

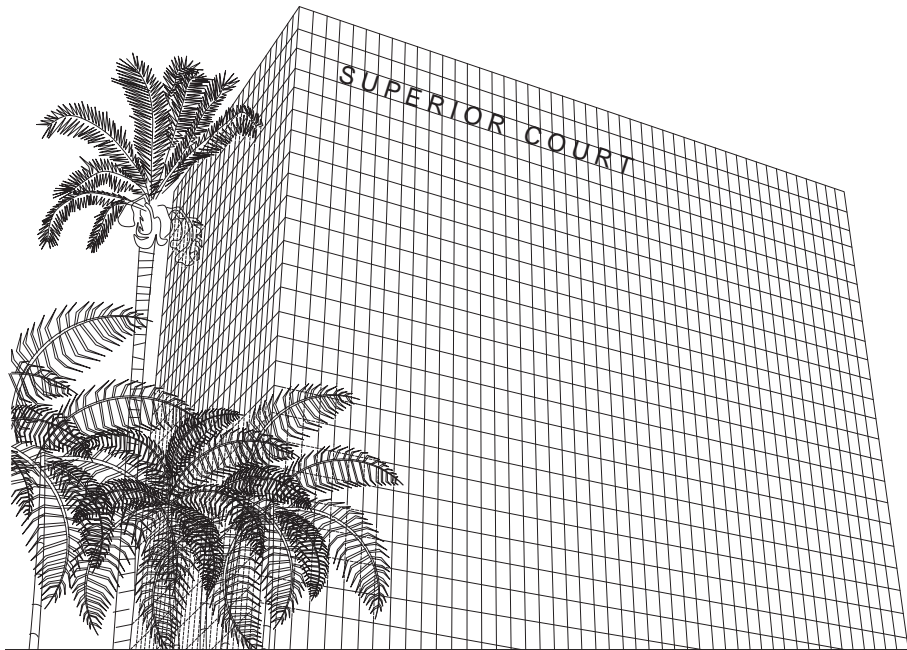
Wilshire Star Maps II

by Urban Operations



Publication Information:

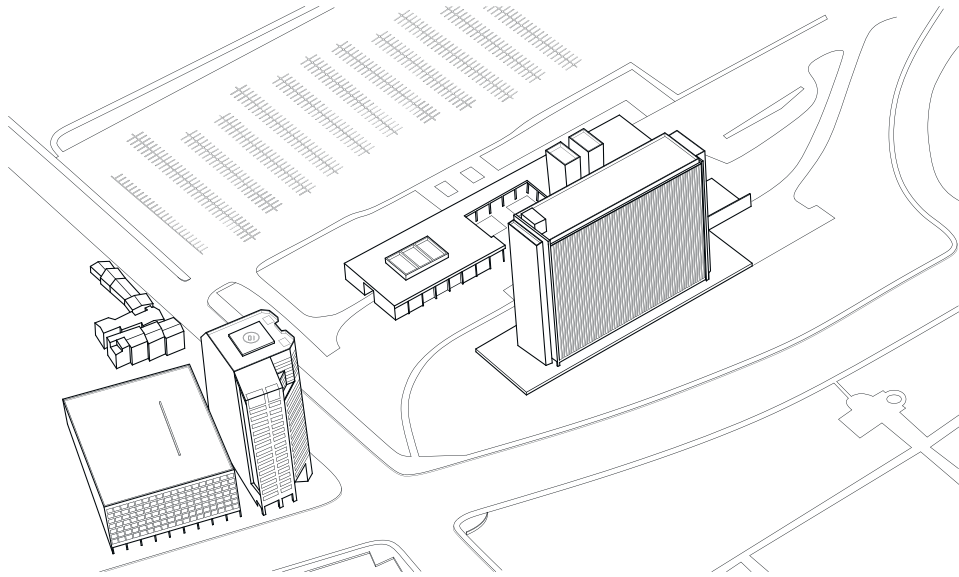
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Project Team: Celine Juan, Shane Reiner Roth, & John Southern

Wilshire Star Maps II: Introduction



Wilshire Boulevard was not initially conceived as fertile ground for vertical experiments in urbanism. Developed by the Henry Gaylord Wilshire in the early 20th Century as a speculative, four-block tendril linking two suburban parks well beyond the existing city center, the tract was thought of more as a respite from Downtown L.A.'s bustling and increasingly congested streets than as a central spine of the rapidly growing metropolis. What began as an exaggerated real estate sales ploy was eventually adopted by the City of Los Angeles and almost immediately lured developers beyond the confined business and residential districts surrounding Downtown L.A. It came with covenants excluding it from street car tracks, as well as other commercial infrastructures and it can be surmised that Henry's myopic view of what would eventually be an auto-centric spinal linkage between the central city and the Pacific, merely envisioned the street as the simplest way of connecting his parcels with downtown investors.

Wilshire didn't initiate its east-west growth until Los Angeles' automobile culture matured in the 1920s. The rising adoption of the automobile as a primary mode of transportation encouraged an expansion of the kind of mercantile development that would come to define Los Angeles -- stores with ample off-street parking and visually stimulating architecture that could be appreciated, not from the perspective of the pedestrian but, rather, the windshield of an automobile.

This new vision of transport-driven urbanity also gave way to the superblocks that presented themselves as epic journeys for pedestrians. While the new buildings were large, they were rarely vertical and stopped at the 13th floor, the result of the city's 1911 zoning ordinance which dictated that all multi-story buildings observe a 150'-0" height limit, thereby presenting themselves as moored ocean-liners adrift in a residential gridiron. It would not be until 1957 when the city reconsidered its zoning regulations that towers would begin to spring from the low-rise commercial strip that had come to dominate Wilshire since the early automobile age. Simultaneously, post-war developments in curtain wall technology allowed these new skyscrapers to escape the language of ornamental stone veneer, emerging instead from their foundations as homogenous glazed volumes, each presenting identical reflections of Wilshire's increasingly frequent traffic jams.

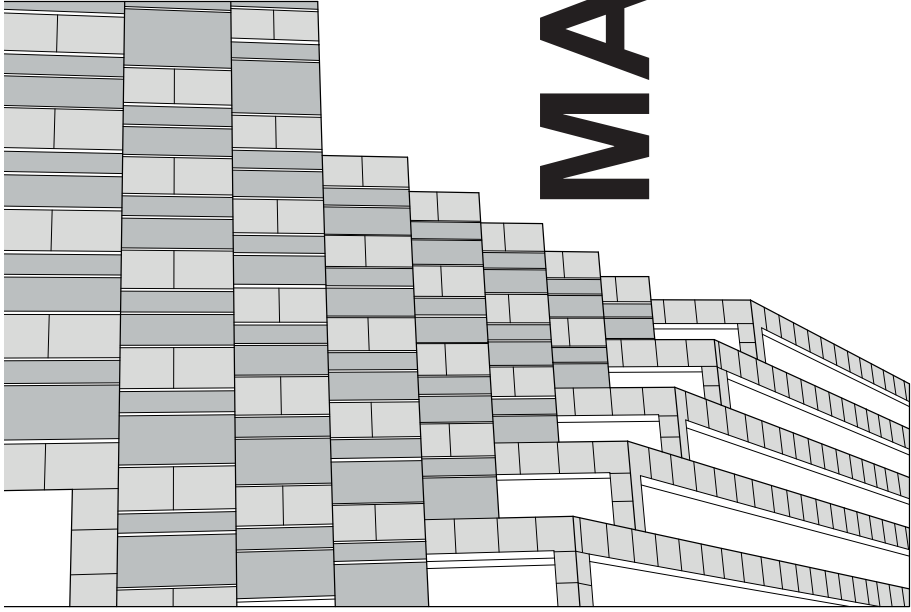
Unlike Manhattan, where pockets of skyscrapers developed based on their relationship to flows of commerce coupled with the depth and density of the island's geology, vertical speculation on Wilshire flourished because of adjacencies to residential zones unable to fight the 1957 changes to the zoning code, which allowed buildings to exceed the 1911 height limit. As Downtown L.A.'s influence waned, and the metropolis continued its westward expansion, Wilshire quickly absorbed the demand for new high-density commercial cores. Rather than develop as an orderly procession from Downtown to the beach, however, Wilshire grew into several vertical C.B.D's further clouding the city's similarities with traditional North American urbanity. It is this horizon that exists today--chunks of speculative verticality, laid out on a horizontal tangle of outdated zoning regulations and perpetually clogged transportation infrastructure.

But what paradigm will represent the Wilshire Boulevard of tomorrow? This guide represents the second survey of the existing high-rise ecologies and visual taxonomies that have emerged over a century of development on Wilshire Boulevard. With the current Los Angeles Zoning Code up for reconsideration, and new rapid public transit options frequently displacing the dominance of the automobile on city streets, the future Wilshire will certainly look nothing like it does today. It can be surmised then that the isolated high-rise archipelagos which presently act as counterpoints to L.A.'s largely horizontal urban form, will cease to remain disconnected. Our two-year examination of the boulevard has brought to light the possibility that Wilshire will perhaps become a city within a city, its dynamic skyline a breeding ground for endless architectural experimentation.

-John Southern

Kevin Roderick and J. Erick Lynxwiler, *Wilshire Boulevard: Grand Concourse of Los Angeles* (Santa Monica, CA: Angel City Press, 2005).

Richard Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).



VERTICAL MANIFESTOS

Rachel Allen: “The skyscraper is a warm gun, mama.”

Orhan Ayyuce: “Skyscrapers should be taken out of the architects’ libidinous objects list. Is it possible?”

Barbara Bestor: “The skyscraper is overrated and underexploited.”

Jennifer Bonner: “The skyscraper is post-modern hats, podium skirts, and sky lobbies.”

David Freeland: “The skyscraper is at the zenith of artifice; a vertically oriented manifest destiny that critically distances humans from their environment. They are looking at and looking out.”

Todd Gannon: “The skyscraper is tall.”

Oliver Hess: “Skyscrapers are one small step toward spacescrapers. Or: why don’t sky scrapers actually scrape the sky? We could use that on some days in LA.”

Ted Kane: “The skyscraper is the embodied form resulting from forces of urban density.”

Tom Marble: “A skyscraper is a building species native to North America with propagates worldwide considered alternately as adapted non-native cultivars or invasive pests.”

Alan Rapp: “The skyscraper is the idiot sentinel on the border between Empire and tomorrow.”

Axel Schmitzberger: “The skyscraper is putting cult back into culture.”

Mohamed Shariff: “The Skyscraper is always a little cocky.”

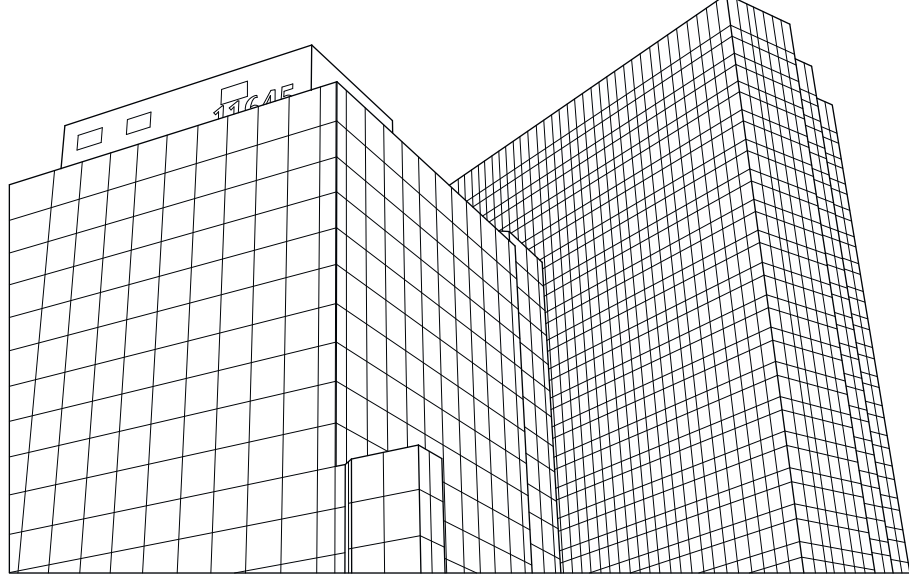
Susan Surface: “The skyscraper is the sky raper.”

