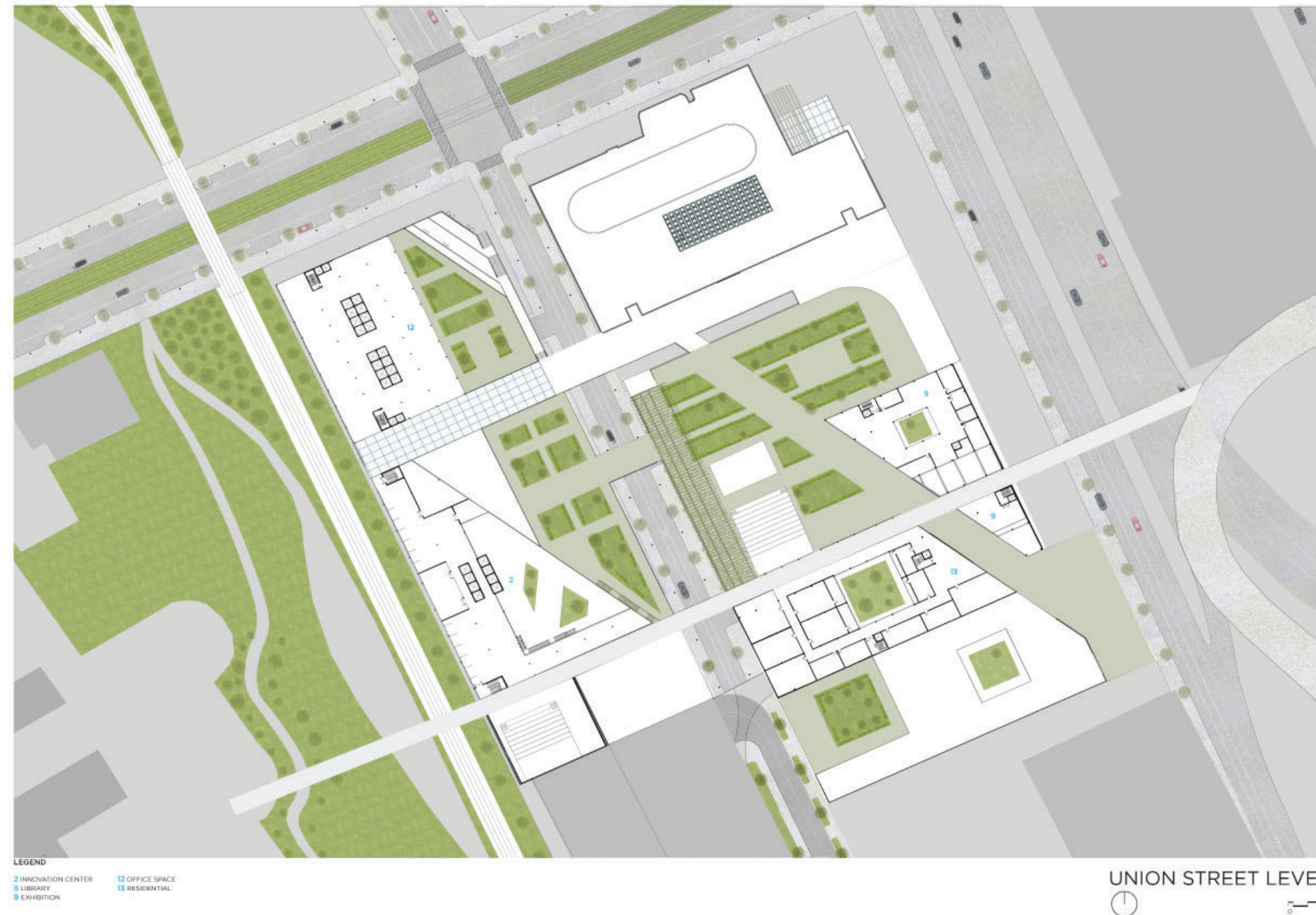
This is the lower level plan of the new parking structure.





This is the new quad level plan.





