

CAPLESJEFFERSON**ARCHITECTS**PC
Williamsburg Community Center



WILLIAMSBURG HOUSES COMMUNITY CENTER

New York, New York

1997

ANALYSIS:

- Former east-west street grid continues to order superblocks of Williamsburg Houses.
- Within the new Center's block, the old street grid shears the block into 3 distinct zones: residential, school and park.
- Within the Williamsburg Houses area, public functions of school, park and commercial retain the orthogonal of the old street grid.
- Almost all buildings in the neighborhood are plan extrusions instead of volumetric conceptions.
- The site mediates the intersection between civic and residential, between the Houses and the 'old' neighborhood, between park and building.

SYMBOLIC CONTEXT

- Create a neighborhood civic center of park community center and school.
- Create separate formal order for the center which differentiates it from residential and commercial buildings, and reinforces its symbolic presence in the community.

CONTEXT

- Create a mini civic center of park, Center, and school.
- Bring park into Center and Center into the park
- Maintain park through entire block
- Differentiate between public realm of the park & semi-public realm of the Center.

FORMAL ISSUES

- Maintain orthogonal grid of civic functions in Center
- Create a Center which conjoins inside and outside
- Create a Center which physically joins park and building, not a free-standing building.
- Dissolve Center into multiple pavilions individually scaled
- Create variety of indoor and outdoor spaces which reinforce the functions within the program: fully enclosed, transparent, screened open to air, covered open to air, open to sky
- Create variety of landscapes related to program: hard paved, grassy, open to sky, shaded by trees



Context plan

PROGRAM

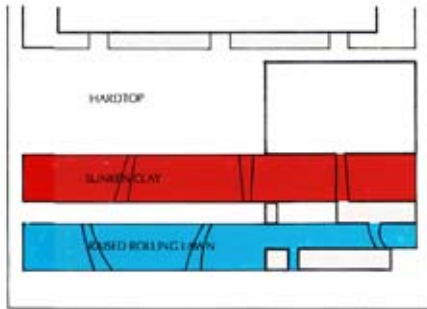
- Park - Create variety of park activity areas: playground, picnic, handball, strolling
- Building - Subdivide Center into distinct clusters of related functions: office, social rooms and gymnasium/ feeding
- Create Center defensive perimeter which varies with availability of supervisors and degree of activity
- Enable visual supervision of Center by just 2 adults

TECTONIC ELEMENTS

- Create distinct structural systems/ tectonics for each cluster appropriate to function and spans
- Build park and Center walls of simple masonry construction, with minimal use of angles or curves; make Center easy to build, durable, and easy to maintain.
- Vary masonry wall construction according to function and orientation

SOLUTIONS

- Pull shear lines of park through the precinct of the Center
- Organize volumes, functional zones, social zones, and tectonics in relation to the shears



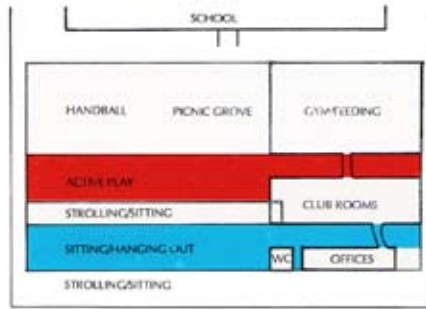
INTERPENETRATION OF PARK & CENTER

Objective:

To bring park into the Center

Solution:

Swaths of park shear through the building volumes



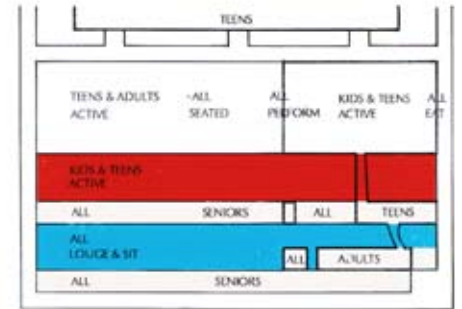
FUNCTIONAL CLUSTERS

Objective:

To cluster related functions into clearly defined areas

Solution:

Allocate a different volume or park level to each functional group



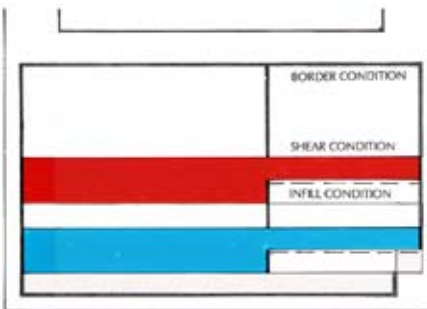
SOCIAL ZONES

Objective:

Give each generational group distinct 'turf' visible to all

Solution:

Group activities specific to a group within its own volume or park level



VERTICAL PLANAR VARIATIONS

Objective:

Order enclosing planes to both civic street face & park face

Solution:

Different plane colors and tectonic orders along border conditions, shearing conditions, and infill conditions



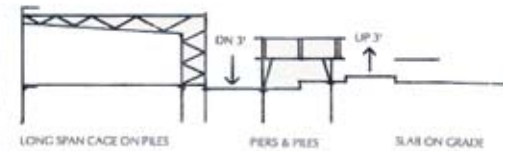
DEGREES OF ENCLOSURE

Objective:

Provide a variety of experiences appropriate to function

Solution:

Provide a variety of tectonic devices appropriate to function



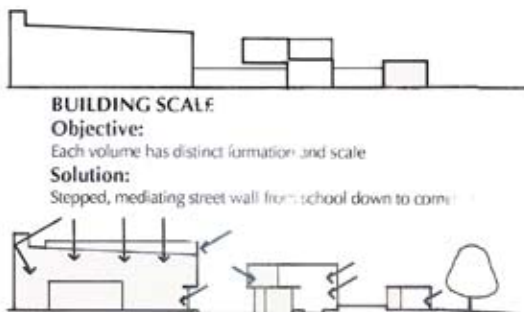
STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS

Objective:

Structural systems for each volume, to float on or pierce soil

Solution:

Slab on grade, piers on piles, long span cage on piles



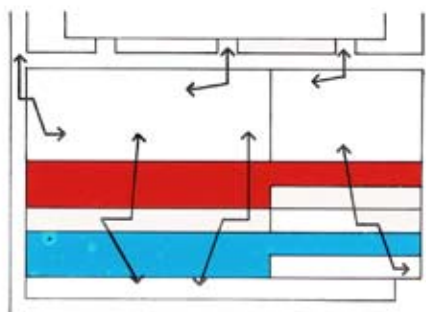
BUILDING SCALE

Objective:

Each volume has distinct formation and scale

Solution:

Stepped, mediating street wall from school down to corner



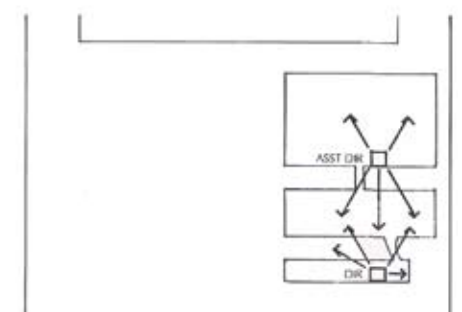
PATHS

Objective:

Slow movement for easy supervision and spatial awareness

Solution:

Shift circulation along points of shear



POINTS OF SUPERVISION

Objective:

Enable supervision of entire Center by 2 adults

Solution:

Strategically locate Director and Assistant Director offices near entrances and at points of transparency

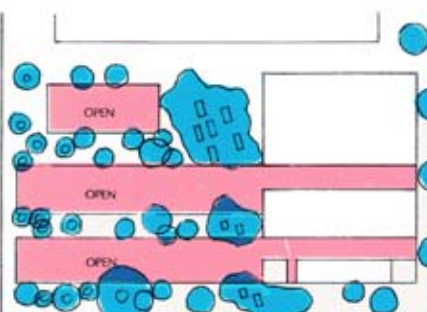
LIGHT & SHADE

Objective:

Each activity receives appropriate light distinct in character

Solution:

Variety of daylight: direct skylight; direct window; reflected light; indirect transparency; shaded areas next to open



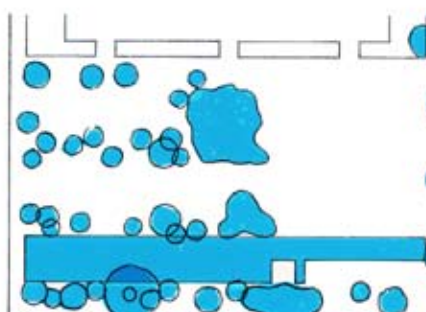
PARK LIGHT & SHADE

Objective:

