

name. LAWS.whiskey house
type. NEW CONSTRUCTION [5,000 - 15,000 SF]
size. 5,806 GSF
cost. WITHHELD
program. A new tasting room for a local whiskey distillery occupies an abandoned corner lot in an industrial neighborhood. The Brutalist-inspired design reflects the unapologetic honesty at the core of LAWS, while introducing a playful contrast between the raw character of making and the lush experience of savoring a finely crafted cocktail. The building is carefully sequenced around educational and tasting experiences that embody the brand's philosophy and craft, using moments of compression and release to evoke emotion and narrate the story of distillation.

date. DEC. 2024
location. DENVER, CO





PROJECT NARRATIVE

LAWS is a tough, no-punches pulled, raw, in your face, beauty... and the tasting room sought to reflect that ethos as the foundation of design.

The resulting architecture offers a spatial pairing to the whiskey that is simple, timeless, patinaed, honest, embraces imperfection, and is deeply soulful.

The LAWS team persevered and manifested this project... Within the concrete and steel that form this building you will find the blood, sweat and tears of LAWSwhiskey.

... it all starts with grain

Heirloom and heritage grains are central to what makes LAWS whiskey exceptional and the grain silos are the vehicle for these ingredients in the first stages of production.

In turn, the silos are the spine of the architectural experience: they are the backdrop of the chapel, where the tour experience begins; you circulate around the silos as you leave the chapel and head to the distillery; and the tops of the silos offer an architecture backdrop that is central to the bar experience.

From each vantage point the silos are intentionally too close to see in their entirety, transforming industrial structures into more abstract, sculptural, and artistic objects.

... curating experience

Following the story LAWS tells on each of its tours, the individual spaces use compression and release thoughtfully in each step of the experience to evoke emotion and to help tell the story of distillation.

The building is organized by natural light and view, or lack thereof, with a procession from dark to light and back again. The introverted dark compression of the downstairs tasting bar is in contrast to the expansive, light filled silo of the stairwell, which is in contrast to the moody, extroverted intimacy of the upstairs lounge.

... the materials

Whiskey is alchemy - taking something simple and ordinary (water / grains / burnt wood) and creating something magical through technique and patience.

The building takes simple, rough, utilitarian materials (CMU / plywood / tectum / concrete / plaster), and makes something magical through the arrangement of elements and use of light: concrete block walls are curved; plywood is installed in a patchwork; tectum panels are faceted; plaster is rolled on heavy and left to drip; and concrete is left to crack.



DESIGN FOR ECONOMY

The project began with humble beginnings and a tightly monitored budget, with cost-conscious design decisions made from the outset. Inspired by brutalism, its industrial context, and the client's no-nonsense philosophy, the design embraces common, inexpensive and durable materials and elevates them through form and detailing.

The locally sourced CMU blocks offer an articulated exterior that references the surrounding warehouses while pushing formal boundaries through large curves. Wood floor and roof framing—using a mix of TJIs and LVLs based on structural needs and visibility—was chosen as a carbon-friendly alternative to steel bar joists and proved more accessible and affordable during pandemic-era supply chain disruptions. Burnished concrete floors on plywood decking were left exposed, offering durable, utilitarian flooring throughout. Finishes are used sparingly but intentionally. In the whiskey chapel and tasting bar, black-painted AC plywood forms a patchwork of rough wood grain and refined pattern. Painted and faceted acoustic tectum panels line the upstairs lounge, bring soft texture, sound dampening, and a sense of compression to the space. Plaster and paint were applied heavily and allowed to drip, evoking the texture of a charred whiskey barrel. Stained wood tambour is used to clad the bar; a subtle taper at its base is introduced to elevate this common material into something distinctive.

The resulting design provides a warm, inviting space that evokes curiosity and offers an abundance of texture, contrast, and composition while staying within the means of the client.

