

2023 AIA|DC Chapter Design Awards

Project Title: Park and Ford :: The Art of a New Life

Location: 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, VA

Date of Completion: February 1, 2022

Office buildings aged past useful life are scattered throughout cities, often in highly desirable transit-oriented locations. Park + Ford, two 14-story, 1980s office buildings are converted these into market rate residences. Reusing the concrete frame, including a parking structure, and more than 50% of the skin, diverted construction waste, saving existing embedded carbon.

The reimaged complex includes 435 residential units, five levels of subgrade parking, innovative outdoor gathering spaces and a childcare center. More than a third of the units include balconies or terraces. In addition, an innovative connector building offers multiple amenities such as social spaces, private function rooms, gym, work areas, and a covered rideshare waiting area. The buildings were improved from 1984 BOCA Code to the 2015 IBC resulting in 40%+ improvement in energy performance. Modular, insulated curtain walls, LED fixtures, fresh air exchange, energy- and water-saving fixtures, and non-toxic finishes all add to occupants' living quality.

1. Design Narrative: How does this project address Design for Integration, Wellbeing, and Discovery?

Transforming underused exterior areas into multipurpose, appealing landscaped gathering spaces generates significant benefits for both residents and the public. Original concrete planters were maintained, and new planting, paving, and strategic lighting create terraced social spaces. A sunken parking court transforms into an oasis with a waterfall feature surrounded by lush greenery, Bocce courts, cabanas, and a synthetic beach. Street level surface parking now provides residents a dog park. The rear terraces are transformed to more private social spaces, and a play area adjacent to a childcare center. Previous common bathrooms in a solid vertical tower are reconstructed as stunning apartments with 180-degree vistas across the community. Custom prefabricated balconies were connected to the concrete slabs giving private outdoor space to a third of the units. New aluminum-framed, insulated curtain walls with colorful insertions and operable windows break up the building's verticality and give residents ample natural light and expansive views.

2. Community Engagement: How does this project address Design for Equitable Communities and Economy?

The project provides needed affordable market rate housing in a transit rich environment, proximate to other services and the city. The design sought to preserve the existing concrete structure and exterior precast panels, while improving the building envelope performance, and reimaging hard exterior surfaces and underused parking areas into appealing social gathering spaces. Upgraded building façades with floor-to-ceiling, modular eco-friendly window walls flood units with sunlight. A bland single-story, pre-cast clad lobby is transformed into a transparent glass link that binds the

buildings together, connecting interior amenity spaces with outdoor areas and surrounded buildings with lush landscaping to foster social activities for residents. Amenities include a fitness room with yoga space, coffee area, a projected vestibule with a trellised rideshare waiting area, leasing offices, conference room, individual workspaces, mail room, and a game simulator room. Improvements to this 1,000,000+ SF project gives the buildings longevity and boosts the surrounding community.

3. Sustainability and Resilience: How does this project address Design for Ecosystems, Water, Energy, Resources, and Change?

