

# UNITED STATES CONSULATE GENERAL

US STATE DEPARTMENT  
BUREAU OF OVERSEAS BUILDINGS OPERATIONS

LOCATION  
**MATAMOROS | MEXICO**

COMPLETED  
**MAY 2019**



## INTRODUCTION

The United States consular presence in Matamoros was established in the earliest days of the First Mexican Republic (1826), making it the longest continually operating Consulate in Mexico. The new Consulate General is an affirmation of the 200-plus years of friendship and commitment between the two countries.

Matamoros, which sits across the Rio Grande from Brownsville, Texas, has been an important point of entry to the United States from Mexico. The Consulate General in Matamoros reflects the values of the United States to the local community, by creating a welcoming and open image. This is achieved by decompressing the entry sequence and softening the appearance of the perimeter. Careful consideration was placed on creating pleasant spaces both inside and out for building occupants and visitors.



## SITE

The new Consulate General sits on a site near the city center between two international bridges and next to the city's primary public park, the Parque Olímpico. Its public-facing consular entrance opens onto the park, creating a welcoming presence in the surrounding Jardín neighborhood.

The scale of the area is primarily one and two story residential buildings with interior courtyards. Several larger commercial and institutional buildings (up to four floors in height) are located along the arterial streets.

The site is located at the confluence of two urban grids and lacks an overriding relationship to street patterns. The park's perimeter drive links the grids and internalizes circulation along the western edge of the property.



## SITE PLAN

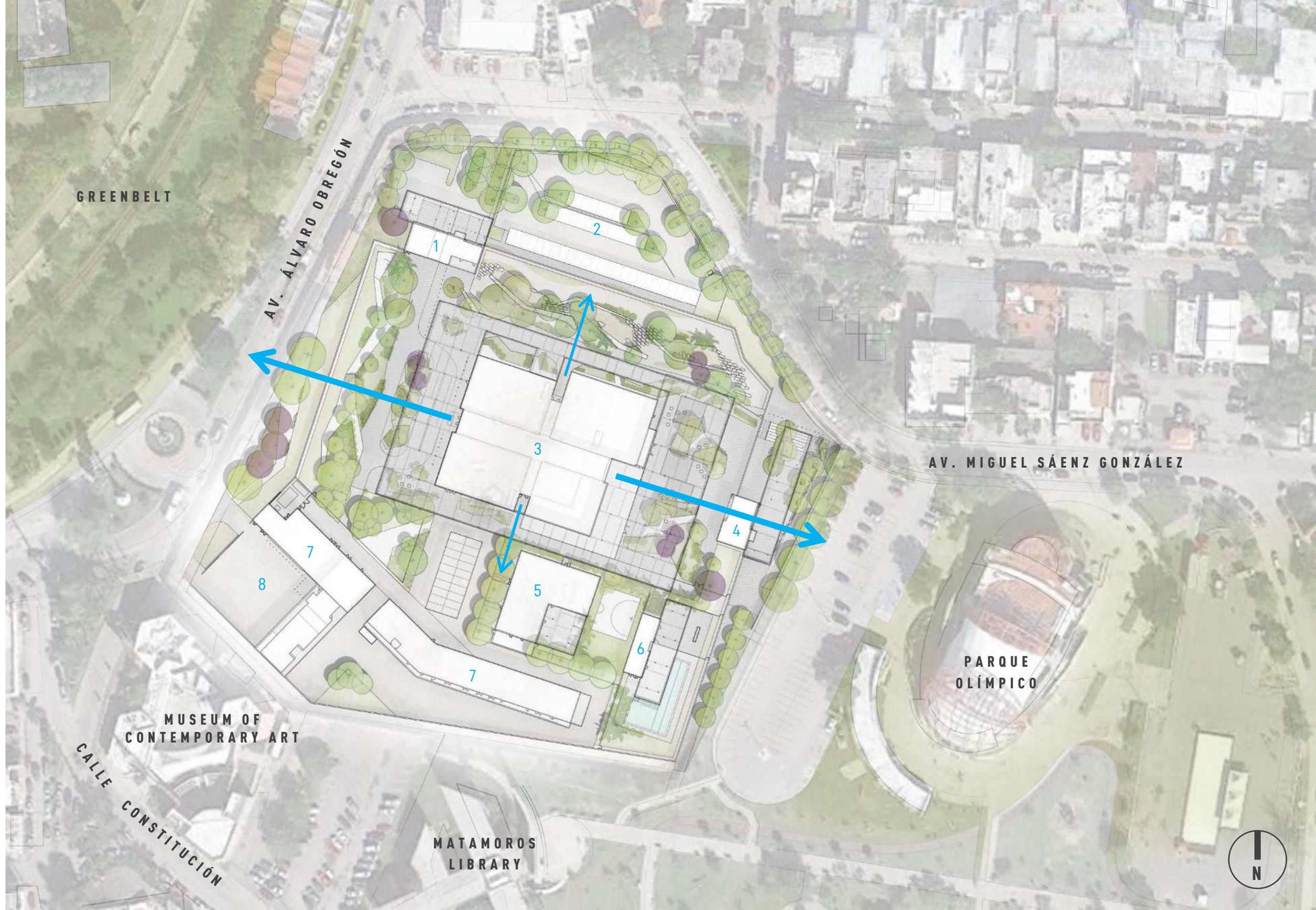
Site planning reflects the primary function as a diplomatic mission with its representational face towards the main roadway, and the consular face (with its receptive edge) towards the community park.