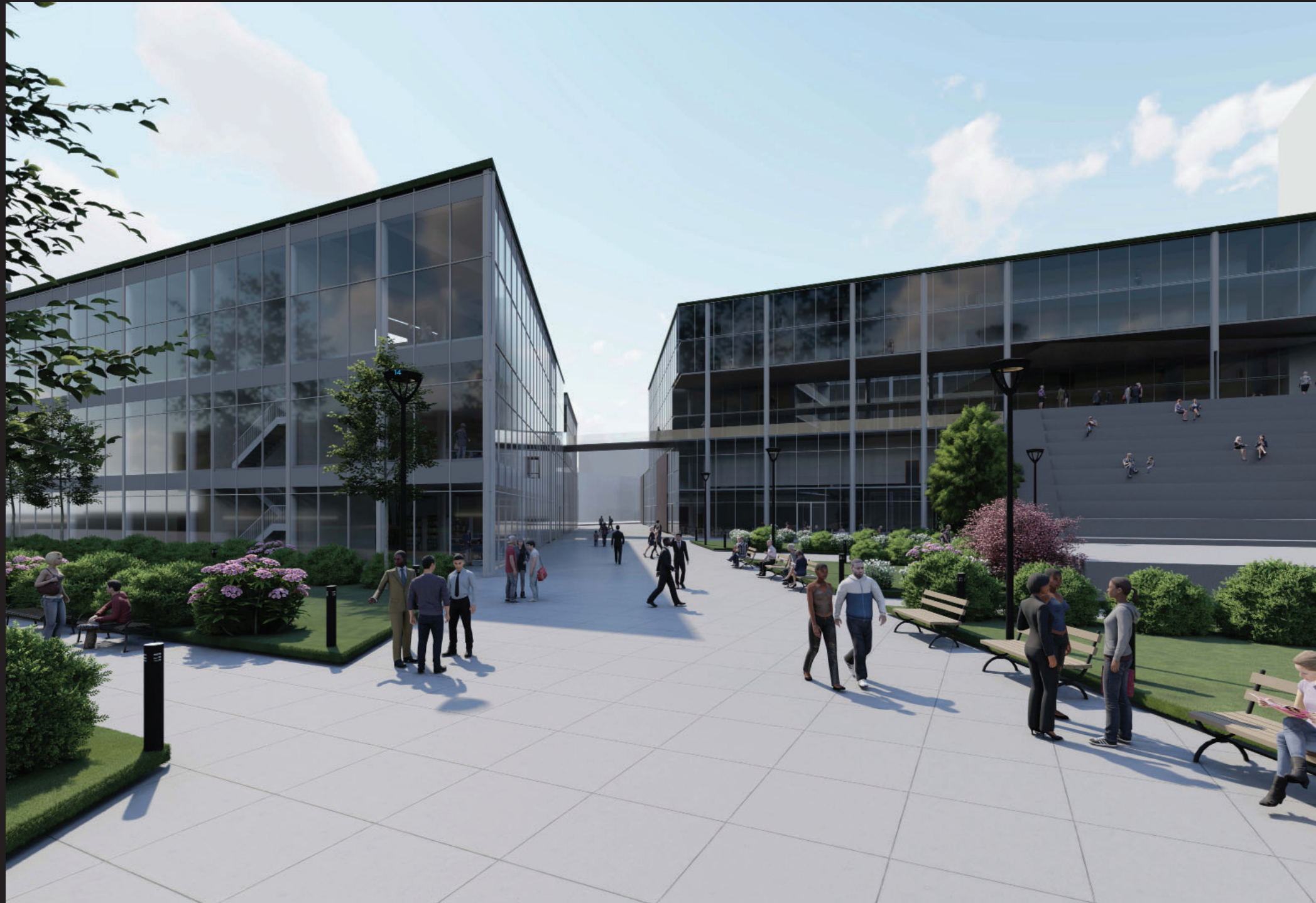
This is the Union Street level plan.