DESIGN FOR CHANGE

This project was developed for a highly specific program and an equally unique client. Shaped by zoning and parking constraints, the design concentrates public functions on two primary floors while anticipating future growth and long-term flexibility.

Instead of a crawl space, the architects proposed a full basement. Though currently utilitarian—housing mechanical systems and storage—it's organized to support a future speakeasy, complete with provisions for an additional bathroom and elevator access. The signature curved stair extends to this level, maintaining the building's elevated spatial experience throughout. A future rooftop deck was also envisioned, offering panoramic views of the mountains and city. The curved stair was engineered to reach the roof, the egress system sized for added occupancy, and the elevator includes a third stop. The roof structure was reinforced, and the building form accommodates a sheltered stair landing and space for a compact rooftop bar.

The structural system—CMU walls with infilled wood framing—spans large open areas and allows for future reconfiguration, enabling the building to adapt to different programs over time.

DESIGN FOR INTEGRATION

While the project was forged out of necessary practicality in many ways, it was important to the client and the architect that two of the fundamental design moves were fulfilled without compromise. These moments celebrate the ethos of LAWS whiskey and provide a memorable sense of wonder.

Before building their own tasting room, LAWS began tours in a small distillery room affectionately called "the whiskey chapel"—named for the salvaged pews and their religious devotion to whiskey. Honoring this origin was essential, and the chapel remained central to the design from the outset. Its defining feature is a soaring, two-story Gothic-style window that offers shifting views of the silo yard—sometimes framing only the steel legs, other times revealing the full vertical scale. Designed in close collaboration with the window manufacturer, it combines standard rectangular units with custom divided lites, creating a bespoke tribute to whiskey and craft.

Inspired by Brutalist forms and Aalto's concrete silo in Oulu, Finland, the team designed a forty-foot CMU silo to anchor the building's corner. Inside, a cantilevered steel stair winds upward—serving as the vertical spine of the project. Lit from above by a rotated skylight, the stair is flanked by 119 lengths of slender steel bar, creating a delicately articulated contrast to the heavy, faceted CMU walls. This expressive core celebrates both material honesty and architectural craft.