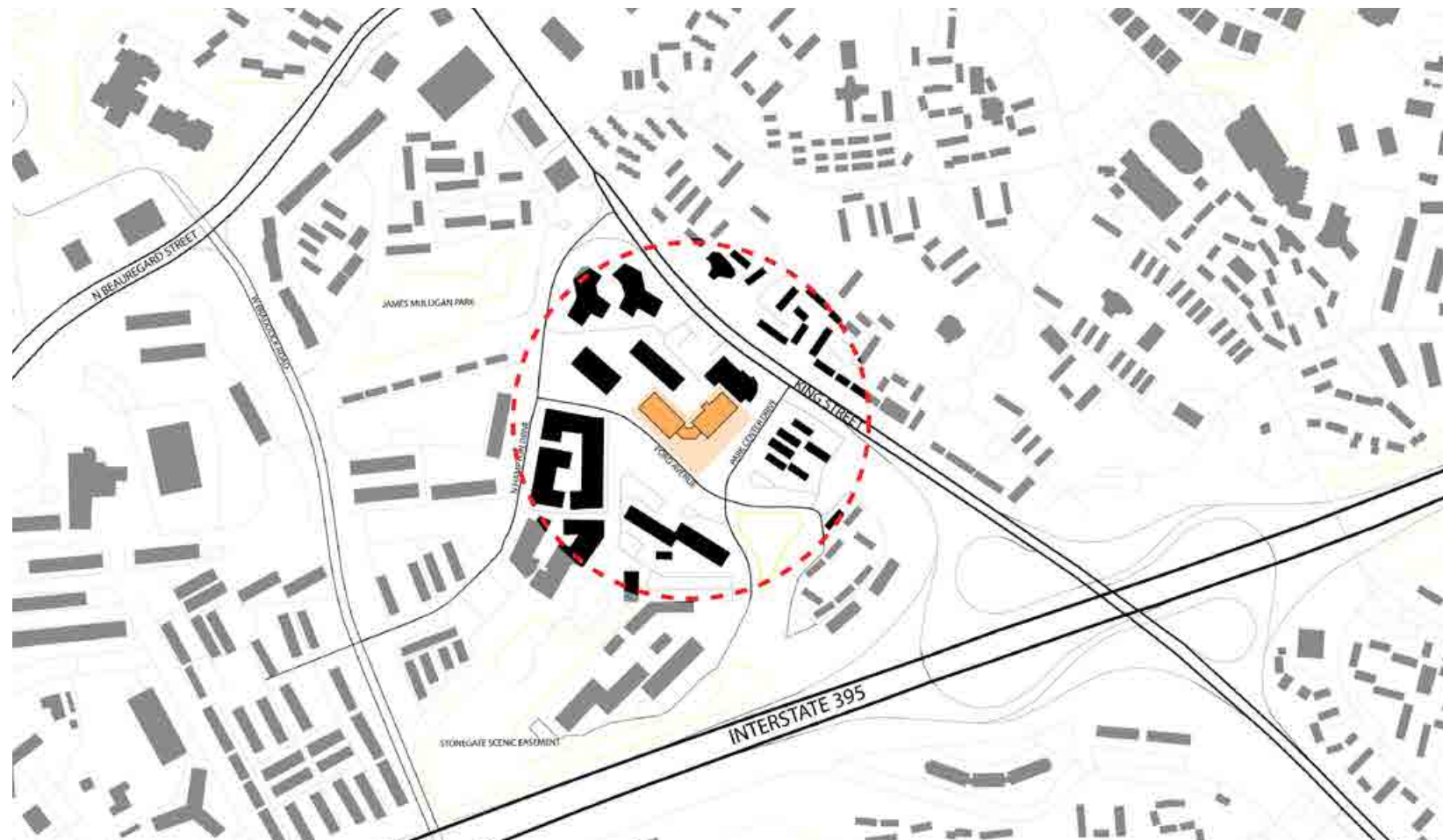
The philosophy of the greenest building being one already built was employed to adaptively reuse 1980s era office buildings with inefficient and decrepit mechanical and building enclosures systems. Preserving concrete post and slab structure and precast panels while upgrading systems and curtain walls turned bland offices into 435 comfortable, healthy dwellings in a highly walkable, public transit oriented urban community. New insulated, reflective modular polychrome curtainwalls improved solar heat gain coefficients by 3 and U factors by 4. Other sustainable features include additional wall and roof insulation, LED lighting, EnergyStar appliances, water-saving fixtures, individual unit heat pumps, high efficiency DOAS fresh air units, and non-toxic materials. Dense landscaping replaced areas of existing concrete surfaces with native plants and converted existing parking areas into outdoor spaces with new planters, including a bioretention planter for stormwater management. All changes dramatically improve the buildings' operating efficiency, while enhancing residents' health and exterior sustainability.



PARK + FORD

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The Art of a New Life

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⊕ Vicinity Map: 4401 Ford Ave, Alexandria, VA 22302



BEFORE



PARK + FORD

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Office buildings that have aged past their useful lives, with antiquated and deteriorated building systems, are scattered throughout urban areas in highly desirable locations in our urban core and surrounding inner suburbs. Most of these office buildings no longer can adapt to modern office technology and planning requirements. This is the case with two 14-story 1980's modern era office buildings, with unsalvageable building systems, from the curtainwall to mechanical and electrical systems. Converted to residential use, reusing the concrete frame structure, including a partially below grade parking structure, and a portion of the exterior precast exterior cladding, a significant amount of construction waste was averted, and greater than half of the embedded construction energy was saved and put back into production.