The site is further subdivided with public and representational functions along the north and northeastern street edges, and service functions organized along its southern edge.

These two axes define the campus organization - the primary east/west representational and secondary north/south functional.

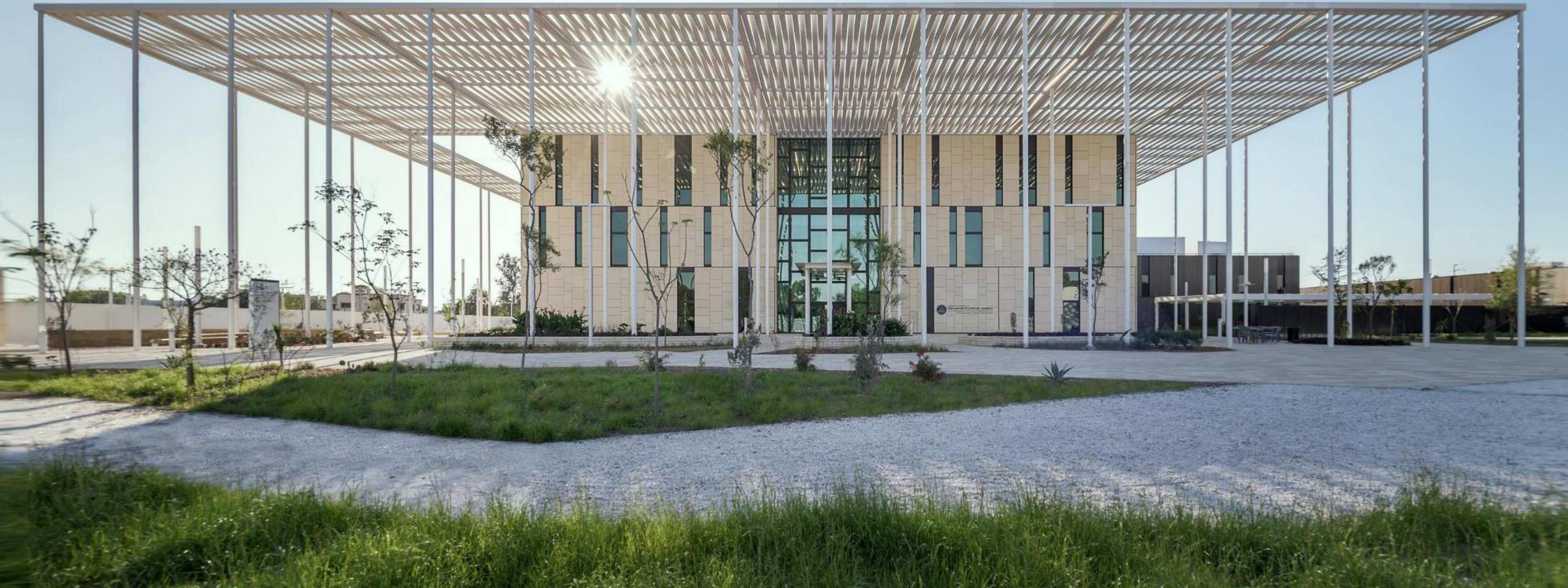
The heavy demand on consular services drives a prominent entry location - identifiable from street edges and permitting easy pedestrian and bus traffic.