Provide a variety of light and shade matched to function

Solution:

Variety of tree canopies, seating zones, and open to sky zones



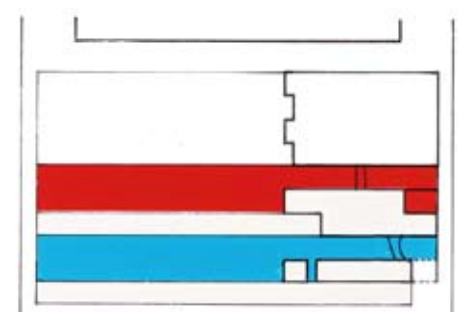
GREEN ZONES

Objective:

Provide a variety of paved and green zones matching activity

Solution:

Create both ground plane green zones and tree shade areas



POTENTIAL EVOLUTION OF SCHEME

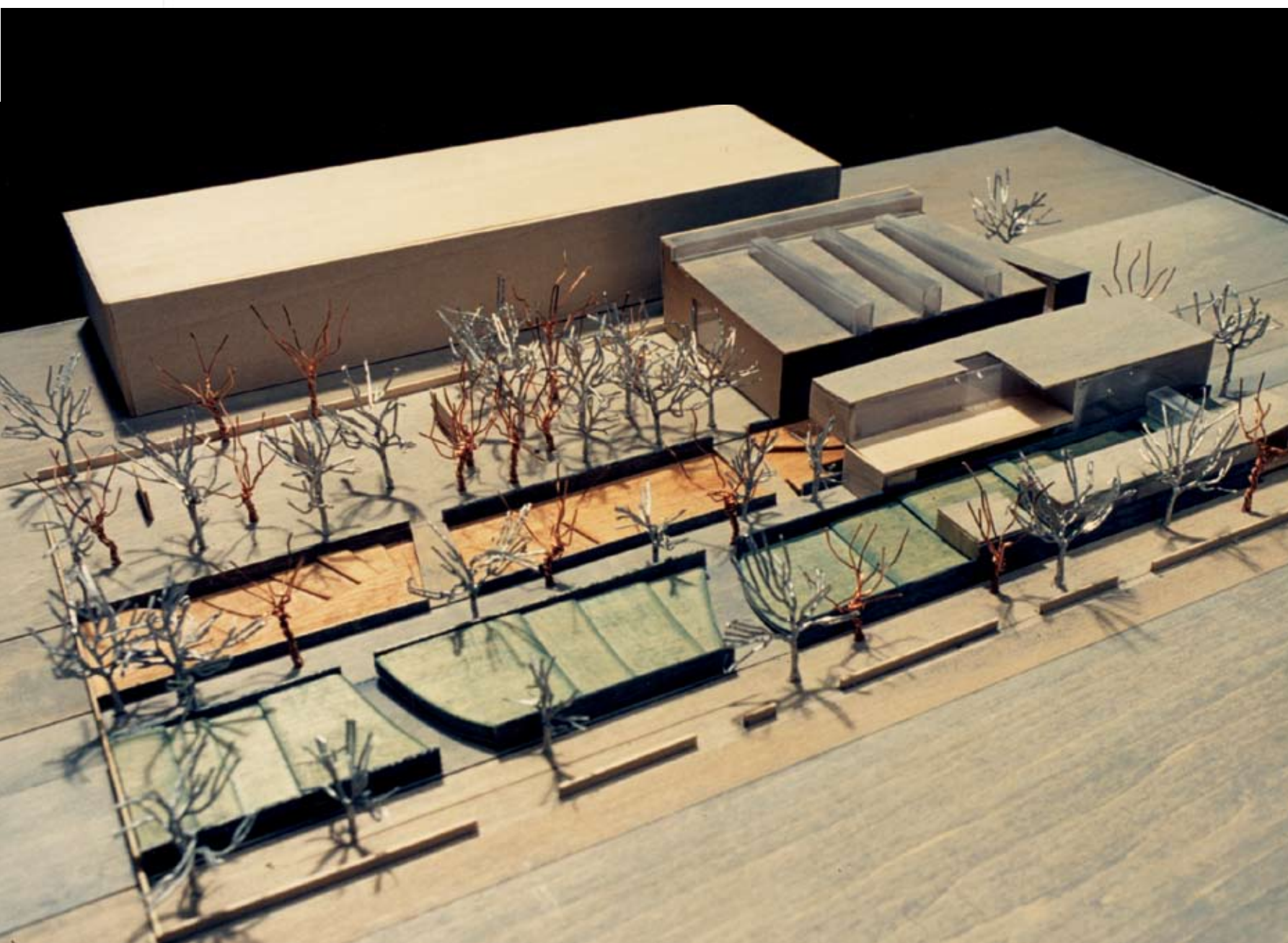
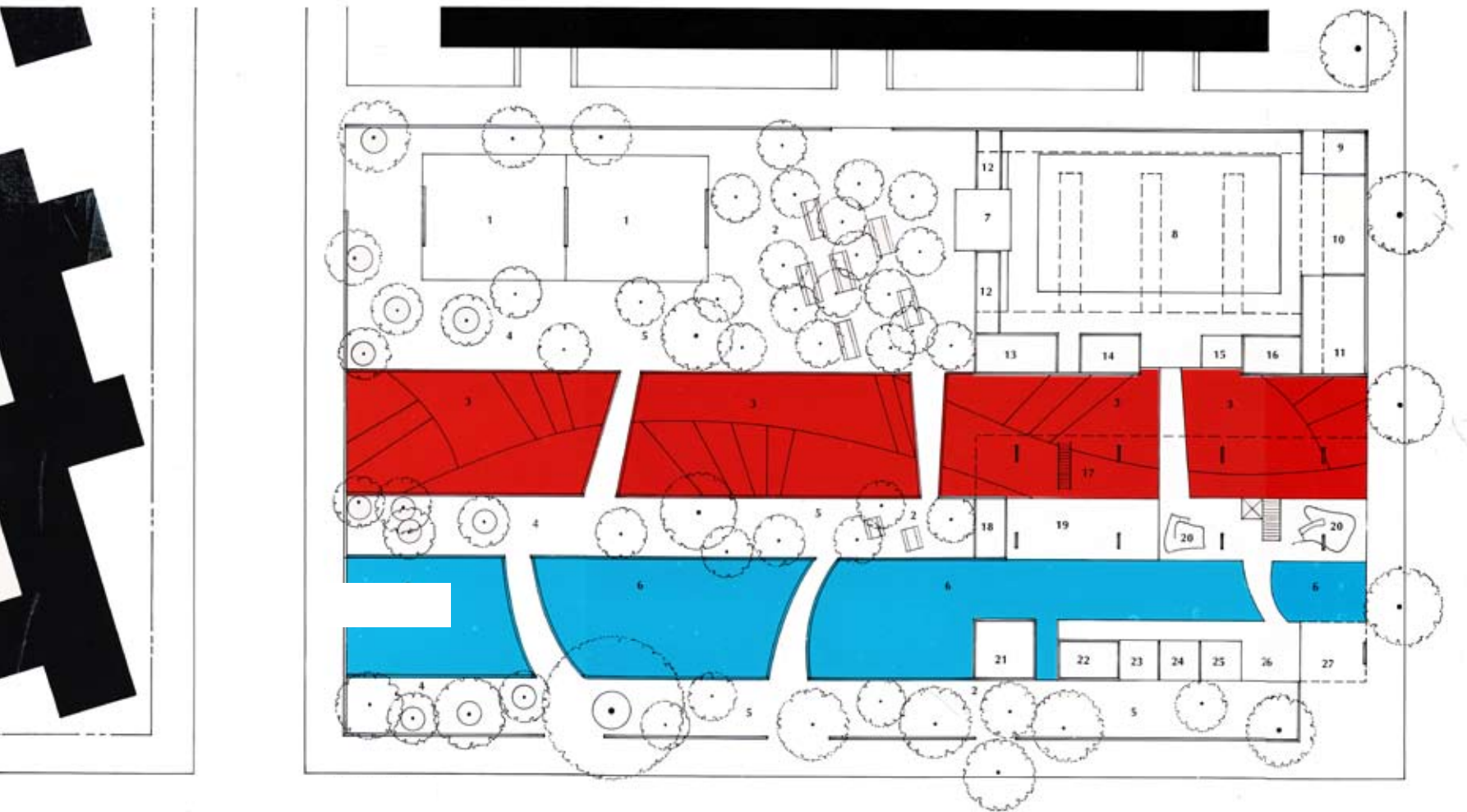
Objective:

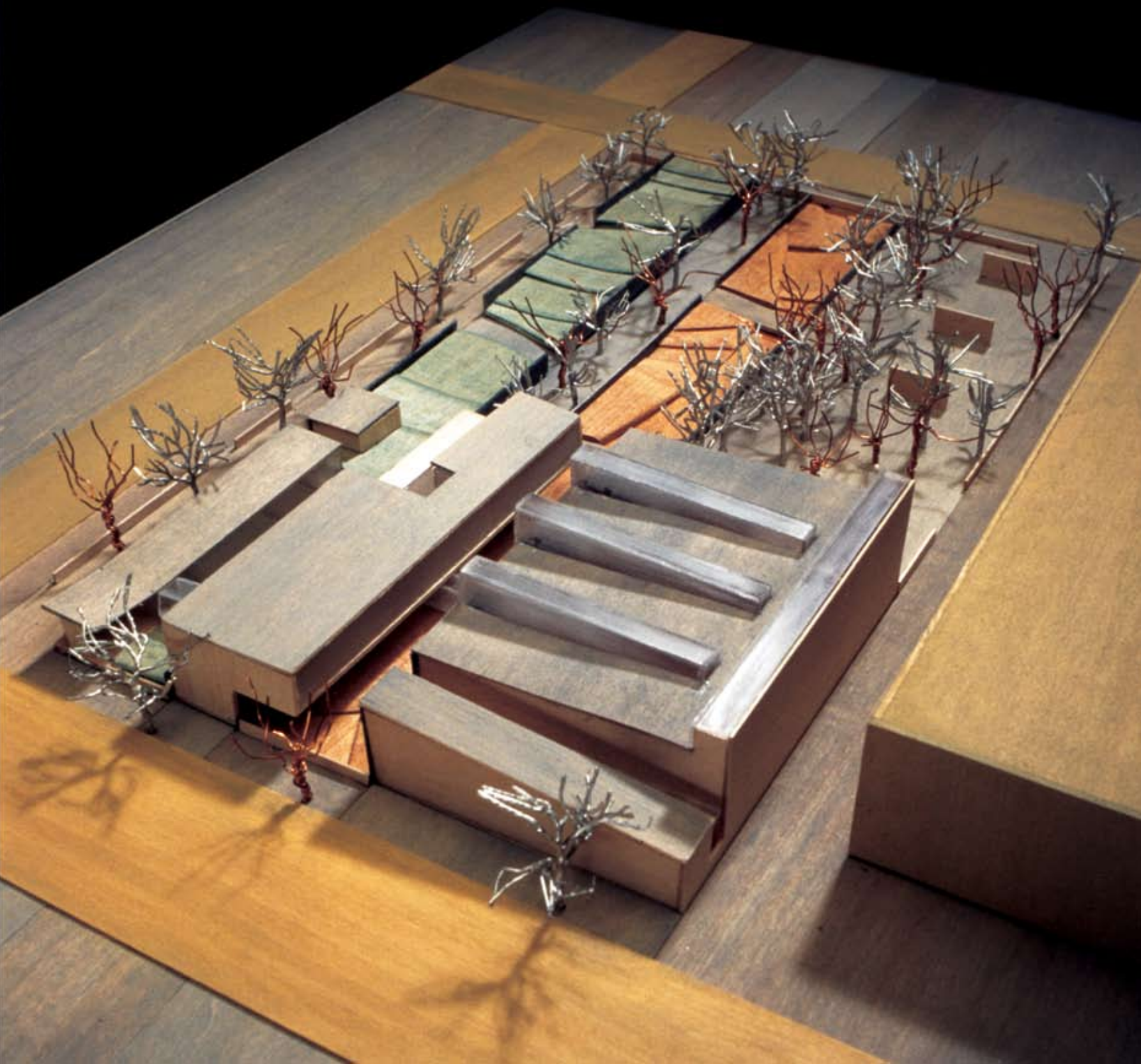
More blending between Center and park zones

Solution:

Erosion of Center border into park

Above: Programmatic Diagram;
Below: Building Model





Building Model Axonometric View

