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TSEBE HOUSE

ST ALBAN'S COLLEGE

TSEBE HOUSE
St Alban's College, Pretoria

CLIENT
St Alban's College

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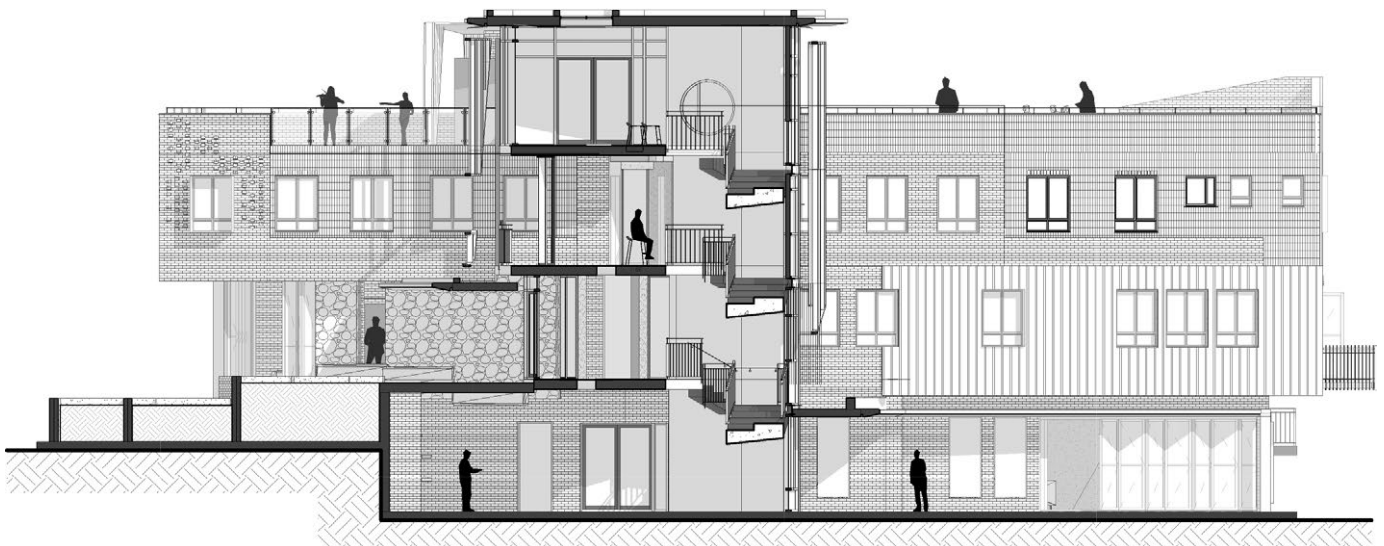
Perched within the undulating landscape of Pretoria's koppies, Tsebe House at St Alban's College emerges as a radical reinterpretation of the boarding experience, weaving together the threads of South African heritage, avant-garde architectural innovation and communal ethos. Designed by ARC MU:V, Tsebe House transcends conventional typologies, engaging with the spatial narrative that caters to the discerning needs of Gen Z and Gen Alpha. This project is a symbiotic convergence of space, light, and form - a dialogue between past and future, tradition and transformation.

Site and Contextual Dialogue

Founded in 1963 in Lynnwood Glen, Pretoria, St Alban's College is a campus that speaks to the interlacing of nature and academia. Strategically sited opposite the historic chapel, Tsebe House serves as both counterpoint and complement, harmonising with the college's vernacular while establishing its own modern identity. This spatial dialogue extends beyond mere adjacency; it is an architectural mediation between the sacred and the secular, between the inherited and the envisioned.

Client Brief and Programmatic Response

Addressing the burgeoning needs of the college's expanding student body, the client brief called for an environment that goes beyond mere accommodation, advocating for spaces that support intimate, small-group living. The design delivers this through precisely calibrated room layouts, en-suite dormitories, and communal spaces that cultivate a profound sense of belonging. It's an articulation of modern





boarding principles, meticulously crafted to enhance the collegiate experience and foster a cohesive community.

