

CAPLESJEFFERSON**ARCHITECTS**PC
Weeksville Heritage Center



WEEKSVILLE HERITAGE CENTER
New York, New York

Construction to be completed - 2011

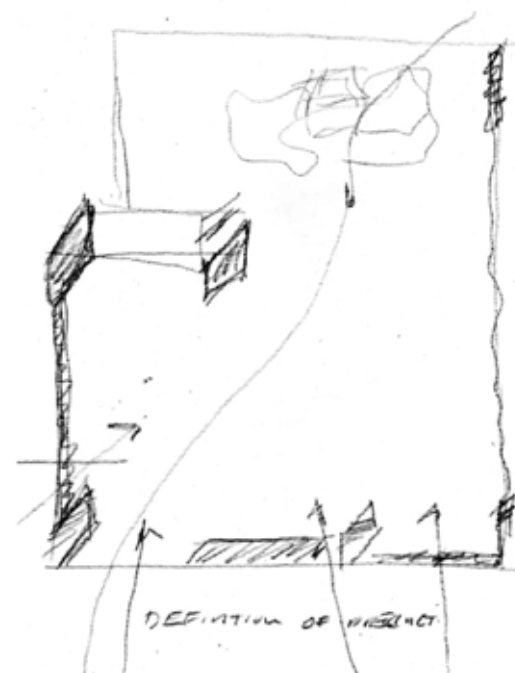
A building and landscape that assist in appreciating the rediscovered freedmen’s village anchoring the site. The Indian trail that preceded the village intersects the building’s form at the 50 foot wide portal; it disappears and reappears before the village houses in the ‘ghost landscape’ extrapolated from old maps. African patterns weave throughout the project, from the vegetal fence posts, to the braiding patterns of the stone and paving joints, to the glazed basket weave structure whose shadows move across the visitors’ paths.

In the 1960’s, 4 remaining buildings from 19th century Brooklyn’s freedmen’s settlement, Weeksville, were rediscovered from the air, when the houses were observed to stand skewed from the later street grid. Through 40 years of impassioned community support, the houses and the surrounding site were gradually accumulated to serve as a focal African-American heritage site.

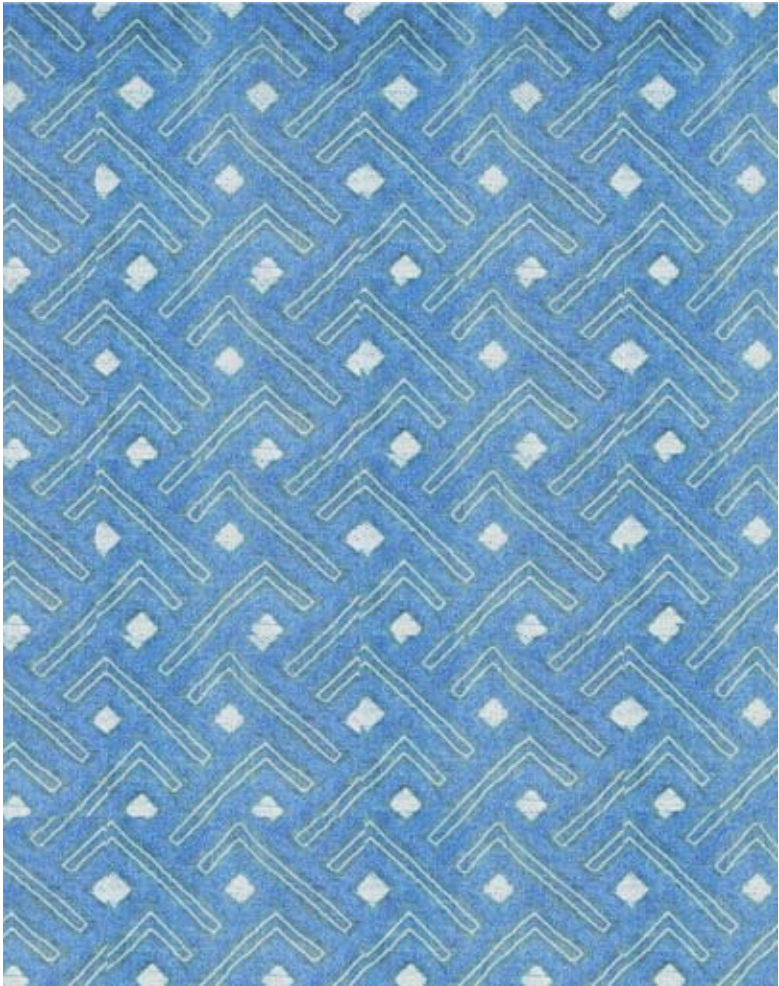
Our brief is to create an interpretative landscape—with recollections of Weeksville’s agricultural origins—and a new gateway building to house classrooms, offices, an exhibition gallery, a performance space, and a small library.