The re-imagined complex includes 435 new residential units and the existing parking levels with a new child care center insertion. Over 30% of the units have either private balconies or ground level terraces. Amenities include an updated connector building with social gathering space, private function rooms, a gym, common work areas, and outdoor landscaped terraces for public and private use. A new high efficiency unitized polychrome curtainwall, additional roof and wall insulation, LED lighting and Energy Star appliances, water saving plumbing fixtures, individual electric meters and heat pumps serving individual units, and high efficiency DOAS units supplying fresh air to common area dramatically improve the operating energy efficiency of the buildings. The buildings were brought up from the 1984 BOCA Building Code to the 2015 International Building Code, resulting in an over 40% improvement in energy performance.



BEFORE

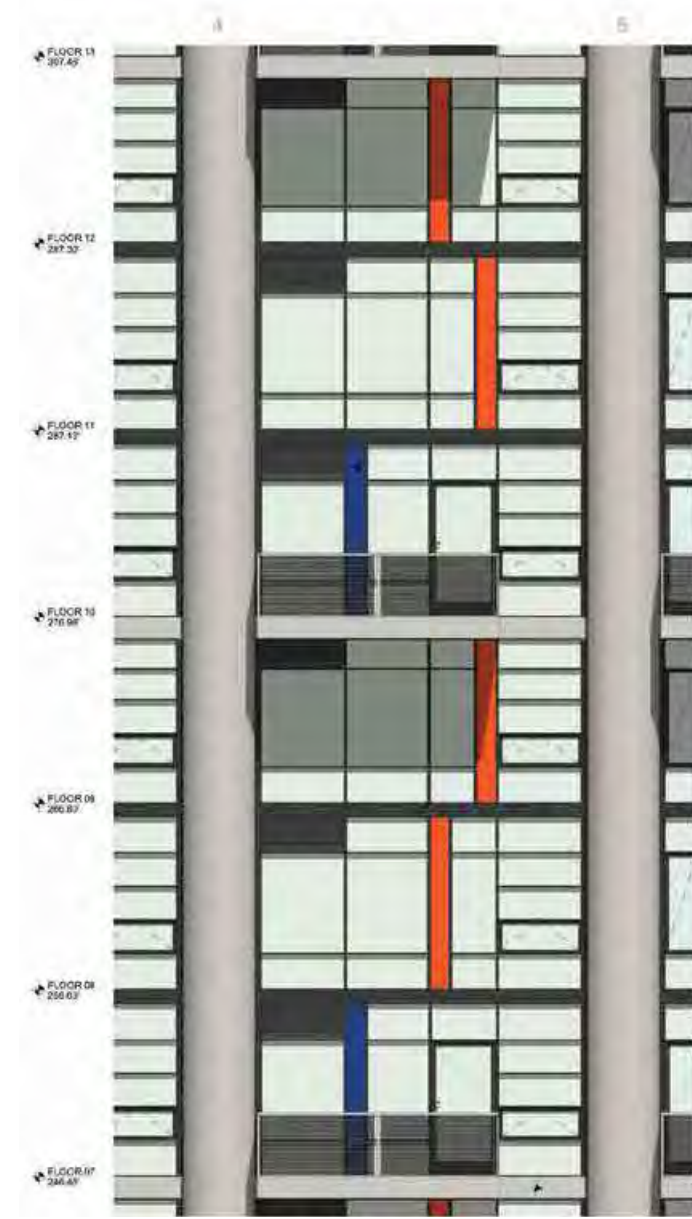
The design team put together over 30 iterations to enhance the exterior facades of Park + Ford. These iterations predominantly had the intent of replacing the low performing curtain wall with eco-window walls and remove a limited number of precast concrete panels at the front two corners of the towers to have continuous glass corners. Due to the constraints of the budget, all precast panels were to remain at all floors. The design team selected a warmer-grey color to harmonize with the serpentine pattern of the colored panels.