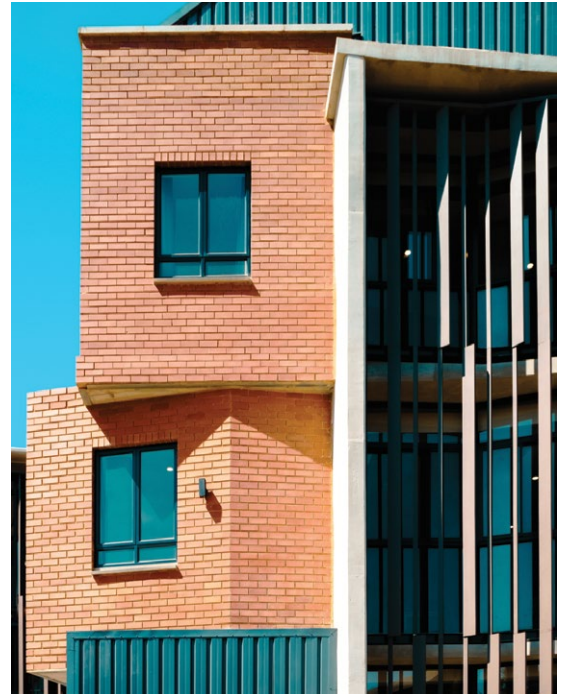
Design Concept: Beyond the Box

Rooted in the principles of contextualism and material authenticity, Tsebe House is an exploration of South African architectural identity. The project embodies the philosophy of 'Breaking the box' - eschewing conventional spatial hierarchies in favour of cross-programming, spatial layering, and solar carving. This triad of design strategies generates a dynamic interplay of public and pri-

vate realms, crafting a built environment where fluidity and function coexist.

Spatial layering is employed to introduce depth and complexity, guiding inhabitants on a journey from the intimate to the expansive. Robust tectonic and volumetric expressions articulate the transitions, inviting discovery and interaction. The approach to solar carving is not merely about form-making but about optimising environmental performance - massing and envelope designs are meticulously sculpted to harness natural light and ventilation, elevating the building's sustainability credentials.





Sustainability as an Architectural Imperative

Sustainability is interwoven into the fabric of Tsebe House, not as an afterthought but as a guiding principle. The integration of locally sourced materials, passive cooling strategies, and natural daylighting systems speak to a broader environmental ethos. This is architecture that is resilient and anticipatory, designed to meet present

needs while remaining adaptable to future demands, thus reducing its ecological footprint.

Façade: The Poetics of Light and Materiality

The façade of Tsebe House is conceived as a palimpsest, inscribed with layers of history and intention. Utilising terracotta satin and travertine brick from Corobrik, it reflects the enduring legacy





EAST ELEVATION

of face-brick at St Alban's College. This is not merely a material choice but a tactile narrative - one that captures light, shifts with the seasons, and interacts dynamically with its environment. The façade's design philosophy is rooted in the idea that 'when a face brick is hit by light, it turns alive', a testament to the power of materiality to evoke emotion and memory.

The articulation of the façade employs subtle shifts in brick patterning and orientation, creating a rhythm that echoes the vibrancy of the student life within. These nuanced variations manifest a crafted aesthetic, celebrating the intersection of the human hand and the machine, the personal and the institutional. The façade thus serves as a mediator, linking the building to its surroundings and embedding it within the continuum of the school's evolving architectural narrative.

Architectural Collaboration and Community Engagement

The creation of Tsebe House was an exercise in architectural collaboration, engaging stakeholders across the St Alban's community - architects, educators, students, and alumni. This process ensured that the building is not merely a product of design but a manifestation of collective memory and aspirations, imbued with a distinctly South African character that reflects the community it serves.

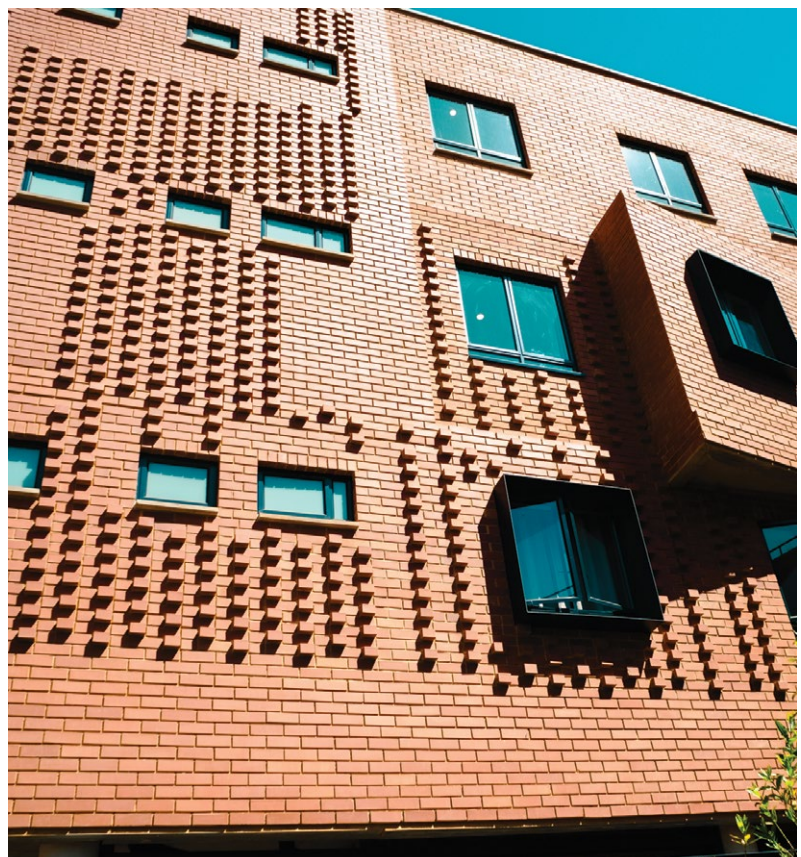
Designing for Gen Z and Gen Alpha: Spatial Fluidity and Technological Integration