- Our clients tasked us with creating a building that
- Serves as a modern counterpoint to the historic
 - Leaves open long views to the ancestors’ homes
 - Brings the public in along the original dirt road
 - Weaves African-American art and patterns into the fabric of the building
 - Respects the earth—the project is to be LEED Gold

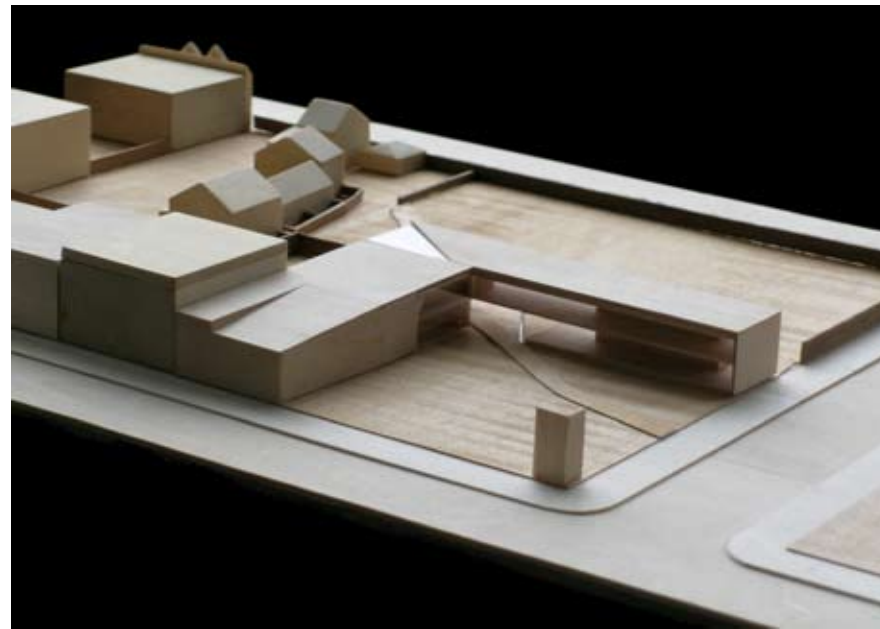
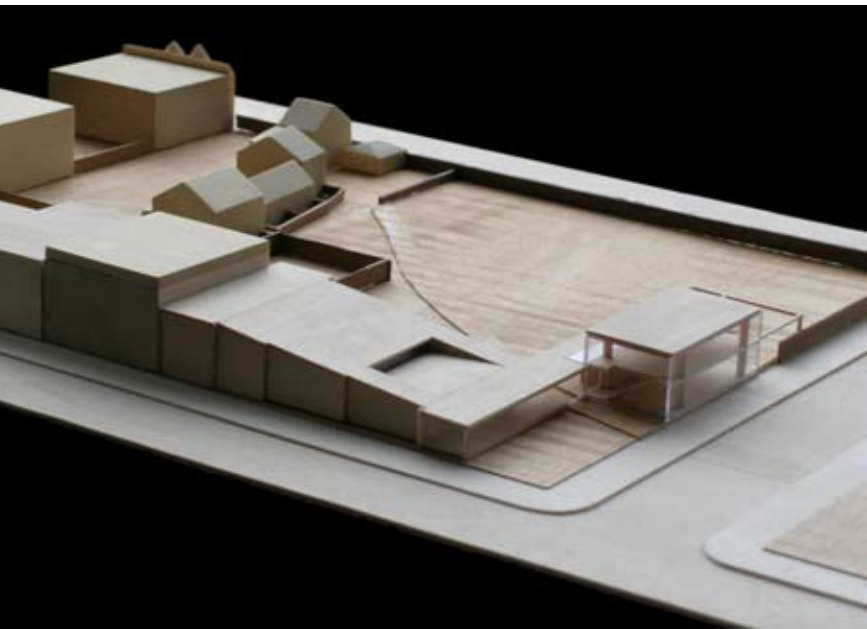
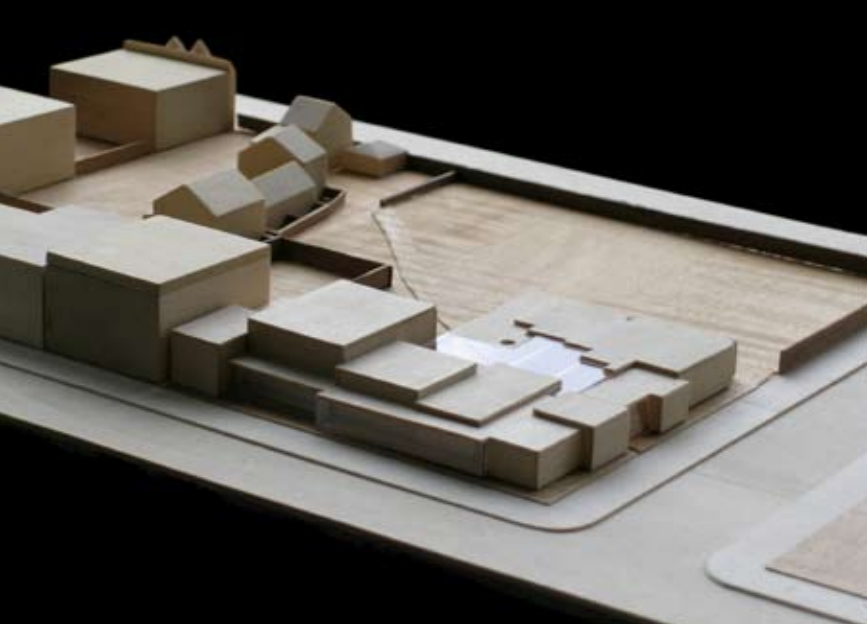
The building is kept intentionally low, in deference to the historic structures. It is sited away from the view, while providing a 50 foot gateway along Hunterfly and secondary views into the site through the transparent corridors. Many of the project’s sustainable features are hidden, such as the geothermal system—the visibly sustainable materials include African hardwood, mottled purple-and-green slate, and zinc roofing; the extensive use of controlled natural light suffuses all rooms of human occupation.