SOUTHEAST ELEVATION

0' 16' 32' 64' 128'

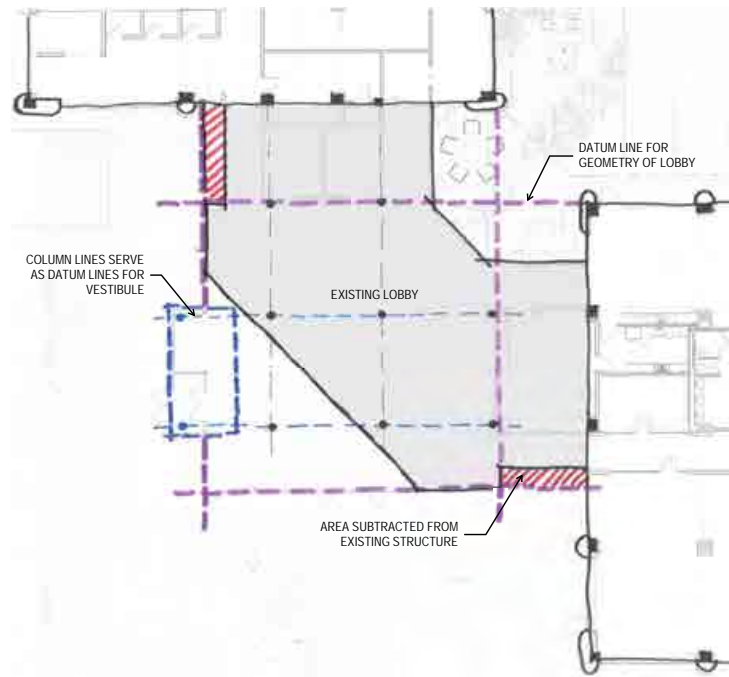
SCALE: 1/32" = 1'-0"



COLORED PANEL PATTERNING

The design sought to preserve the existing concrete structure and exterior precast panels, while improving the building envelope performance. The design team upgraded building façades with floor-to-ceiling, modular eco-friendly window walls flooding units with sunlight, and included a serpentine pattern of colored panels .