BRANDY

AMARO

CURACAO

WORLD'S BEST SMALL BATCH BOURBON 2024
LAWS WHISKEY FOUNDED 1924

LAWS
FOUR GRAIN BOURBON

LAWS
FOUR GRAIN BOURBON

LAWS
FOUR GRAIN BOURBON

202
LAWS
ORIGINS

LAWS
BLACK & GOLD BOURBON

LAWS
BONDED CORN

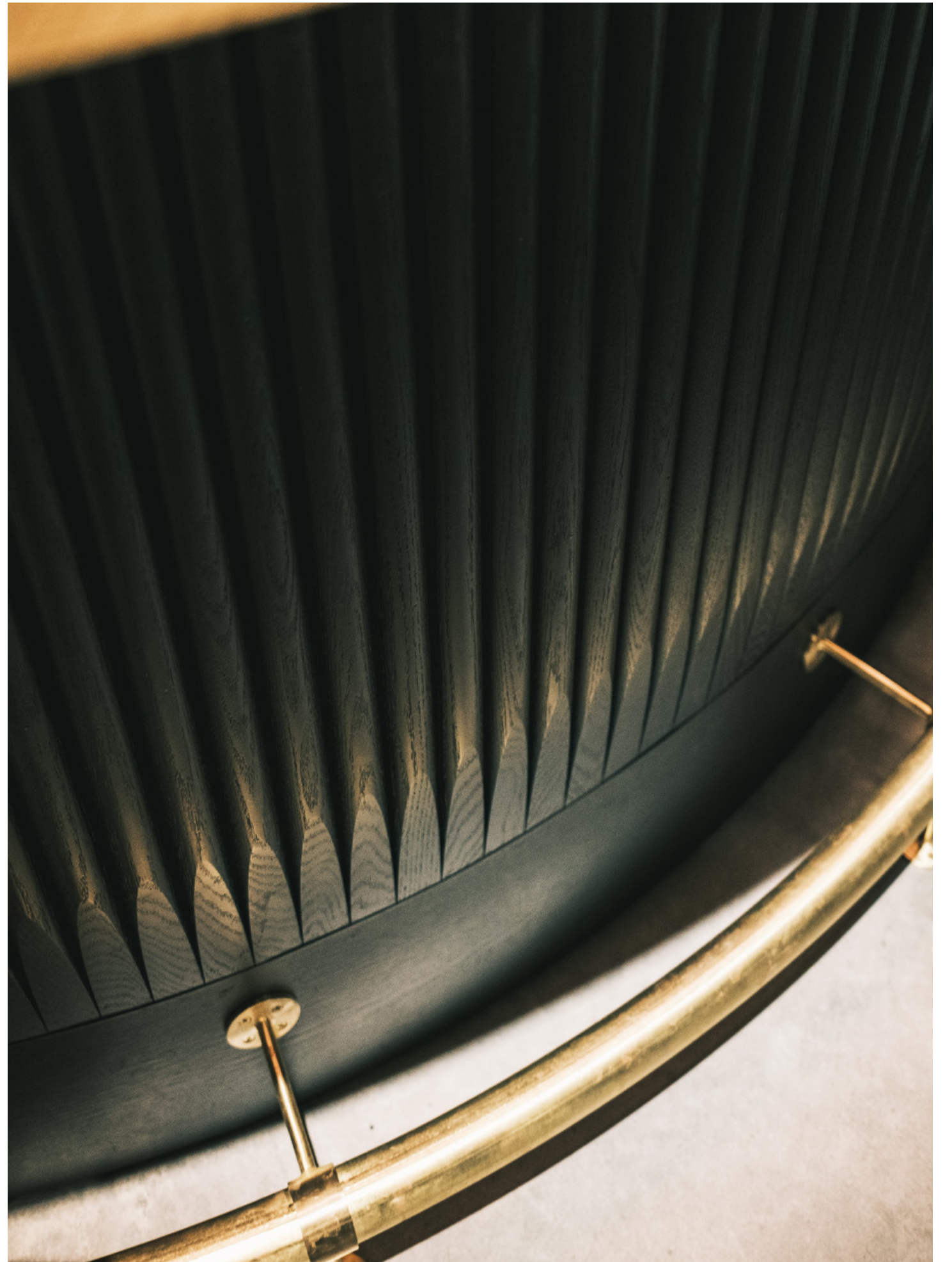
LAWS