Tsebe House redefines the boarding experience by dismantling the orthodoxies of spatial arrangement. Corridors are reimagined as social conduits - broad, inviting, and animated with potential. Cross-programming permeates the design, with spaces taking on multiple roles: staircases evolve into amphitheatres, rooftops transform into venues for learning and leisure. This multiplicity reflects a deeper understanding of the spatial needs of Gen Z and Gen Alpha - cohorts that prioritise connectivity, flexibility, and communal experiences.

The building's technological infrastructure is seamlessly integrated, from ubiquitous Wi-Fi to advanced security systems, creating an environment that is as safe as it is connected. These interventions are not superficial add-ons but are woven into the architectural language, ensuring that the physical space meets the digital expectations of its inhabitants.

Inclusivity and Adaptive Futures

Tsebe House is also a testament to inclusive design, prepared to evolve alongside the community it serves. The central staircase void, reserved for the future integration of a wheelchair lift, exemplifies this forward-thinking approach. Such design



TSEBE HOUSE



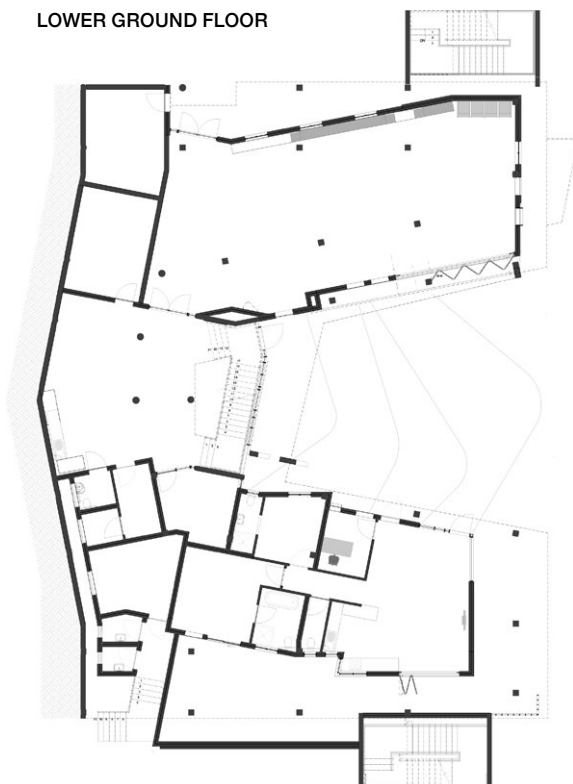
decisions ensure that the building remains adaptable, catering to a diverse range of needs and preferences while maintaining its core architectural integrity.

Honouring Legacy: Tsebe House as a Living Memorial

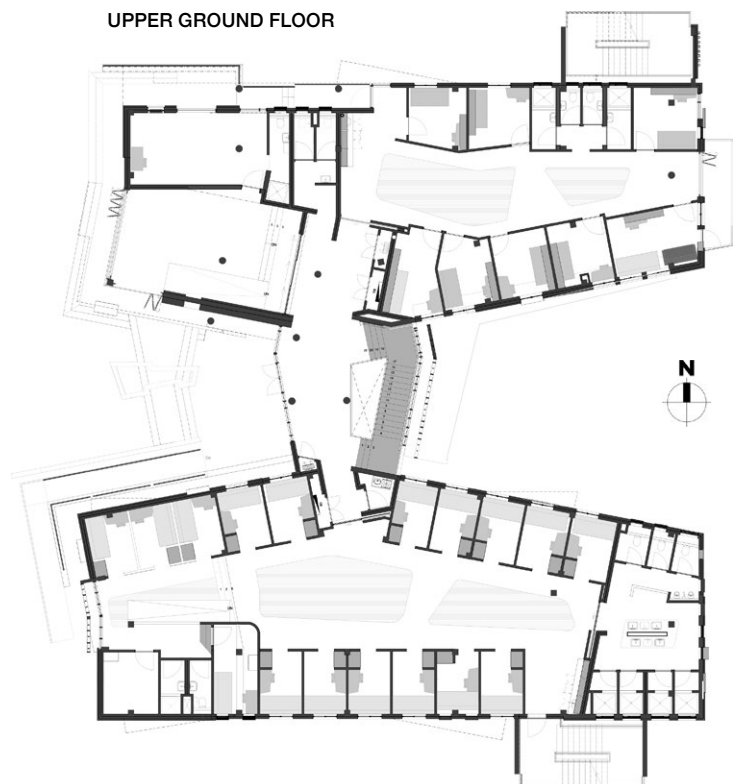
Named in honour of Canon John Tsebe, the first Black member of St Alban's Governing Body,