LINK BUILDING RE-DESIGN



CONCEPTUAL STUDY



BEFORE

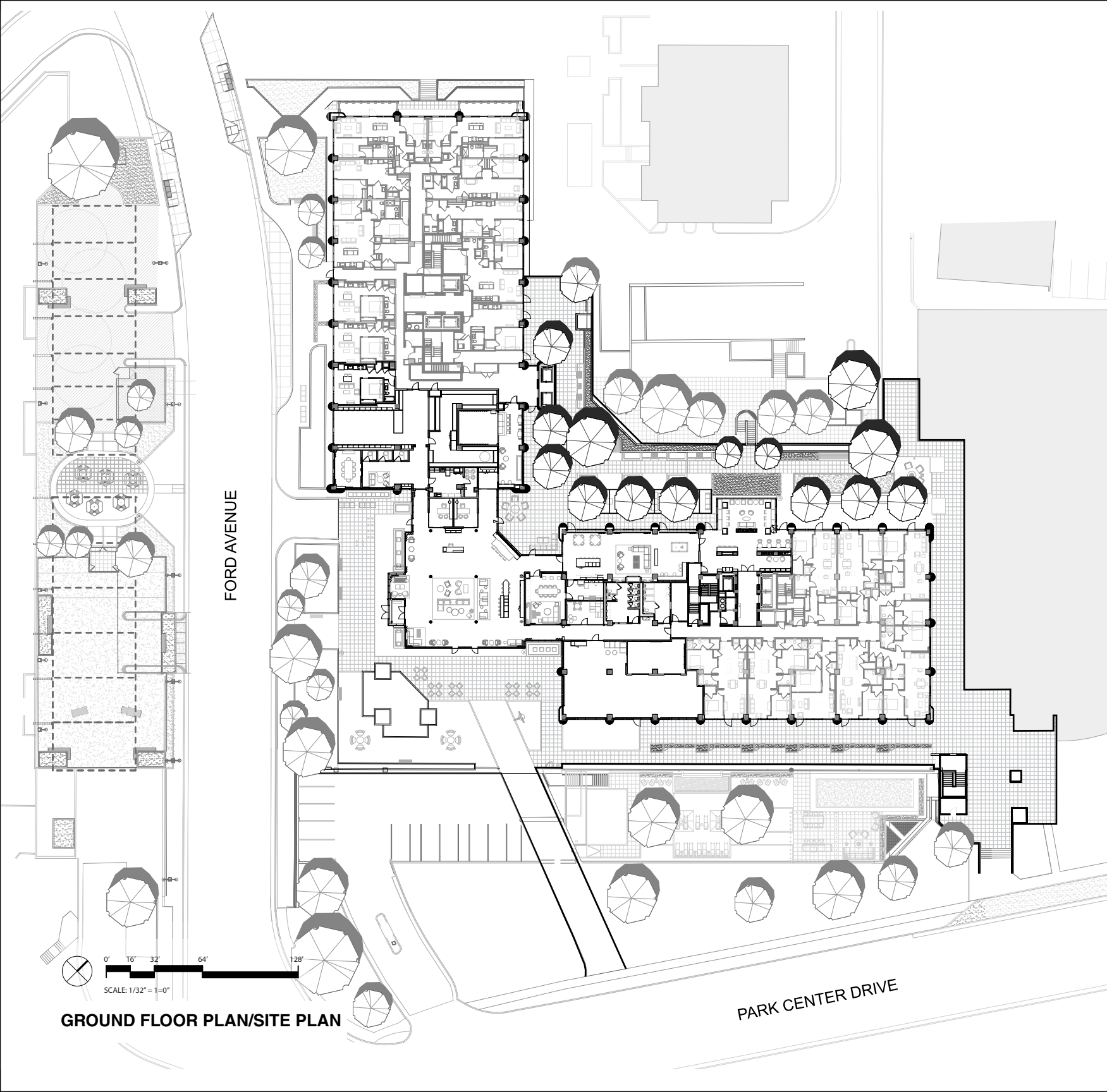
PARK + FORD





LINK BUILDING

The existing, single-story lobby was enhanced to welcome guests and residents through a glass entry vestibule and lobby space that binds the buildings together and connects interior amenity spaces with outdoor areas and surrounded buildings with lush landscaping to foster social activities for residents and neighbors. The intent of the Link building was visualized as a jewelbox for direct transparency to the outdoors during the day and have an illuminating glow during the night.





BEFORE

Northwest view of rear terraces and Park's rear facade with colored, eco-window walls that also replaced former precast panels at the vertical, projecting tower.