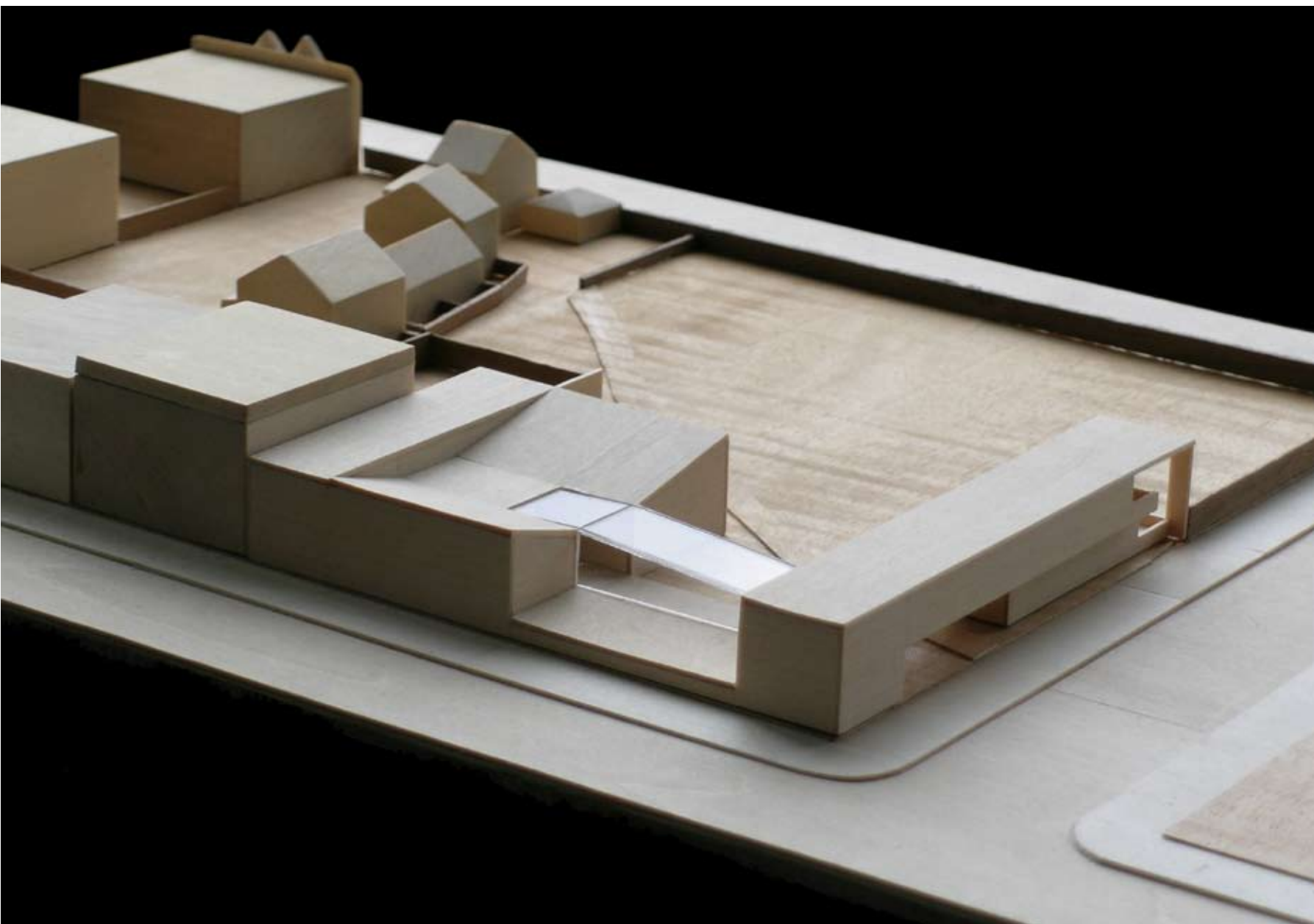
Above: Concept sketch;
Below: Remnants of the old village
counter the street grid plan

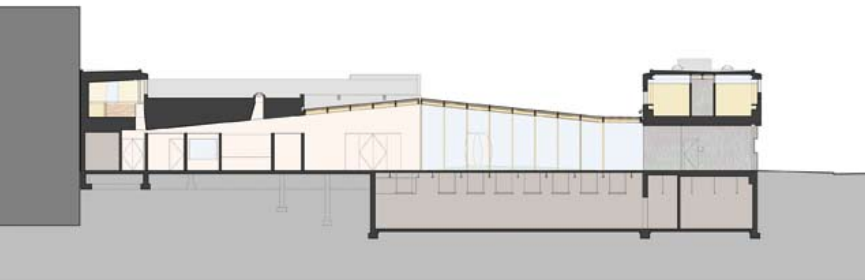


Above: Patterns in West African art;
Below: Congolese textile and connector glass frit

