Previously, the various legal departments of the governments of Barcelona and l’Hospitalet were scattered in seventeen buildings across the two cities. The new combined City of Justice required 240,000 square metres of floor space, improving efficiency and flexibility as well as providing space for future growth.

The site – previously a military barracks – is at the border of the two cities of Barcelona and l’Hospitalet. It is adjacent to both the Avinguda de la Granvia de l’Hospitalet, a major access route into the centre of Barcelona from the south, and the Avinguda del Carrilet, an arterial road leading to l’Hospitalet. The position provides optimum accessibility to the city and main metropolitan routes on both public and private transport.

The project divides the extensive programme into a series of nine separate but interrelated blocks on a public plaza. Four of these are linked by a continuous four-storey concourse structure. The total composition attempts to break the rigid and monolithic image of justice while also creating relationships between the different working areas, public areas and landscape. Situated around the perimeter of the linking concourse is a group of four judicial buildings, characterised by ground-floor courtrooms and offices on the floors above. Each is accessed directly from the concourse building, which acts both as a filter and as a gathering point for people at the start and end of their visit within a central public room overlooking the exterior plaza.

Independent of this interconnected complex are four other structures: a judicial services building for l’Hospitalet, a forensic sciences building and two commercial buildings with ground-floor retail facilities. The buildings are conceived as formally restrained blocks with load-bearing in-situ concrete façades. Each has a contrasting, although muted, colour tone and vertical, recessed windows. In contrast to the main buildings, the concourse structure is black and white, and has a more free-form plan. Its external walls are mostly glass, with woven mesh screens in front of frameless glazing, serving both to filter the light and improve security.
City of Justice