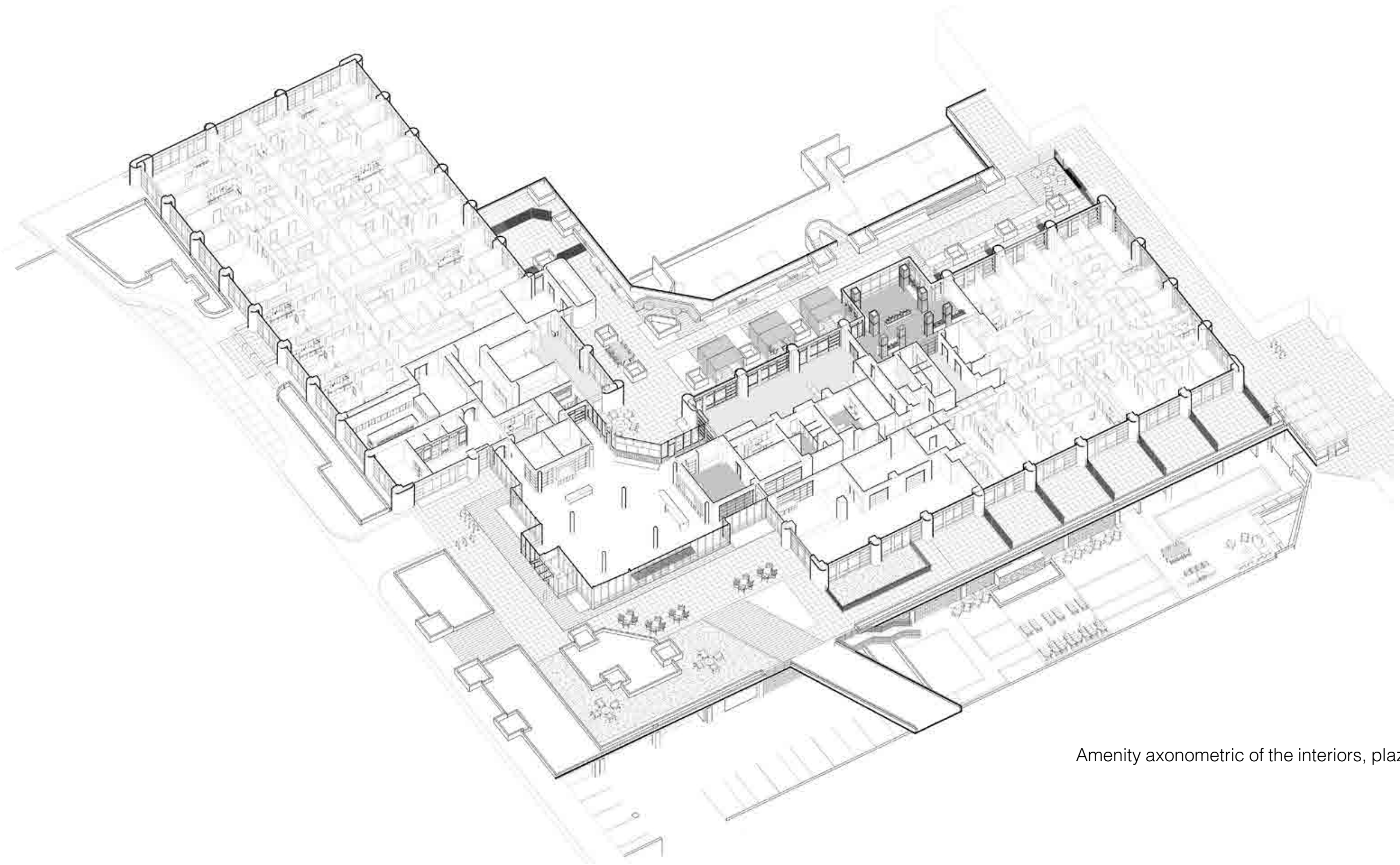
BEFORE

The existing terraces were re-visualized to define outdoor communal spaces and activities. The materiality of the new integrated wood benches and the existing precast planters were complemented with native plants and low-profile exterior lighting.



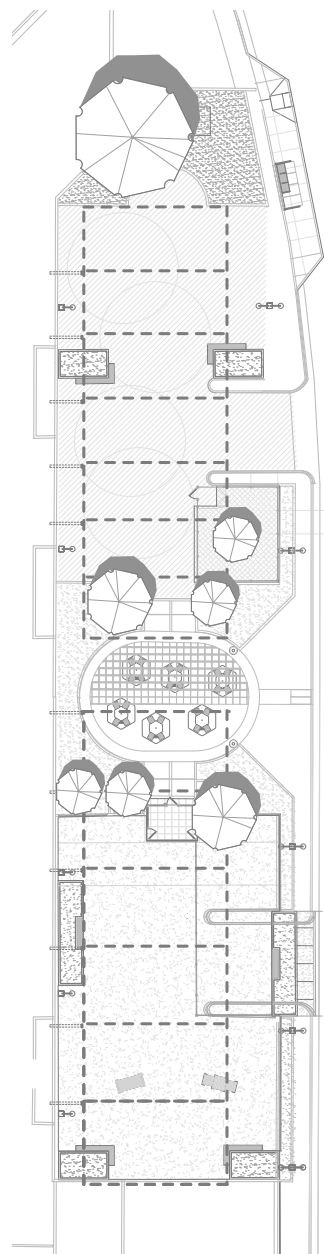
BEFORE

The design team proposed outdoor shading structures that harmonized with the design of the terraces to delineate intimate gathering areas, and further enrich the views from the dwelling units.