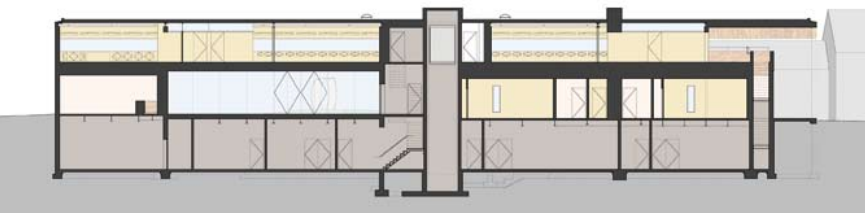


Above: Alternate massing studies; Below: Selected concept





Section through glass link looking north



Section through office/ education wing looking west



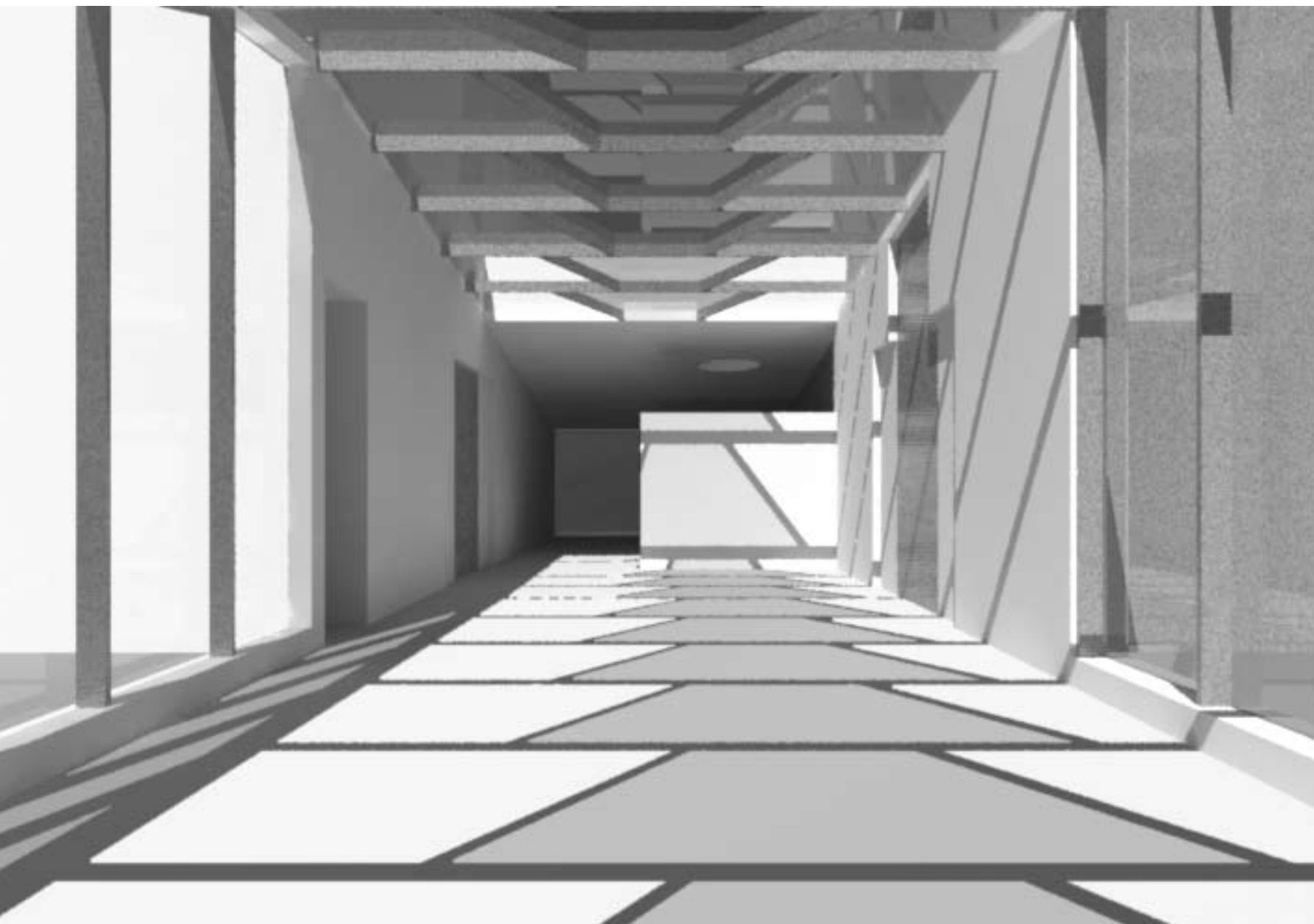
Ground floor plan



Courtyard perspective

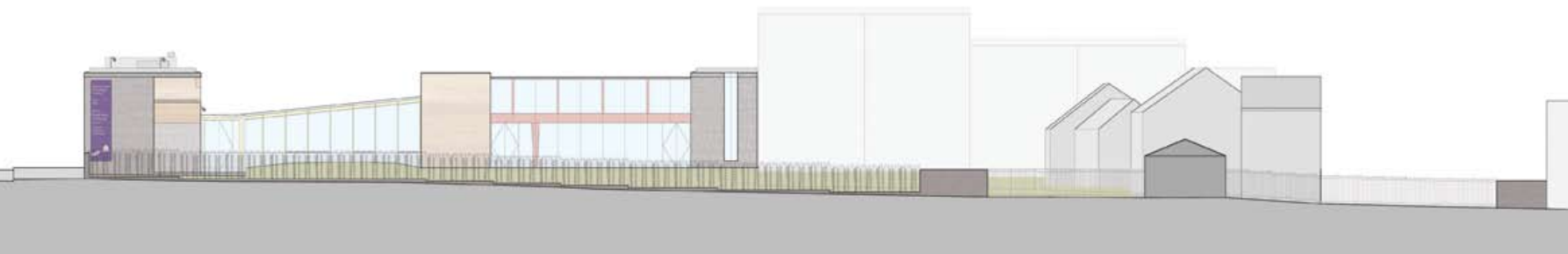


Top: Fence study and final design
Bottom: Glass link and basket structure