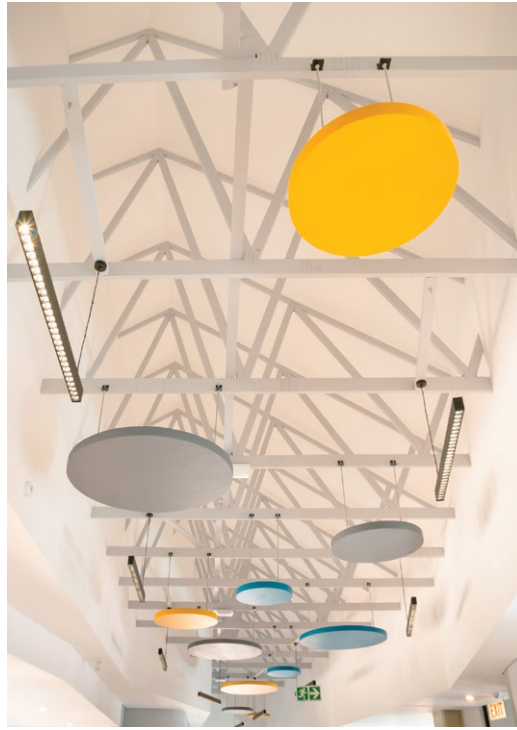
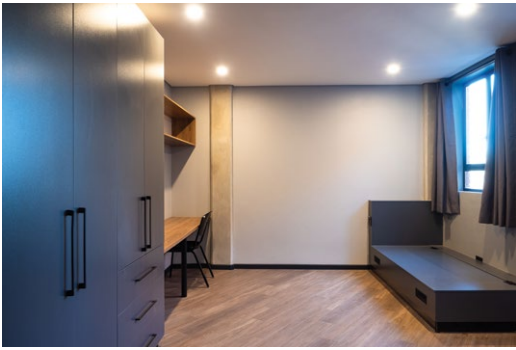
Tsebe House stands as a living tribute to his legacy of inclusivity and community. It embodies the values of equity and respect, bridging the past with the future. This symbolic gesture is not confined to the nameplate; it permeates the very bricks of the building, which incorporate salvaged materials from the site's previous structures, forging a physical and metaphorical connection to the school's rich history.

LOWER GROUND FLOOR



UPPER GROUND FLOOR



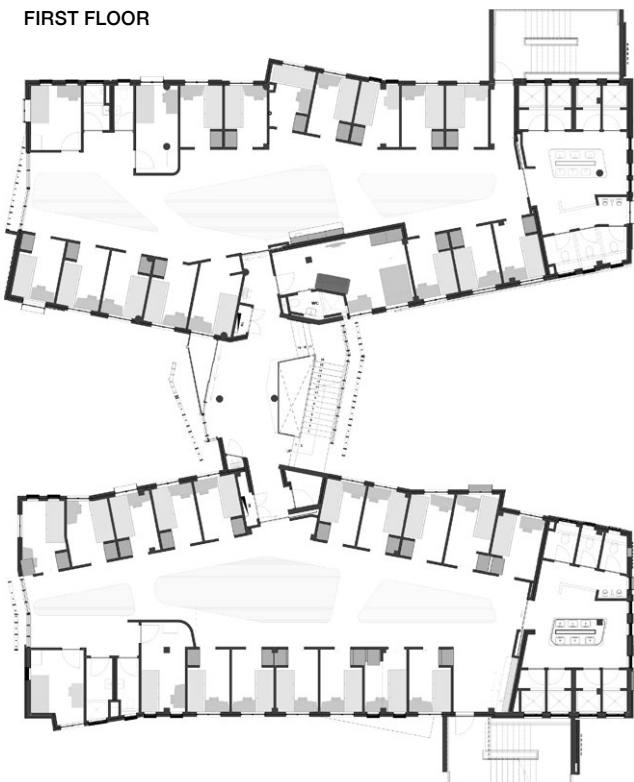


Conclusion: Architecture as Experience

Tsebe House is more than a building, it is an experiential environment that challenges, engages, and inspires. Through a meticulous orchestration of form, function, and philosophy, it redefines the future of educational spaces. It is an embodiment of St Alban's vision of prioritising people and their experiences, turning the built environment into a canvas for

community and connection. In every corner of Tsebe House, the past whispers, the present hums, and the future beckons - a profound illustration of the enduring power of architecture to shape human experience. As Headmaster Shane Kidwell aptly states, "Schools are ultimately about people, and our focus must always be on creating environments where people matter most."

FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