Linda Taalman: “A skyscraper is an artificial mountain, modern temple, utopian monument of the everyday.”

James Michael Tate: “The skyscraper is rising.”

Emily White: “Without the skyscraper there would be no elevator music.”

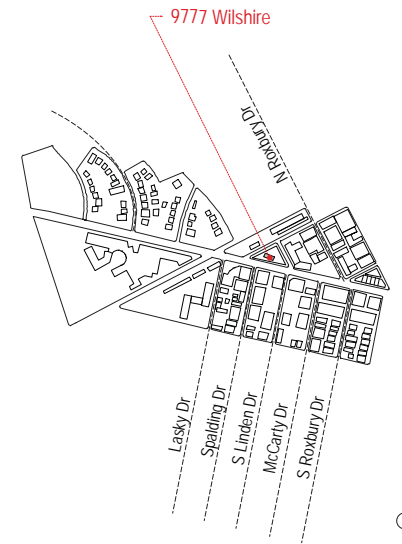
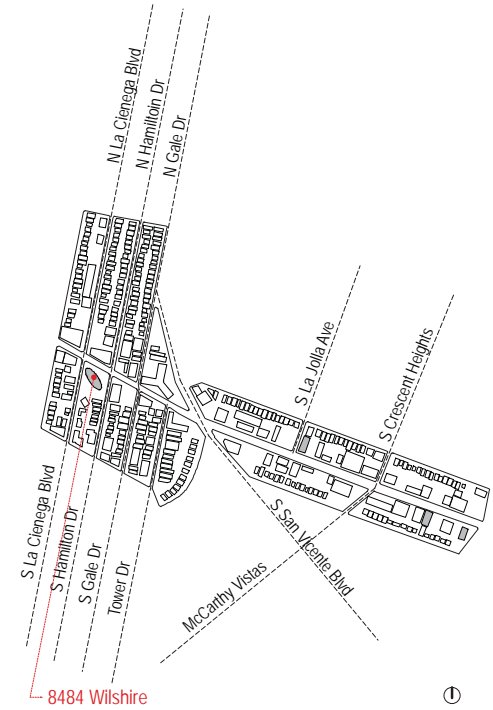
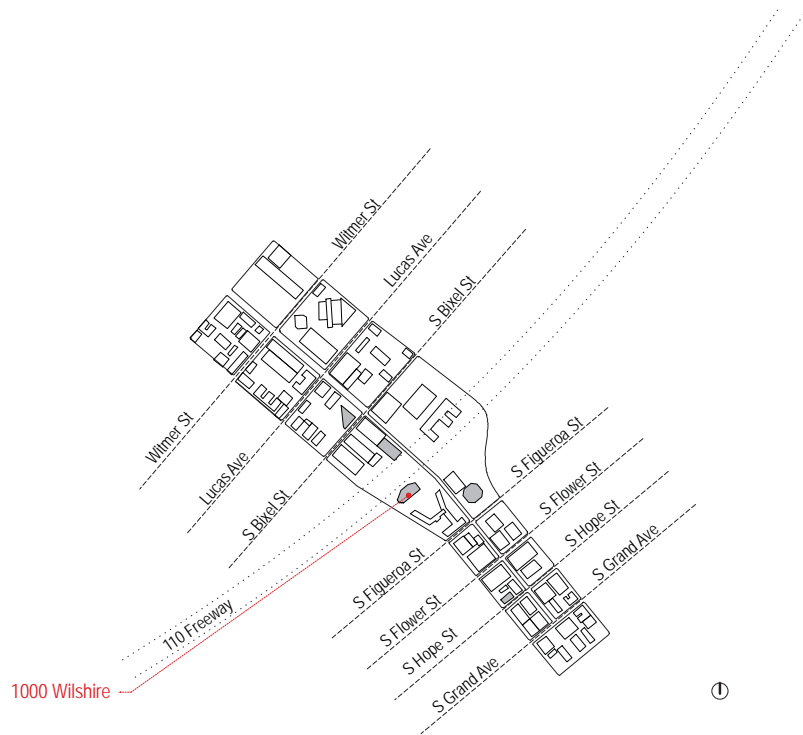
Mimi Zeiger: “The skyscraper, once considered the apex of construction—the symbol of technological prowess and economic display—now exists as a typological wonder and marketplace folly.”



Oscillate

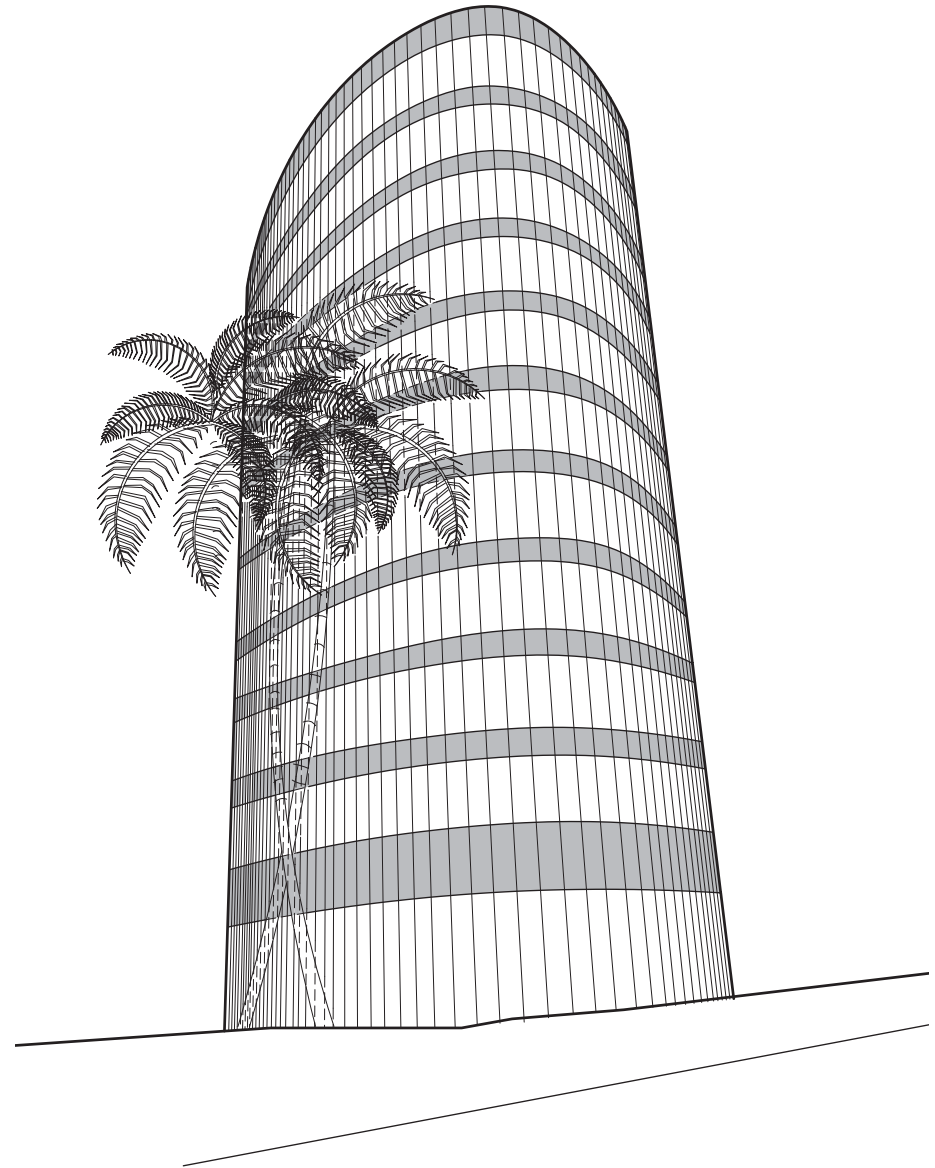
"For 15.8 miles it swoops through the sprawl, tying downtown to the Pacific Ocean along a promenade that, like the city itself, is an accidental creation of civic ambition and personal hubris. No one could have designed Wilshire Boulevard to assume such a commanding place in the story of modern Los Angeles."