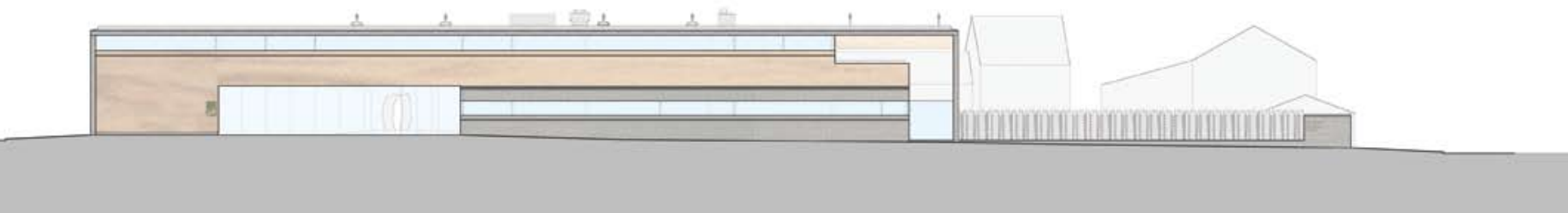




Garden elevation of office / classroom wing



North elevation of link and meeting room



Buffalo Avenue east elevation of main entry facade



St.. Mark's Place south elevation



Buffalo Avenue elevation



Buffalo Avenue entrance by day and by night





Arriving along the Old Indian Trail



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