RALPHIE'S BOURBON

LAWS
FOUR GRAIN BOURBON

LAWS
AMERICAN WHISKEY

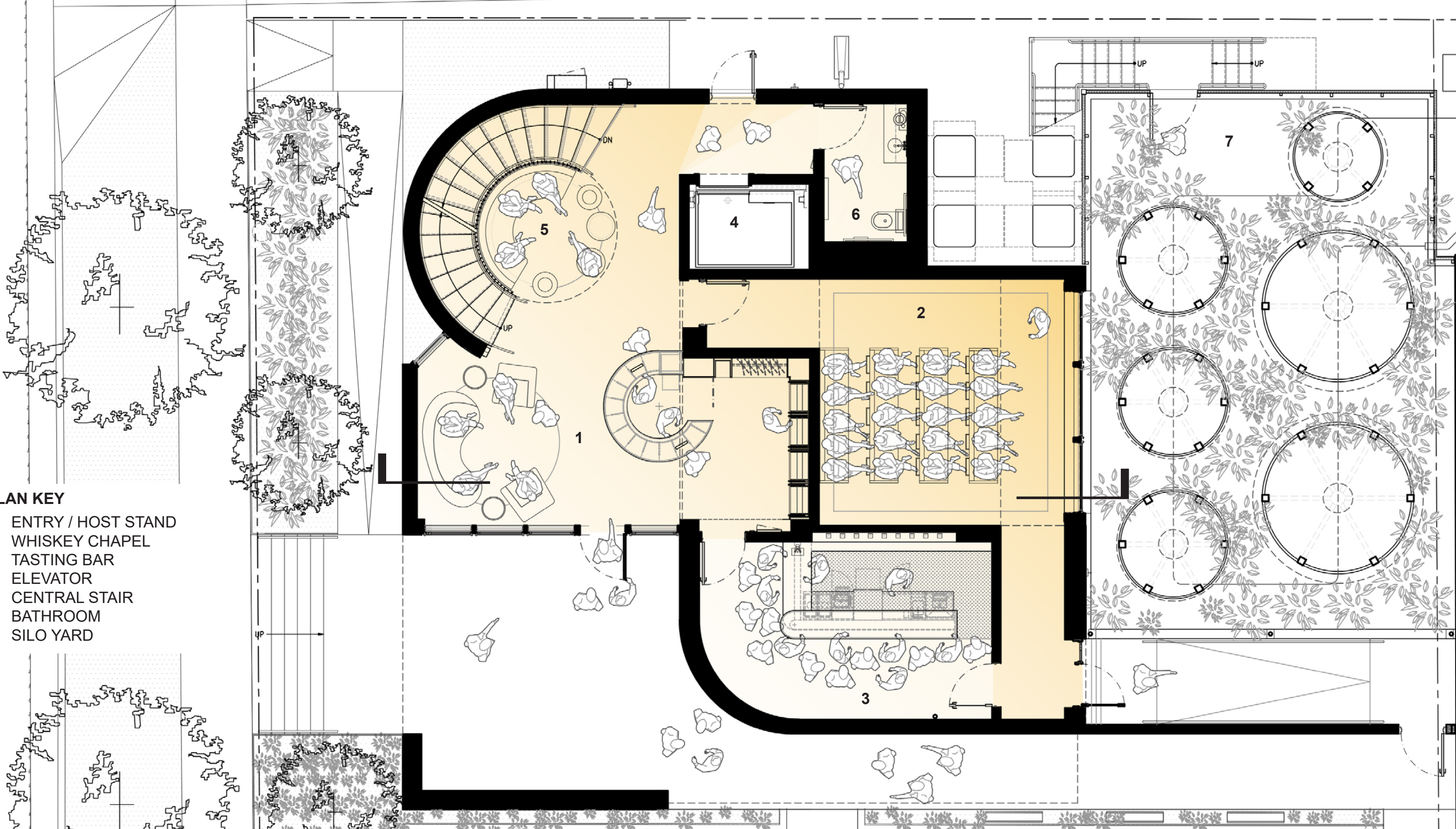
LAWS
CENTENNIAL WHEAT

LAWS
WHISKEY

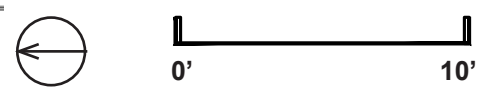


PLAN KEY

- 1 ENTRY / HOST STAND
- 2 WHISKEY CHAPEL
- 3 TASTING BAR
- 4 ELEVATOR
- 5 CENTRAL STAIR