-Kevin Roderick, *Wilshire Boulevard Grand Concourse of Los Angeles*, 2005

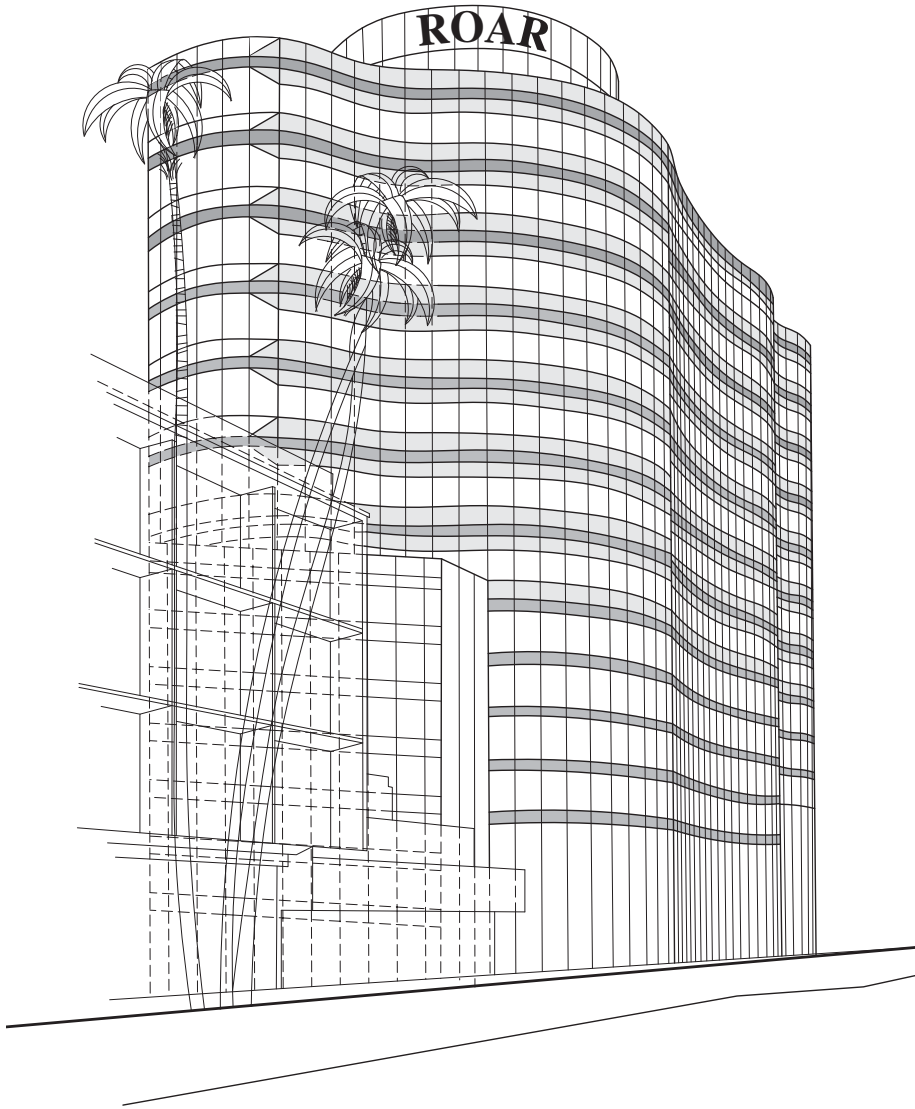




1000 Wilshire Boulevard



8484 Wilshire Boulevard



9071 Wilshire Boulevard

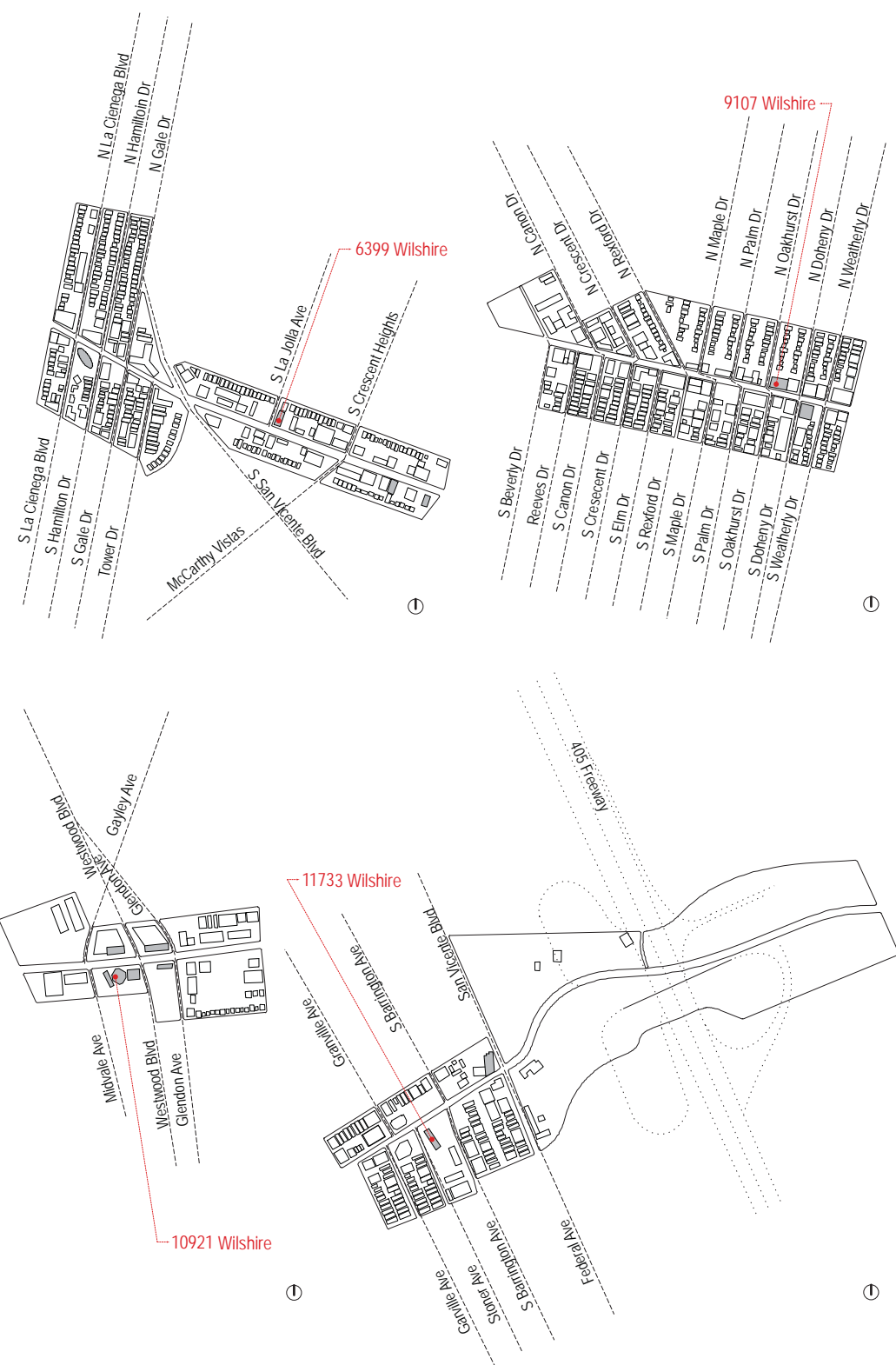


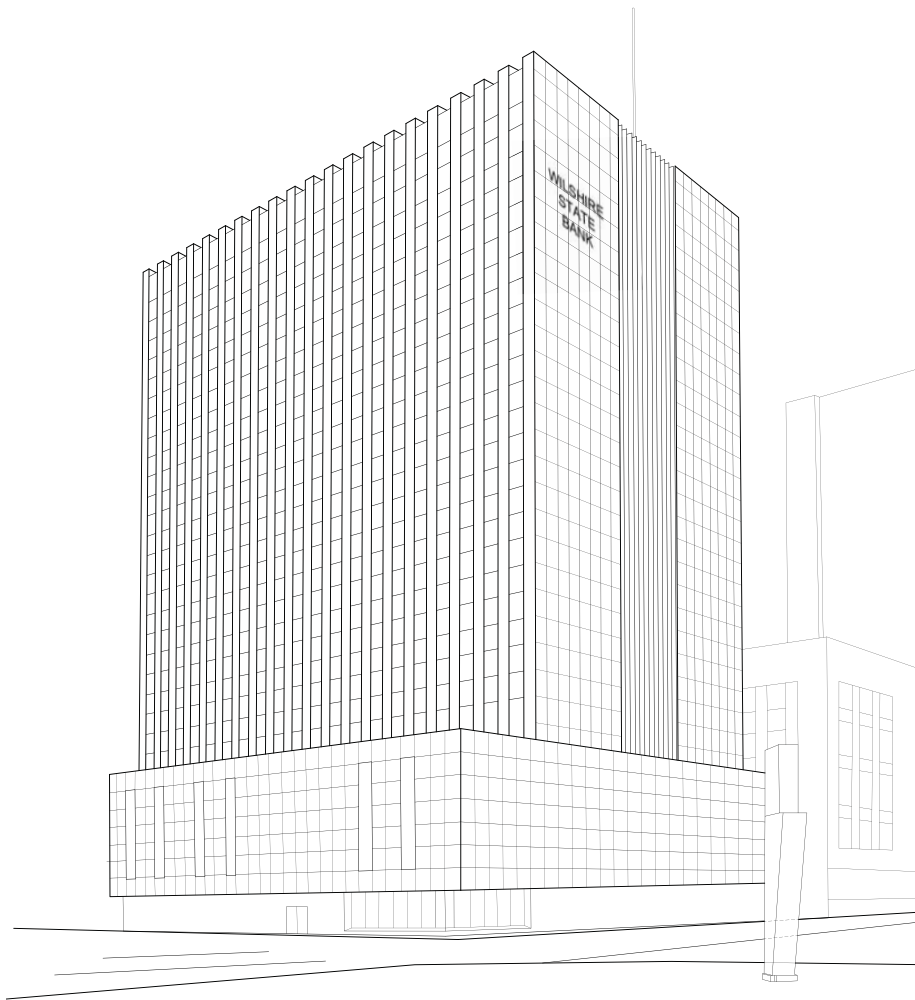
9777 Wilshire Boulevard

Anchor

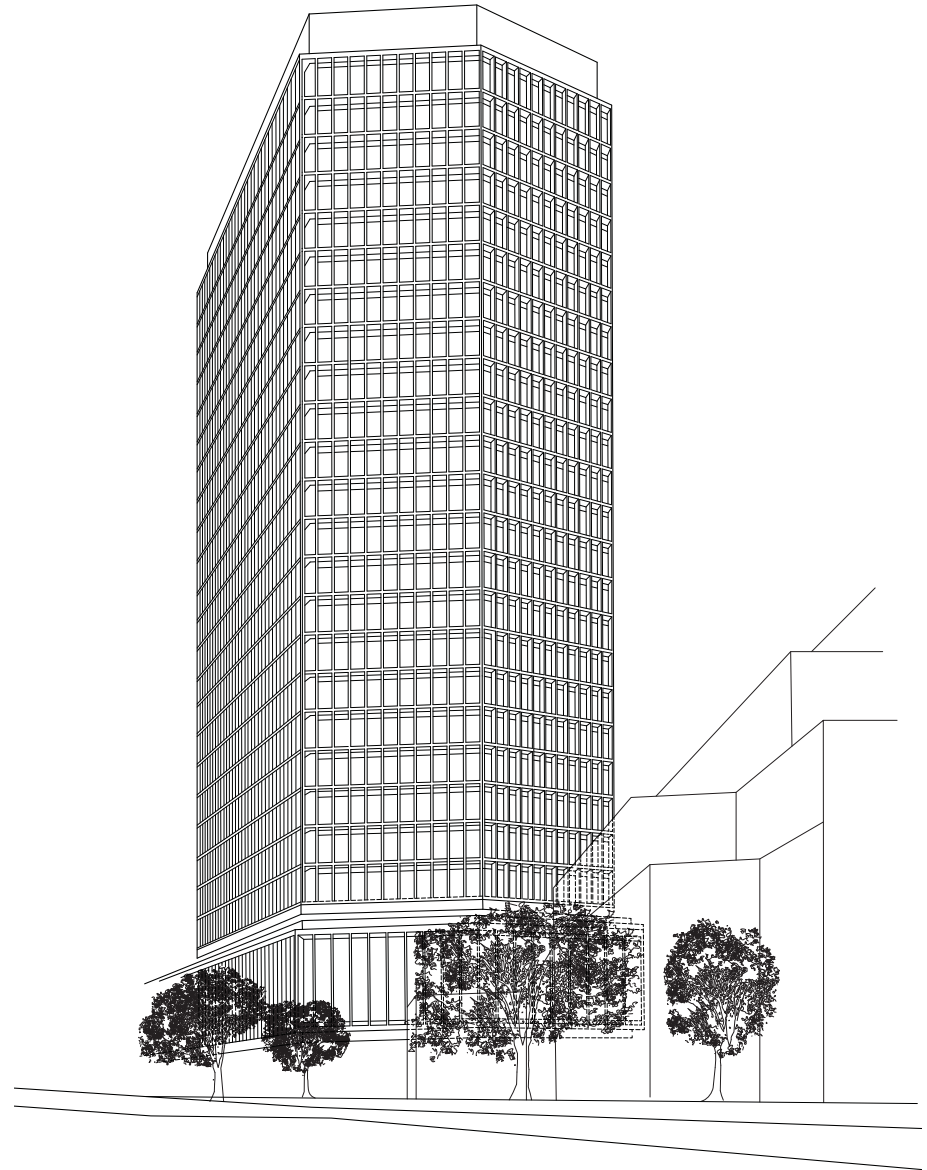
"The emergence of Wilshire Boulevard as a business stretch second to none in the metropolis revealed the process whereby the authorities allowed the landowners to exploit their frontage so that the few roads in Los Angeles planned as rustic parkways emerged as commercial highways."

-Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, 1967





3200 Wilshire Boulevard



5622 Wilshire Boulevard



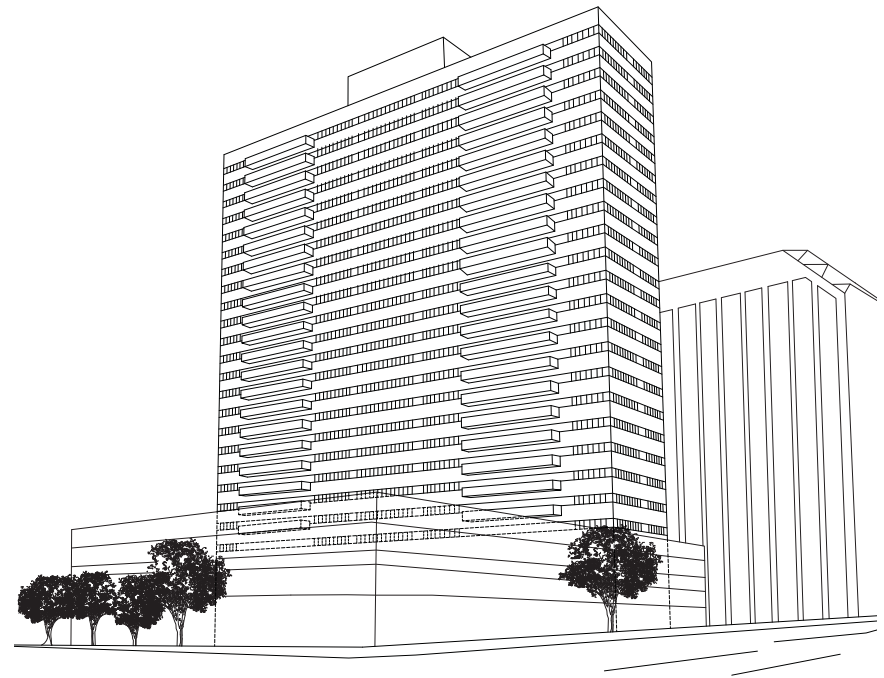
6399 Wilshire Boulevard



9107 Wilshire Boulevard



10921 Wilshire Boulevard

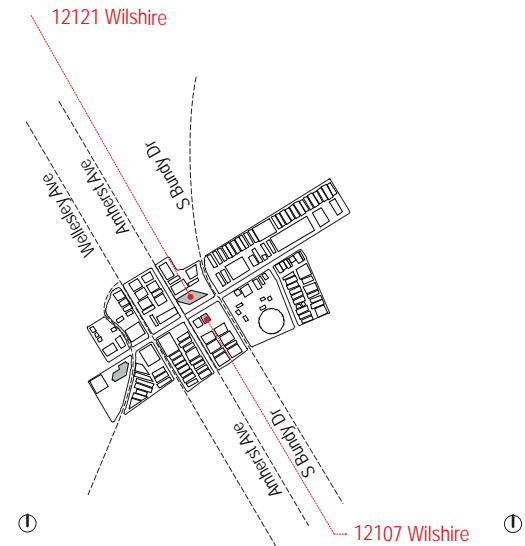
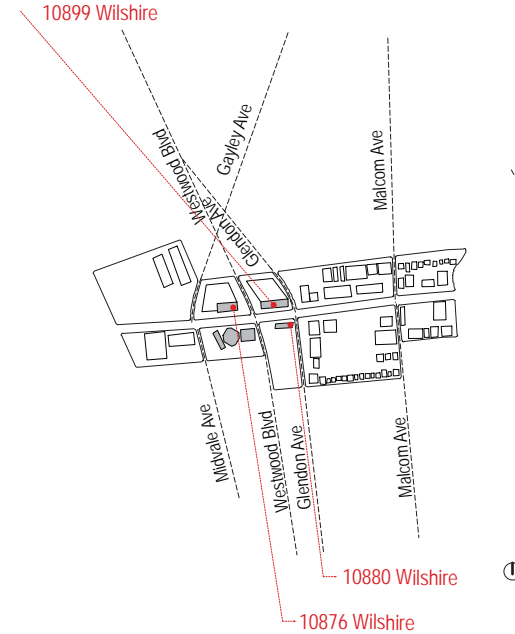
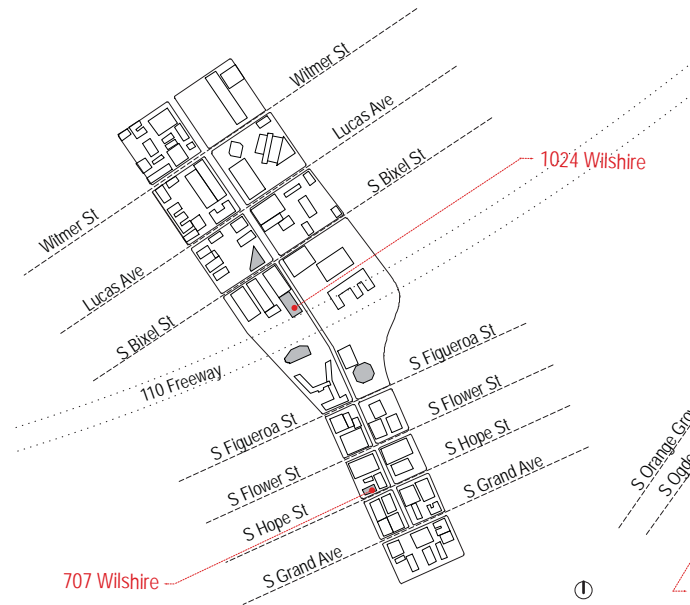
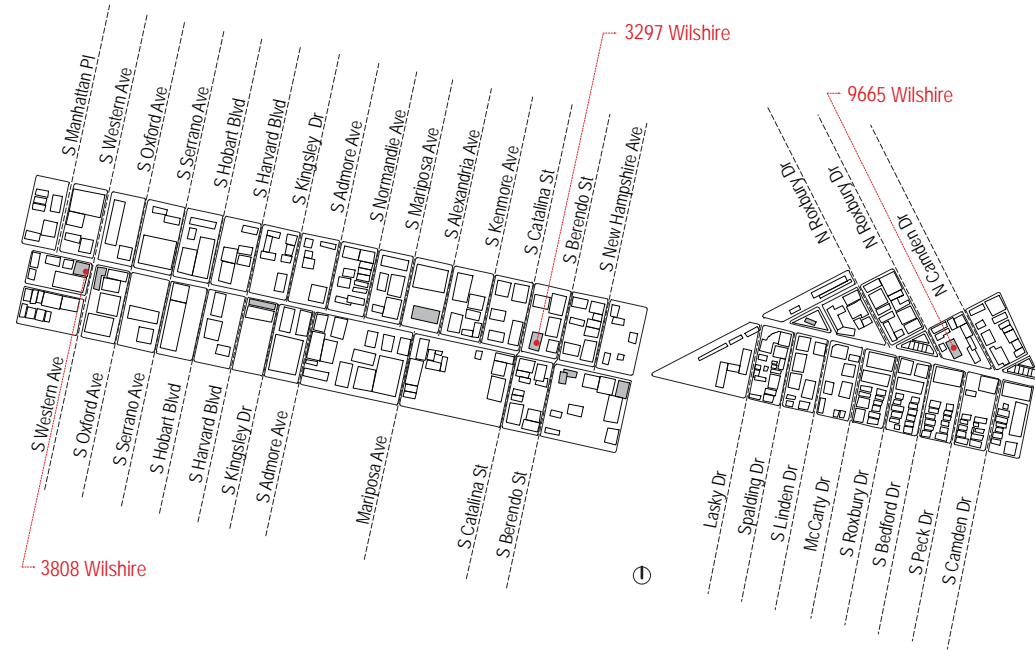


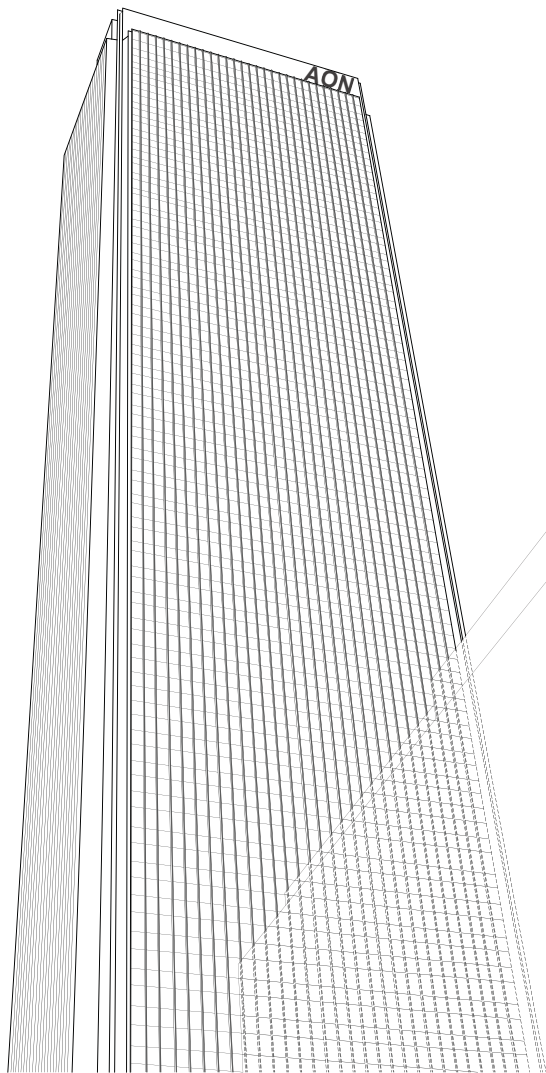
11733 Wilshire Boulevard

Camouflage

"When something is built, you can't hide it. A building is intentions, values and economic power made flesh. A close scrutiny of an architectural object can reveal much about the hidden agendas and power relationships of the various players in the development of the city."