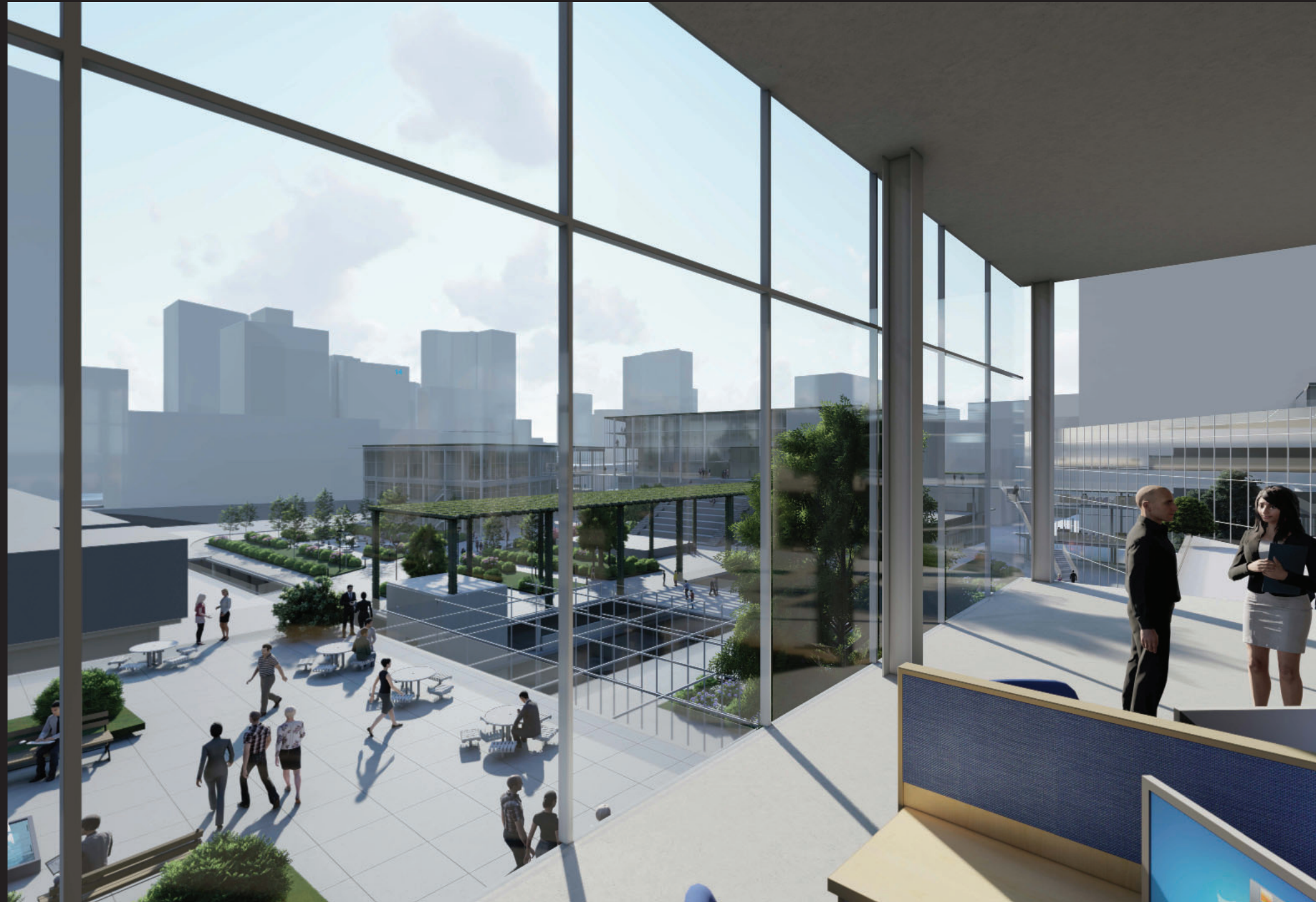
This drawing depicts the elevated concourse above and across the quad.





Here is another view of the new quad.





A view from above building down into the quad.





A view of the new campus massing in its context.



So what's next? Just a week before the semester began, TSU announced a freeze on all university discretionary spending, and with this budgetary crisis, administrators were preoccupied with just "keeping the wheels on". And I don't think that the late and sudden announcement by Amazon of the 5,000 jobs coming adjacent to the downtown campus, and its long term, synergistic potential, was yet graspable, so I am considering reissuing the design vision plan this Spring semester, with the hope of greater interest and participation on the part of TSU.



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