- 6 BATHROOM
- 7 SILO YARD

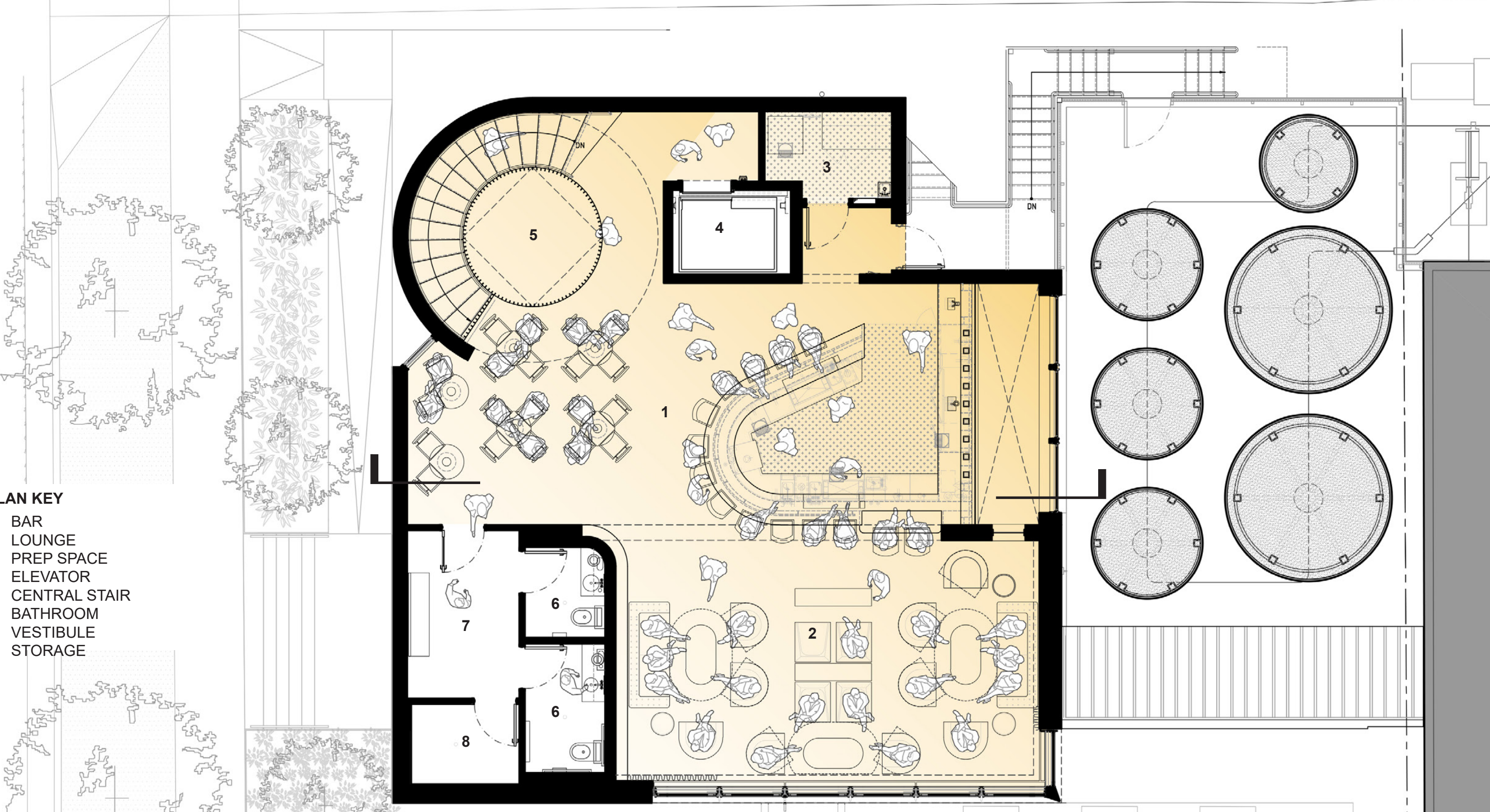


FIRST FLOOR

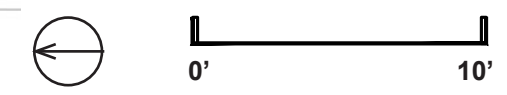


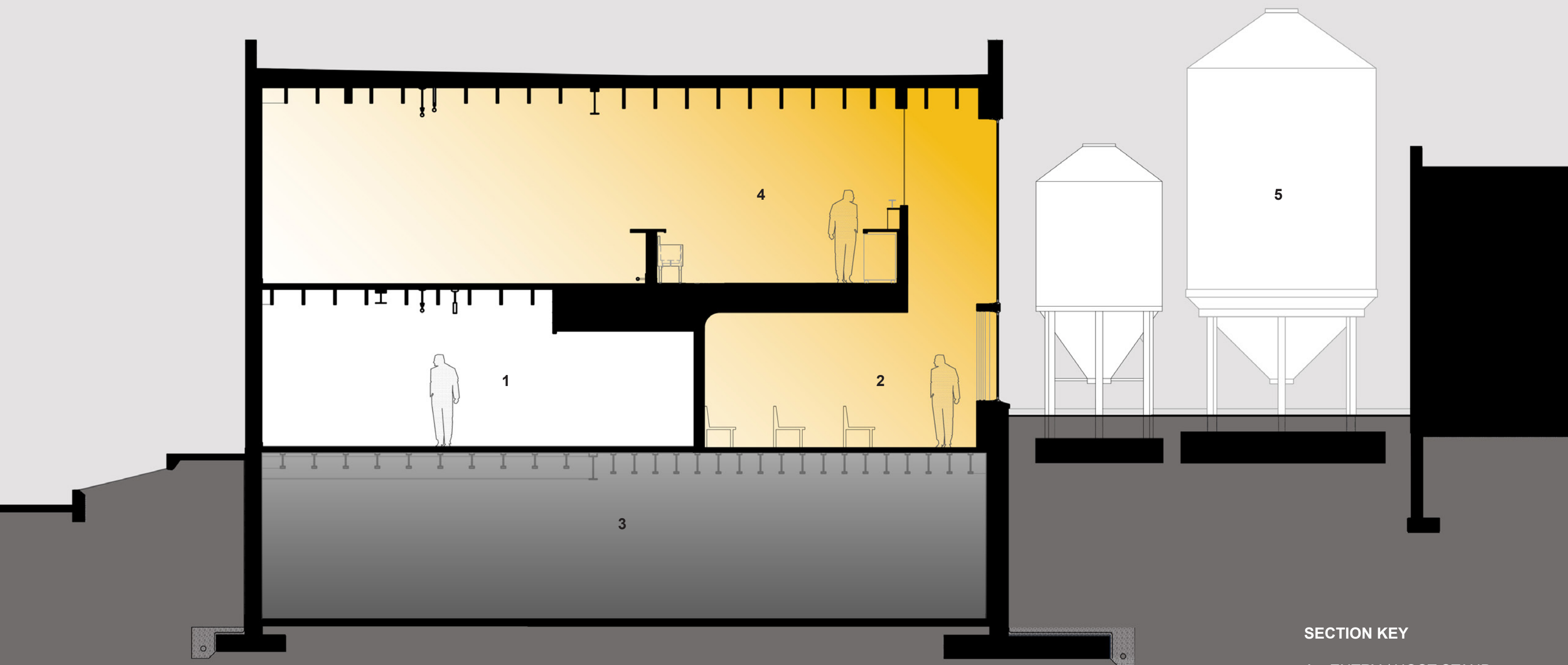
PLAN KEY

- 1 BAR
- 2 LOUNGE
- 3 PREP SPACE
- 4 ELEVATOR
- 5 CENTRAL STAIR
- 6 BATHROOM
- 7 VESTIBULE
- 8 STORAGE



SECOND FLOOR





SECTION KEY

- 1 ENTRY / HOST STAND
- 2 WHISKEY CHAPEL
- 3 MECH. ROOM / STORAGE
- 4 BAR
- 5 SILO YARD









WHISKEY SANCTUARY
AT LAWS WHISKEY HOUSE

80





LAWS
WHISKEY
HOUSE





CRAFT OVER COMMODITY
QUALITY OVER QUANTITY
WHISKEY ABOVE ALL

LAWS
WHISKEY
HOUSE