-Aaron Betsky, *LA Forum Newsletter*, October-November 1990

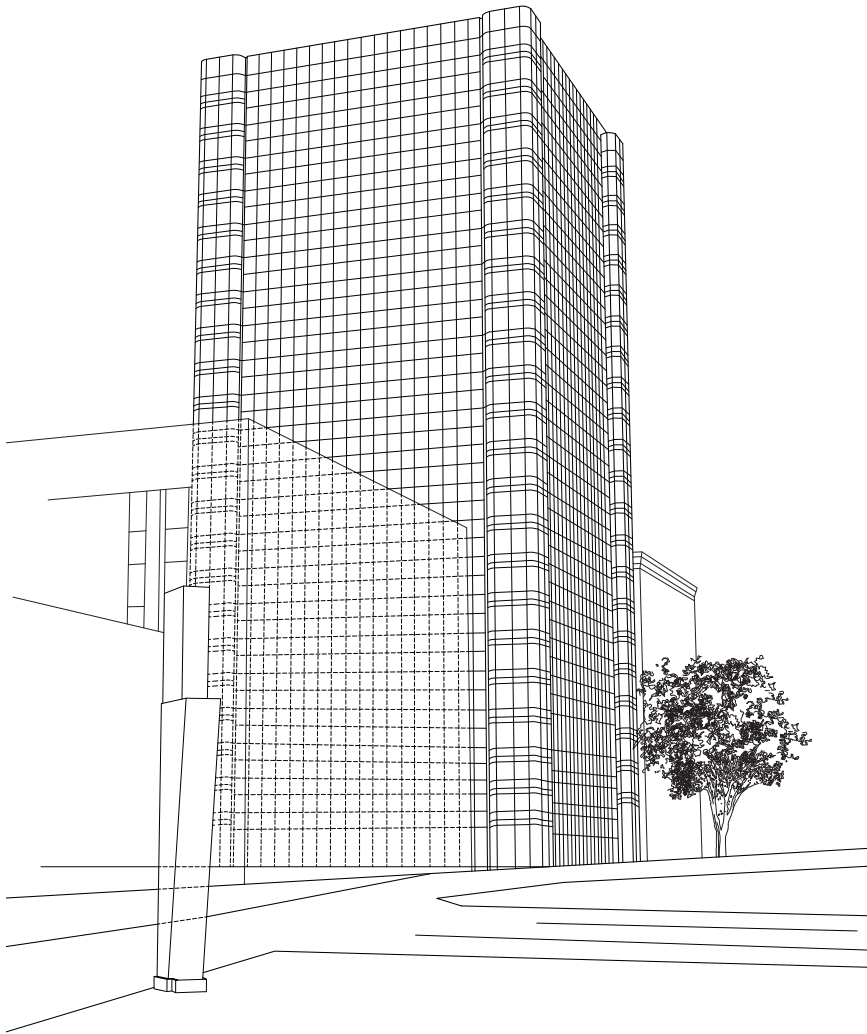




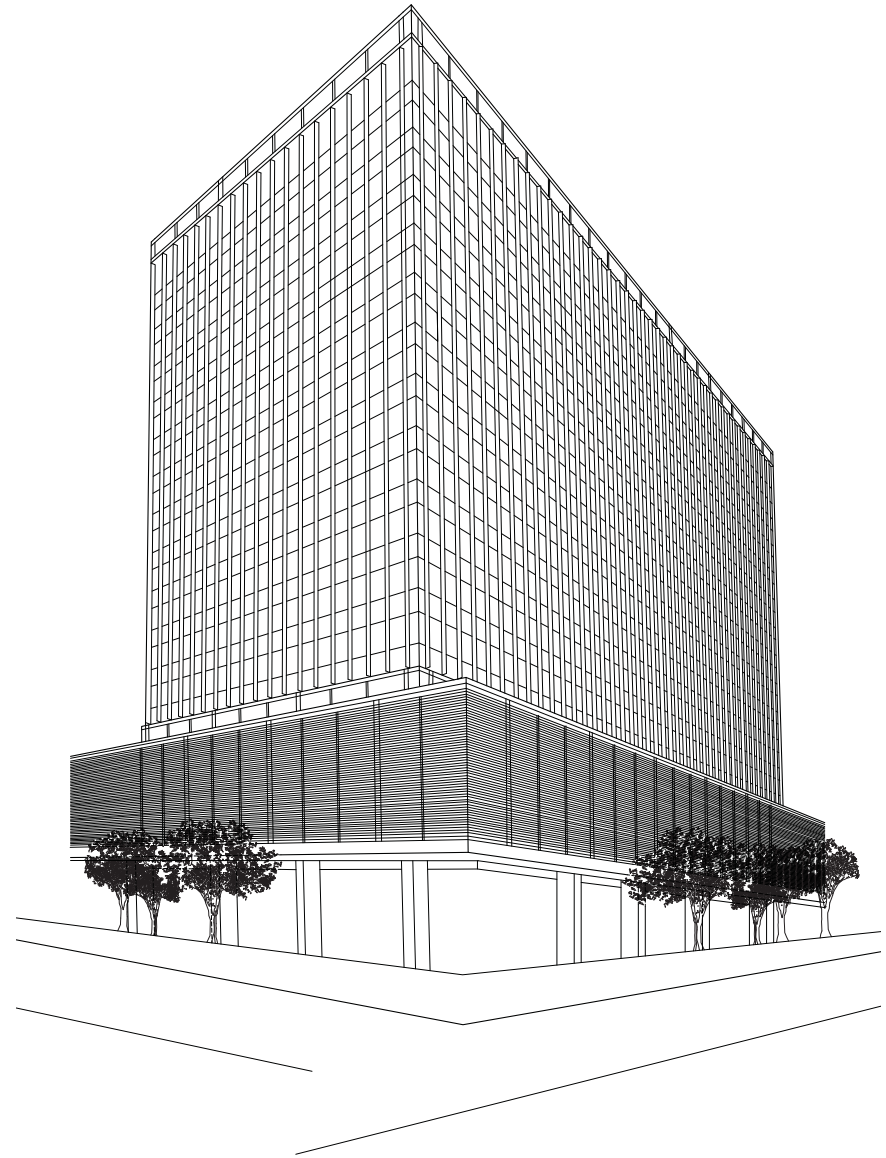
707 Wilshire Boulevard



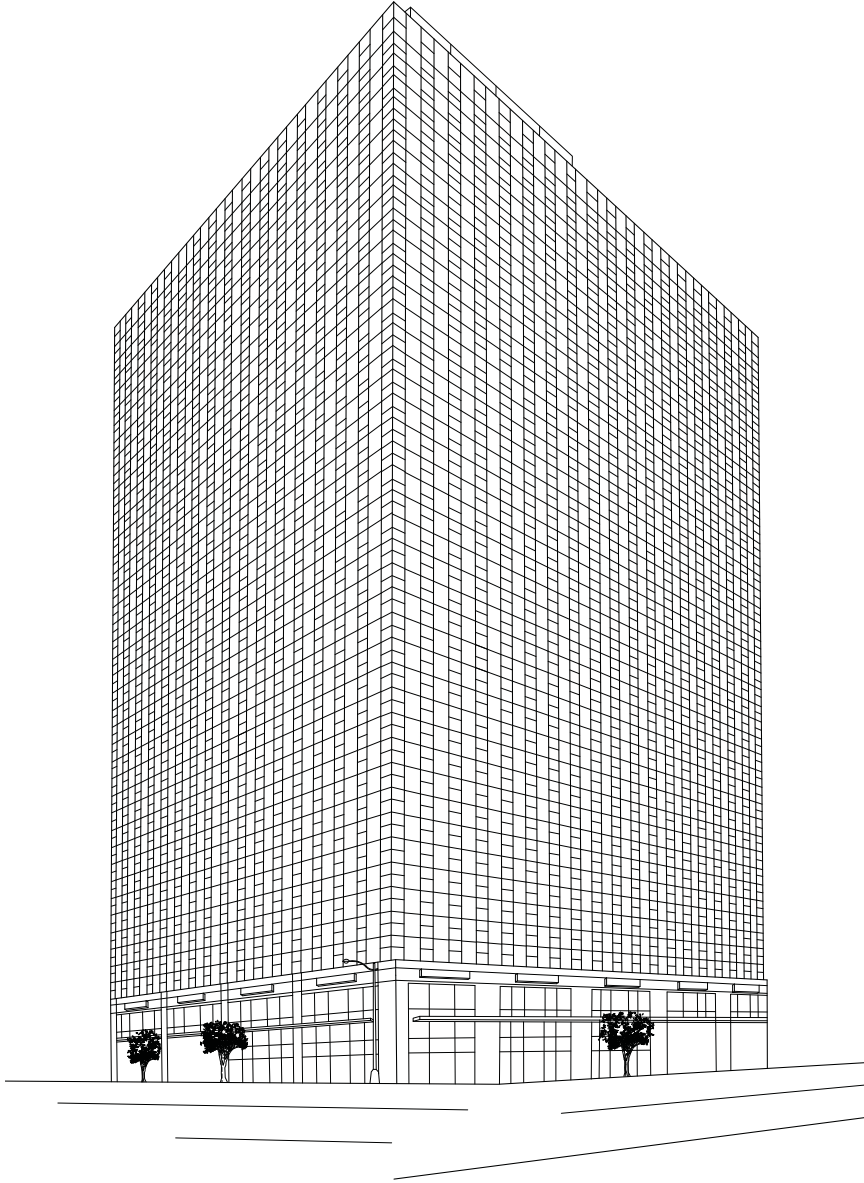
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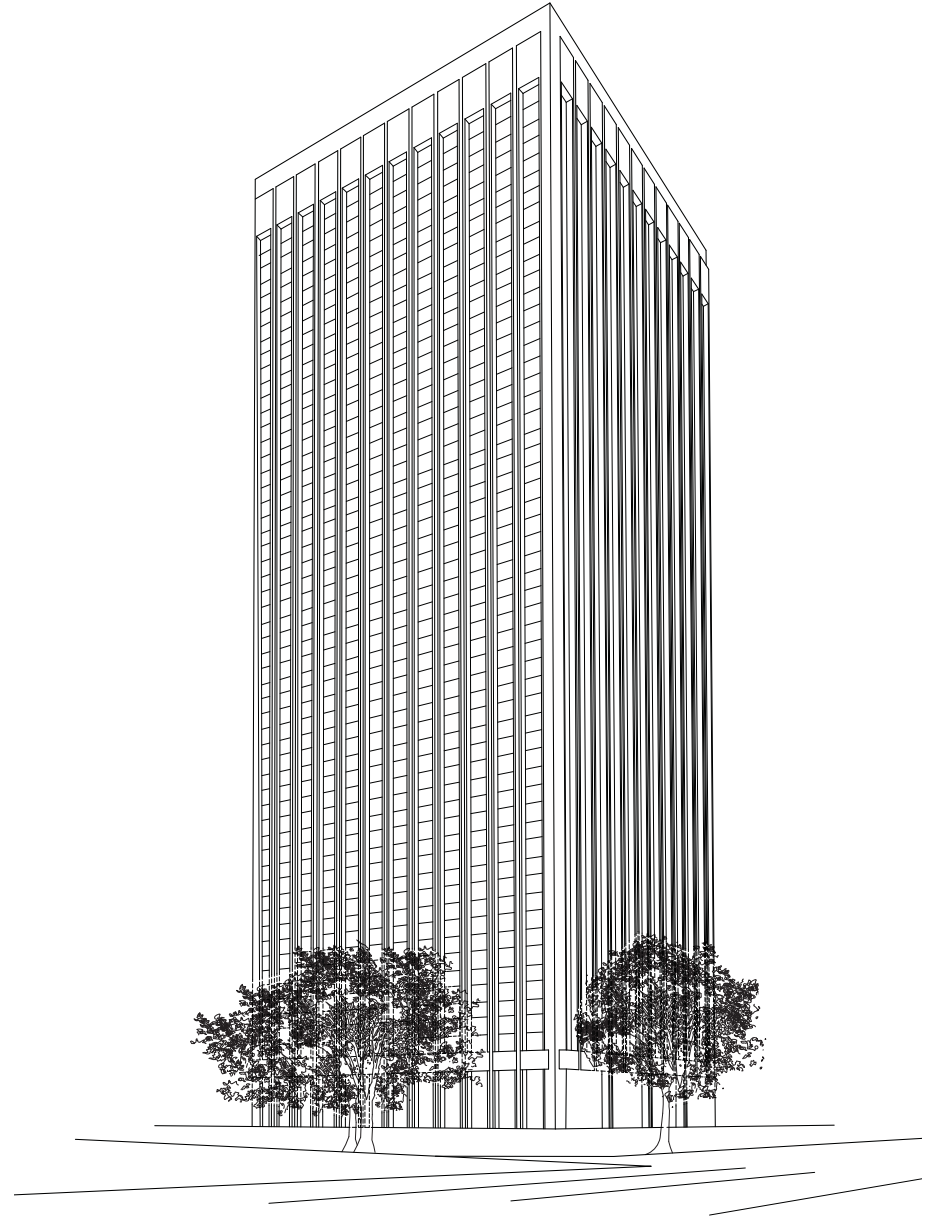
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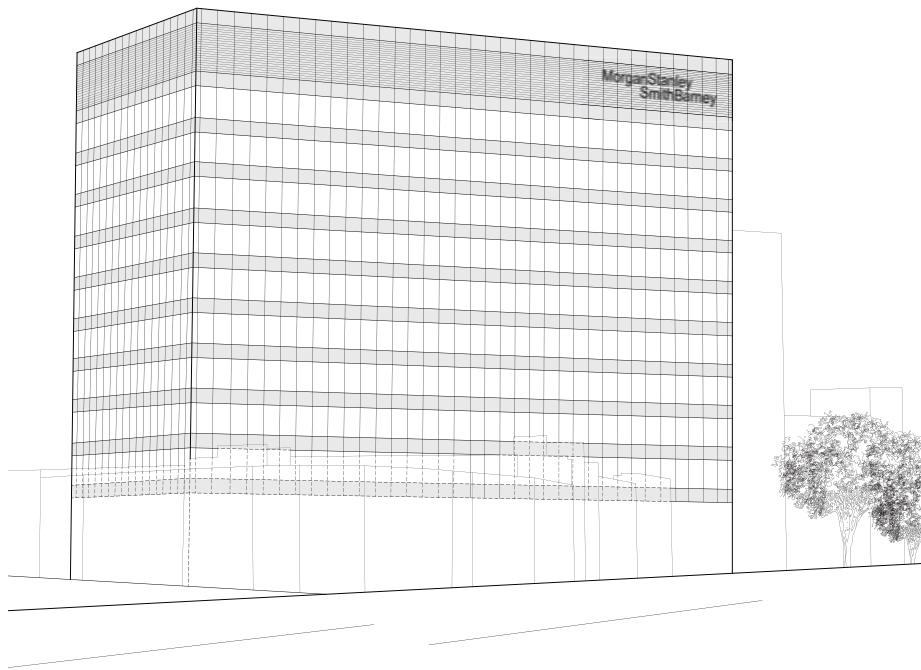
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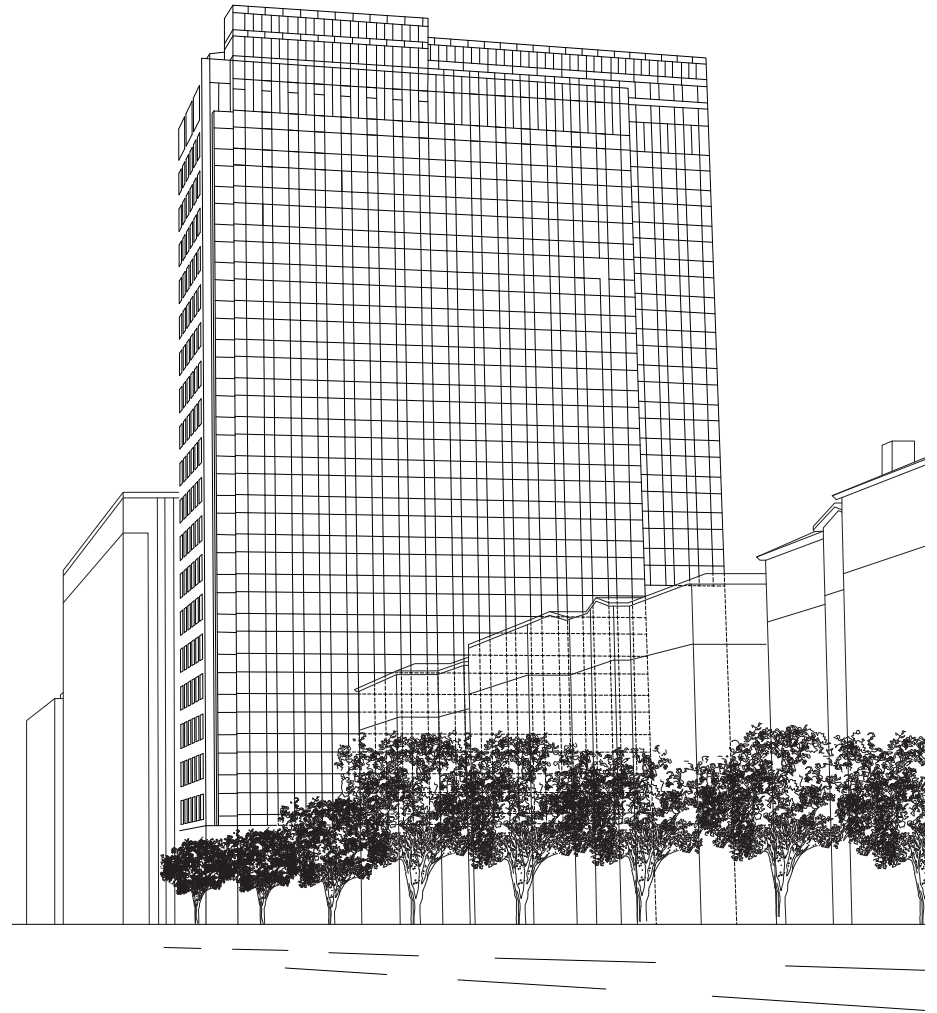