Amenity axonometric of the interiors, plaza, and terraces

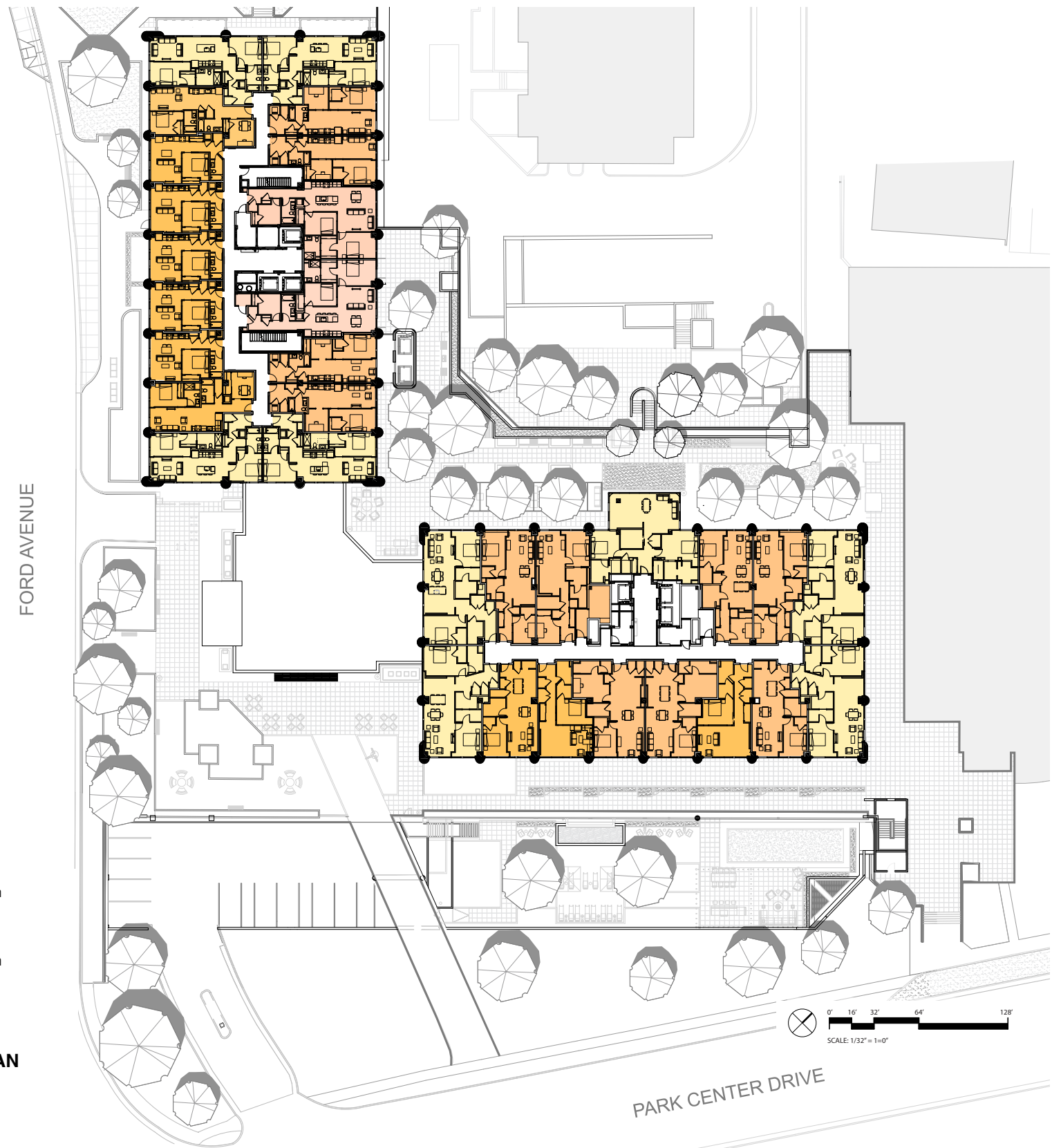




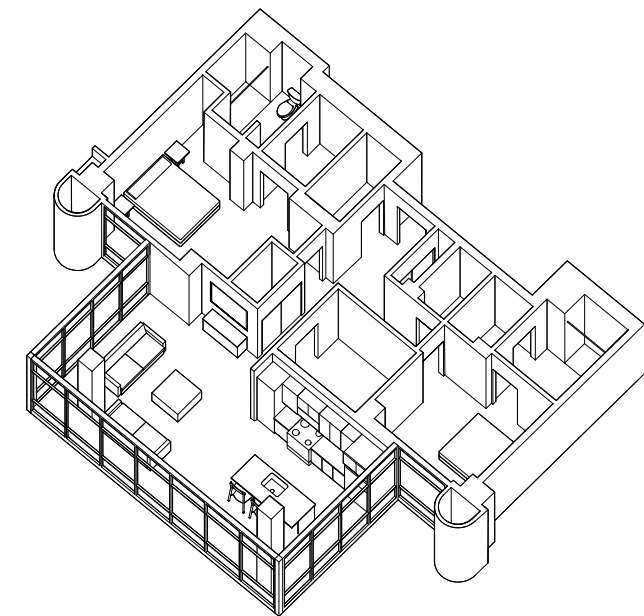
- 2 Bedroom + Den/2 Bath
- 2 Bedroom/2 Bath
- 1 Bedroom + Den/1 Bath
- 1 Bedroom/1 Bath

TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN

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Park + Ford has 435 luxurious dwelling units with modular, floor to ceiling glass window walls for premium views, as well as custom balconies for 30% of the total units.



Luxurious dwelling unit with floor to ceiling windows



PARK+ FORD

4401

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