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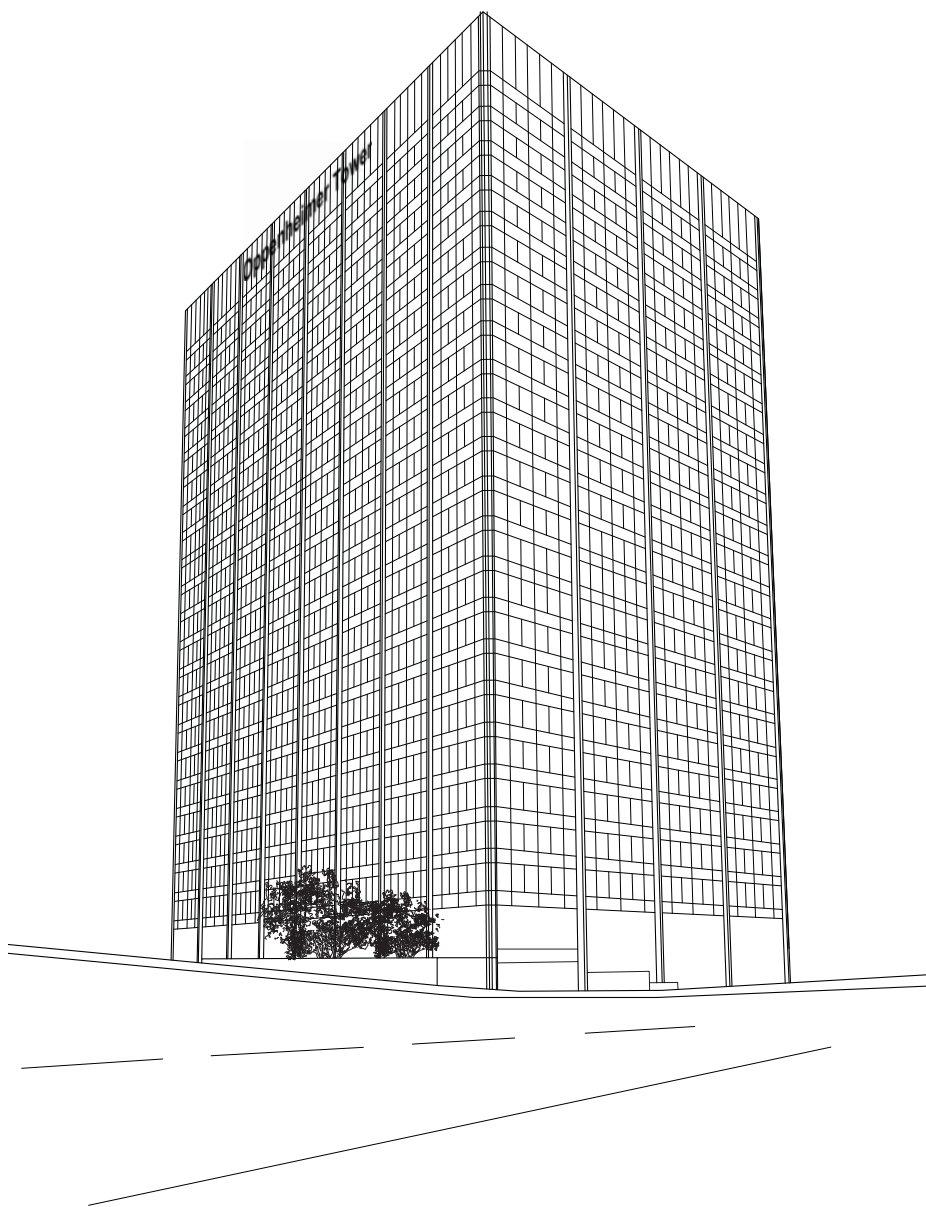
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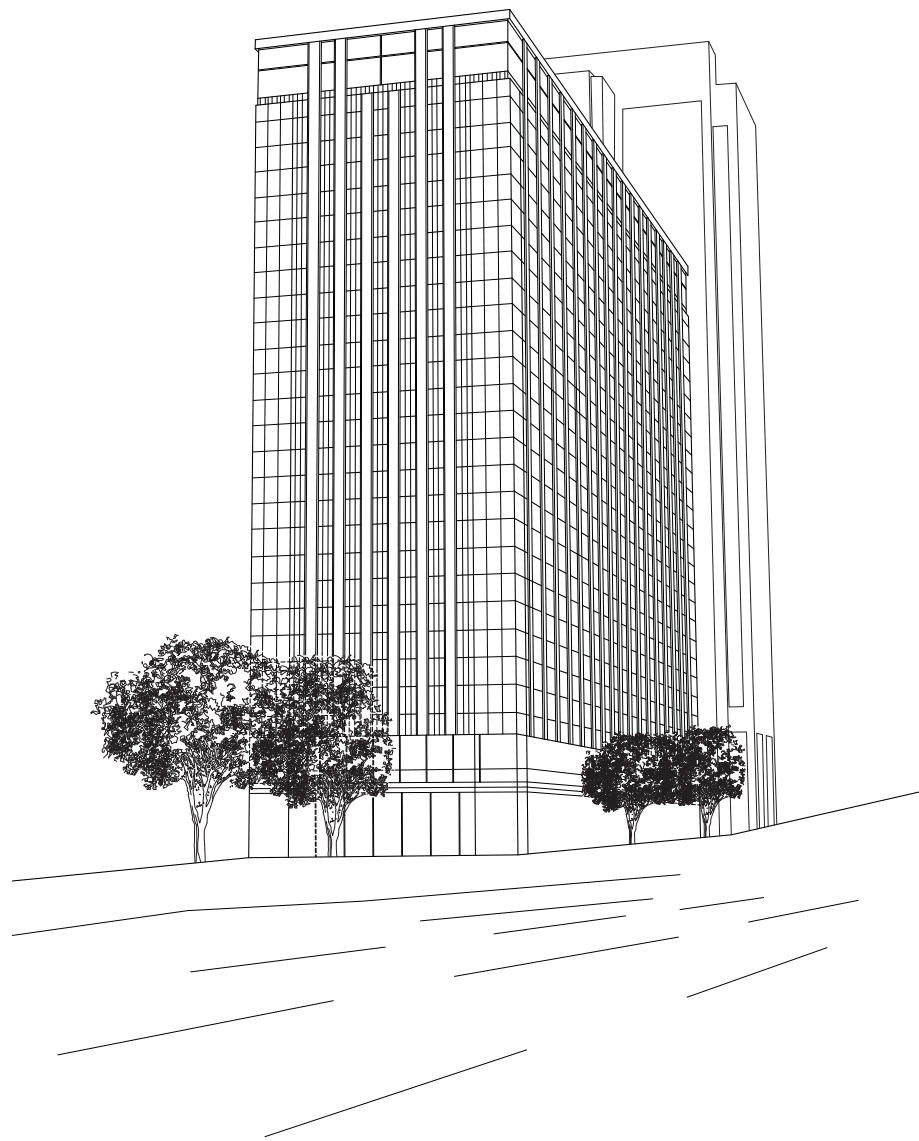
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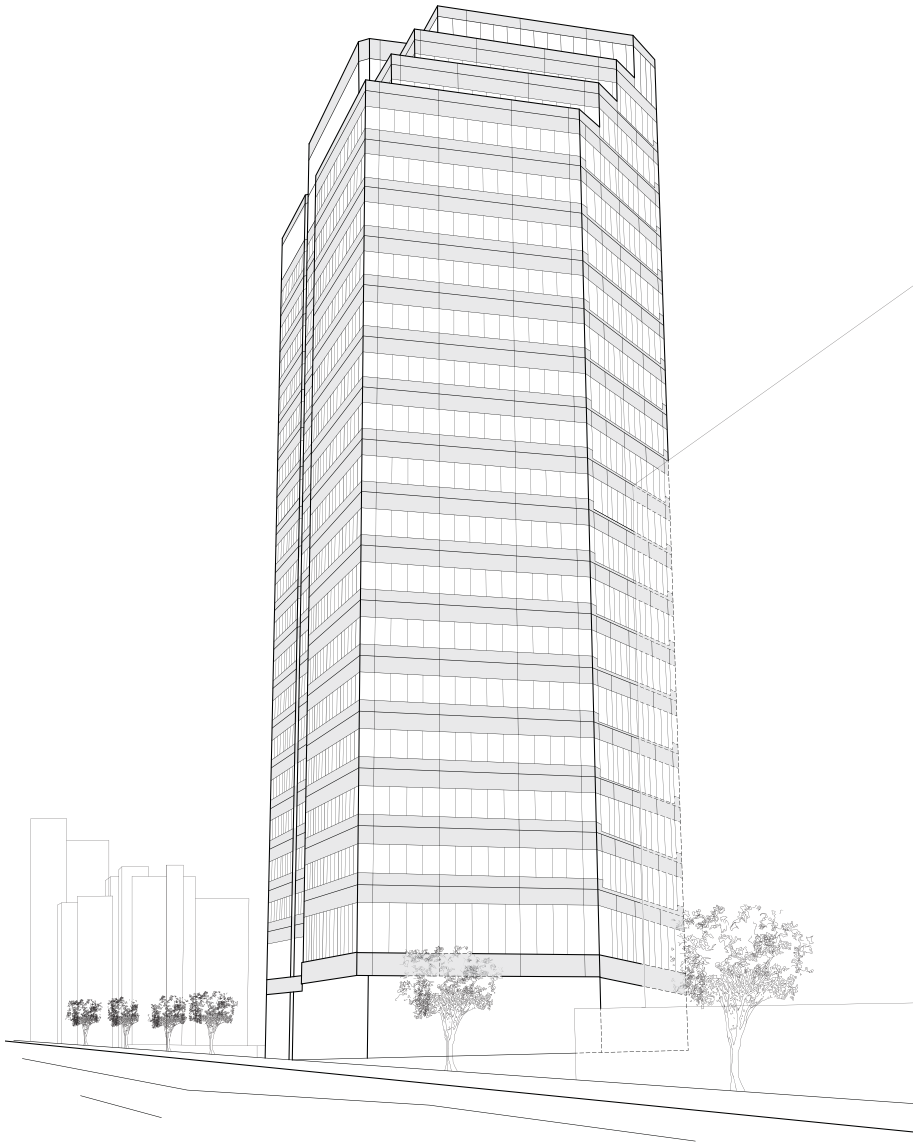
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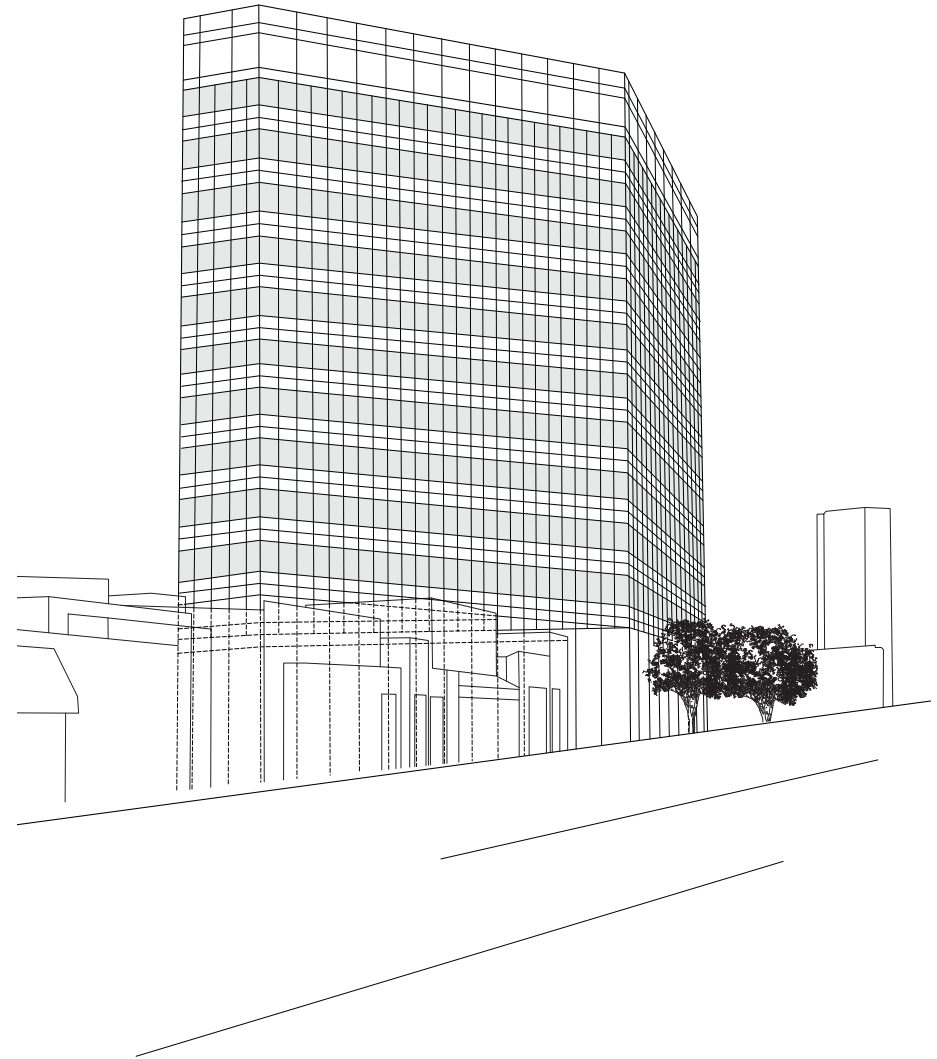
10880 Wilshire Boulevard



10899 Wilshire Boulevard



12107 Wilshire Boulevard

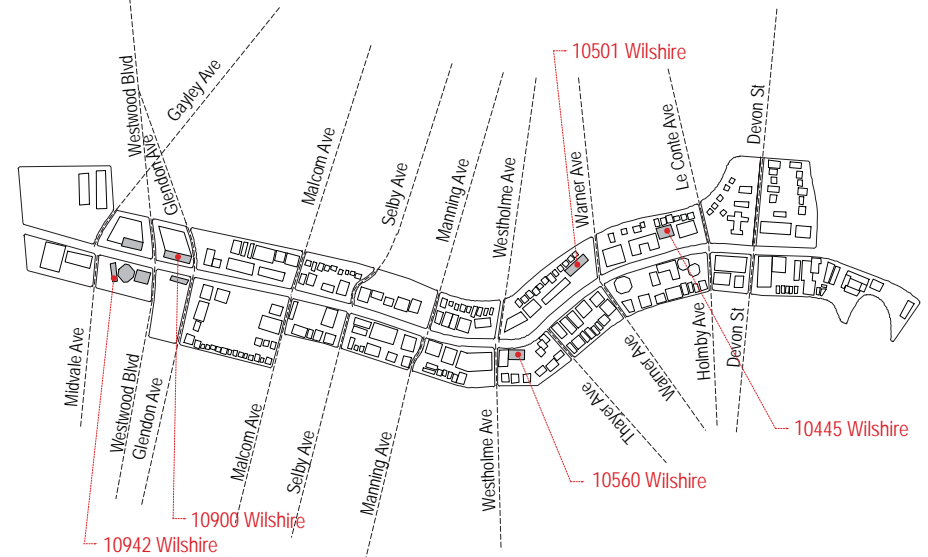
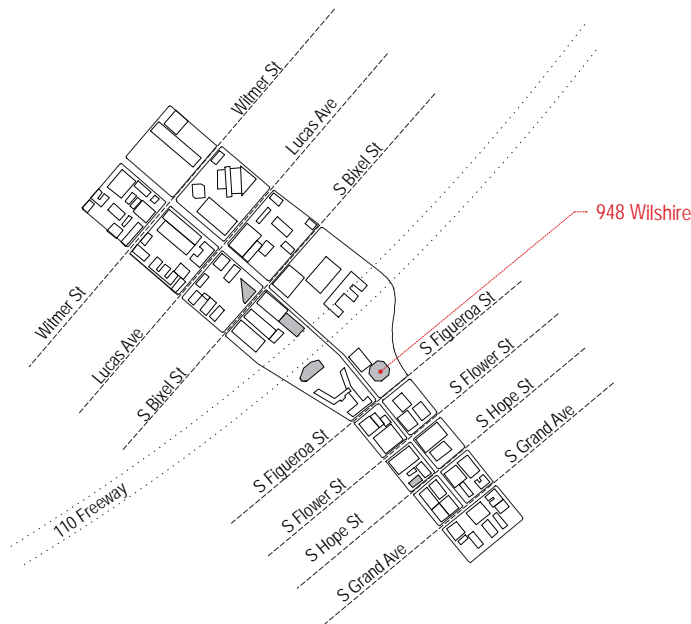


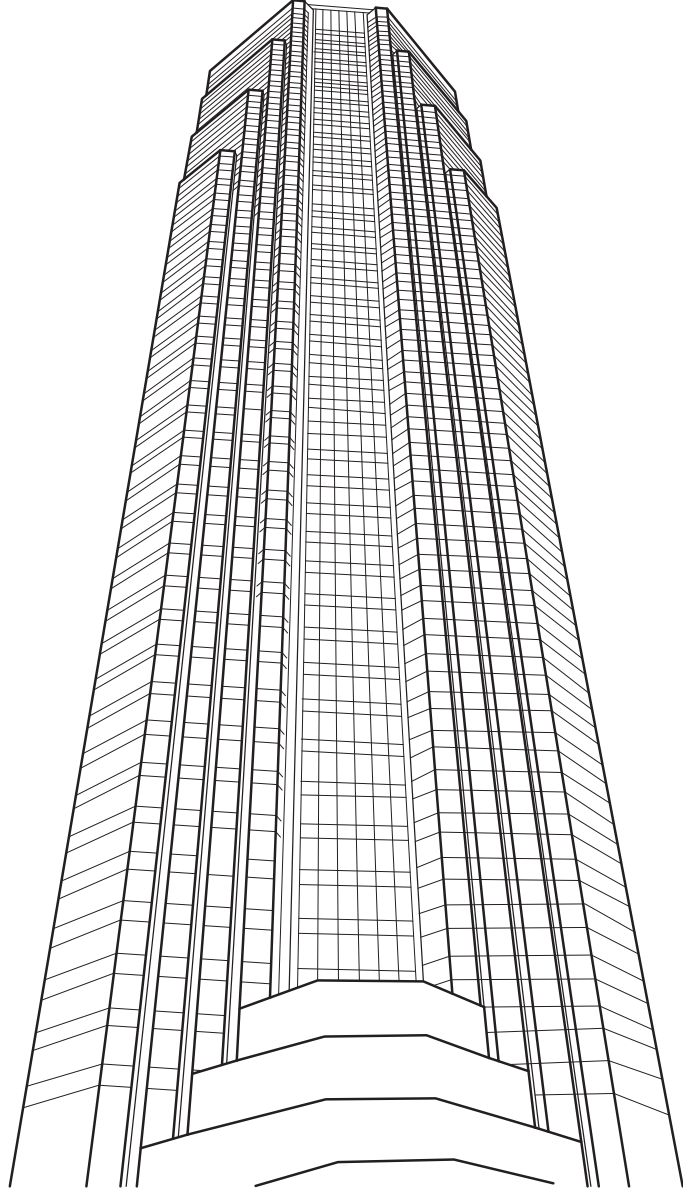
12121 Wilshire Boulevard

Surface

“One of the attractions of the automobile in a dispersed and relatively under-equipped community is that it requires, fundamentally, very few special facilities—it will run tolerably on any fairly flat, hard surface. So Sunset Boulevard was not surfaced at all...But in that year work was already in hand on the first real monument of the Motor Age: Miracle Mile on Wilshire Boulevard. The Boulevard itself was the creation of years of ad hoc subdivisions...”

-Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, 1971

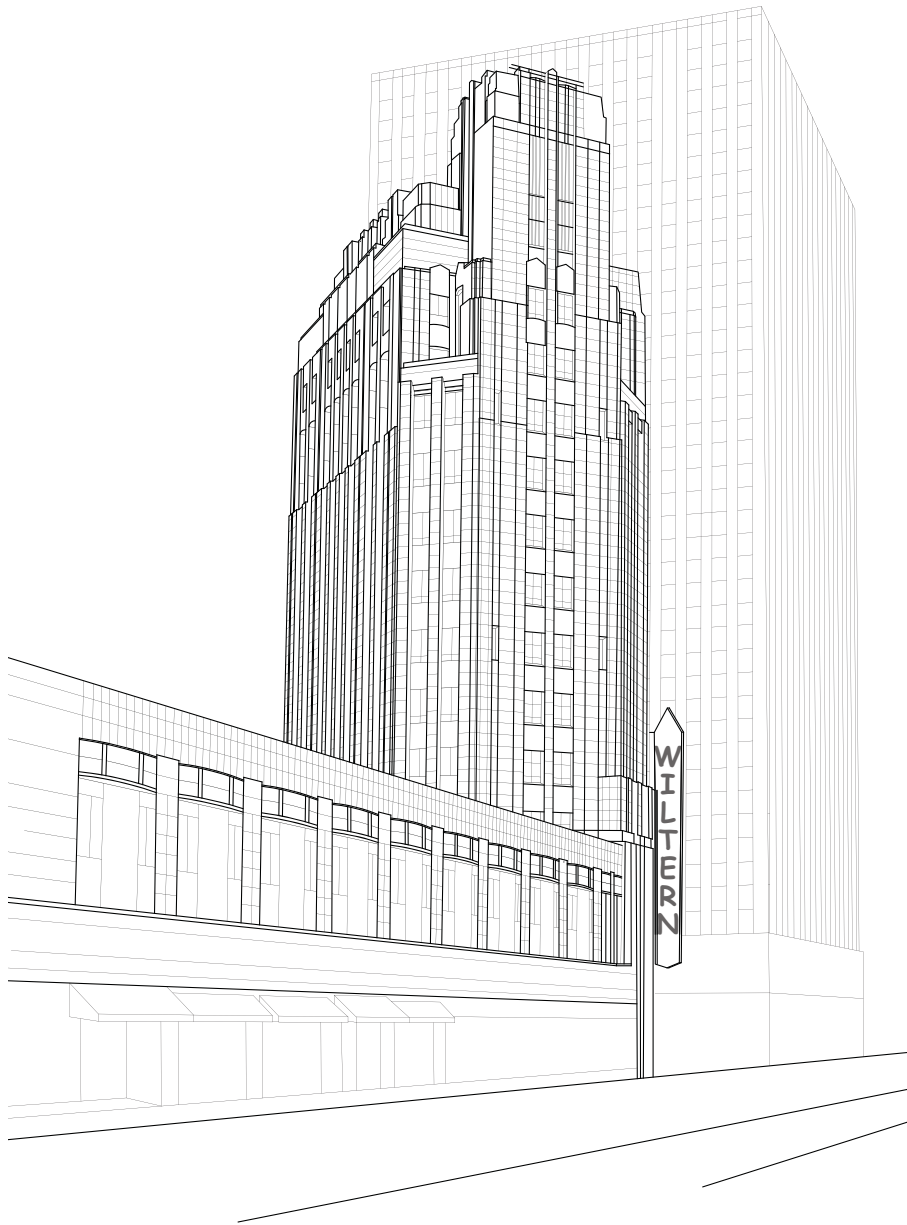




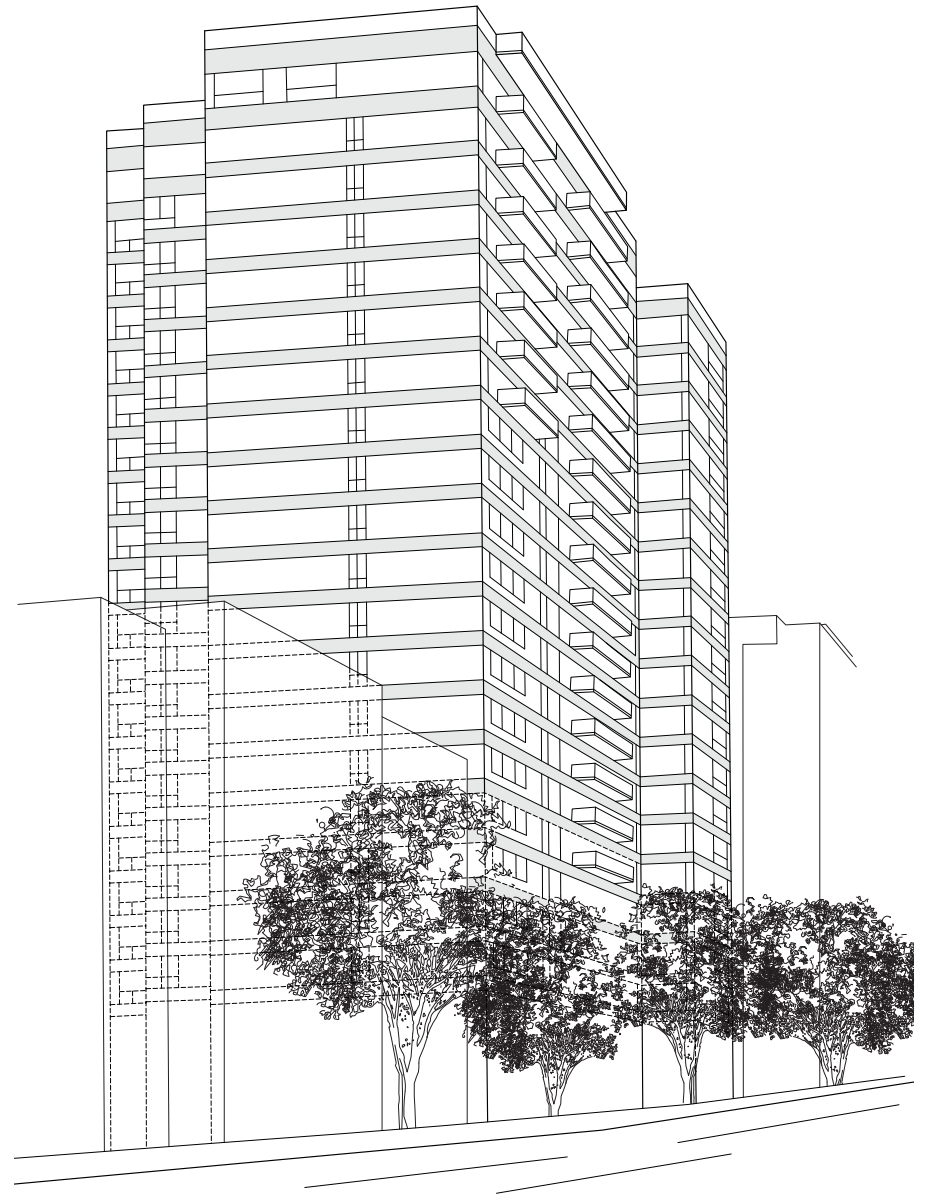
948 Wilshire Boulevard



2960 Wilshire Boulevard



3788 Wilshire Boulevard



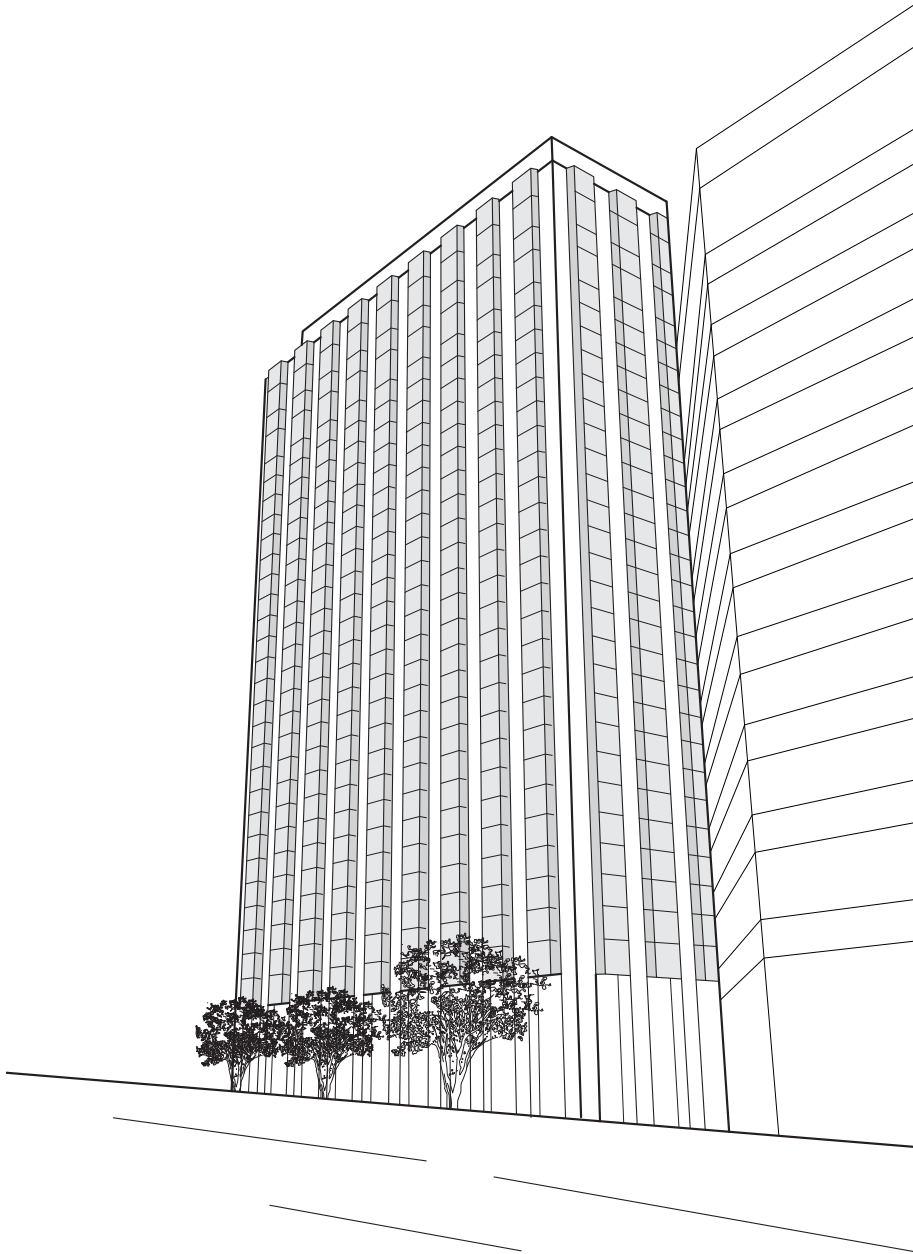
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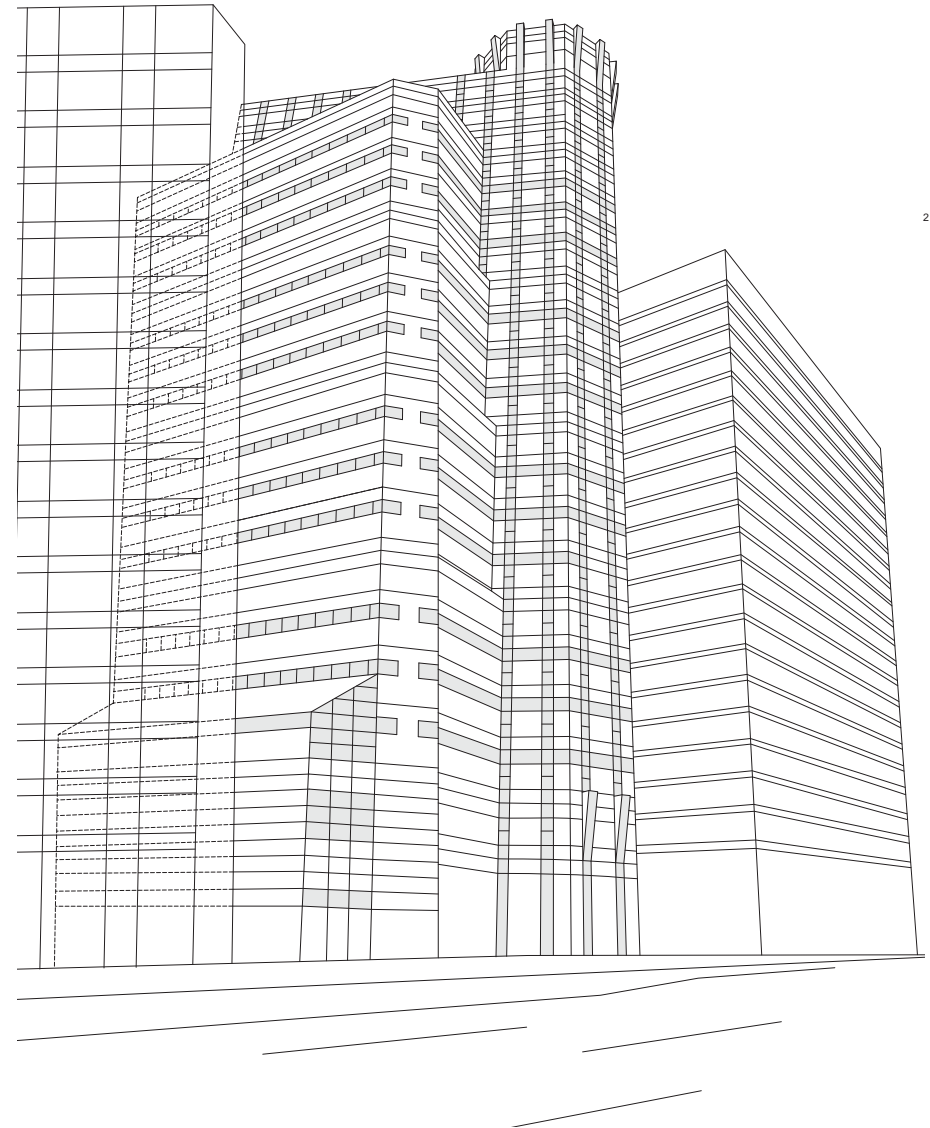
10501 Wilshire Boulevard



10560 Wilshire Boulevard



10900 Wilshire Boulevard



10942 Wilshire Boulevard

Epilogue



“Wilshire had emerged as the city’s earliest and most conspicuous example of linear extension, and to urban observers it must have seemed logical that the old dominance of a central point (downtown) with its regional-town satellites in orbit, would now be replaced by the dominance of a single line. But the controlling spine turned out to be only a transitional rather than definitive urban form.”

-Douglas R. Suisman, Los Angeles Eight X-Rays of the Body Public, 1989