1. MAIN ENTRY PAVILION
2. PARKING
3. NEW CONSULATE BUILDING
4. CONSULAR ENTRY PAVILION
5. RESIDENTIAL
6. RECREATIONAL AREA
7. SUPPORT BUILDING
8. SERVICE ENTRY



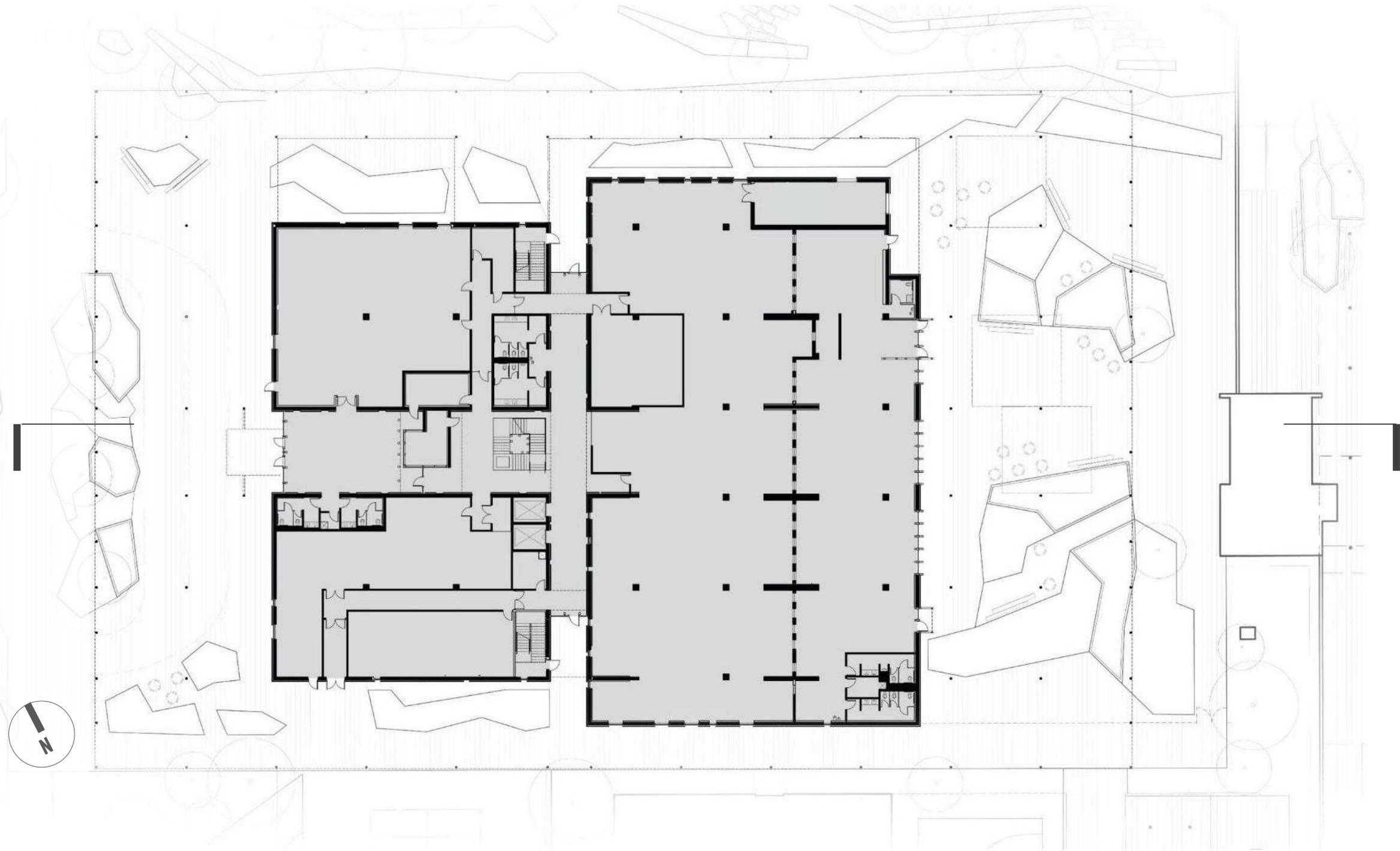
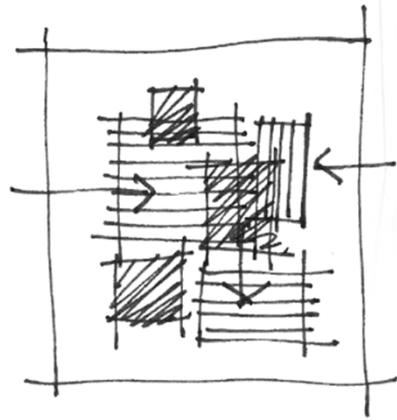
## CIVIC ARCHITECTURE

The project seeks a common architectural language expressing the values and experiences shared by the people of the United States and Mexico.



## ORGANIZATION

The form of the building is driven by internal function which provides a compact, economical and secure environment for the building occupants. The compact singular form expresses the separate functional quadrants between the primary gallery and the secondary circulation axis. This organization allows for the required separation of public and secure areas.



PLAN + SECTION

TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN



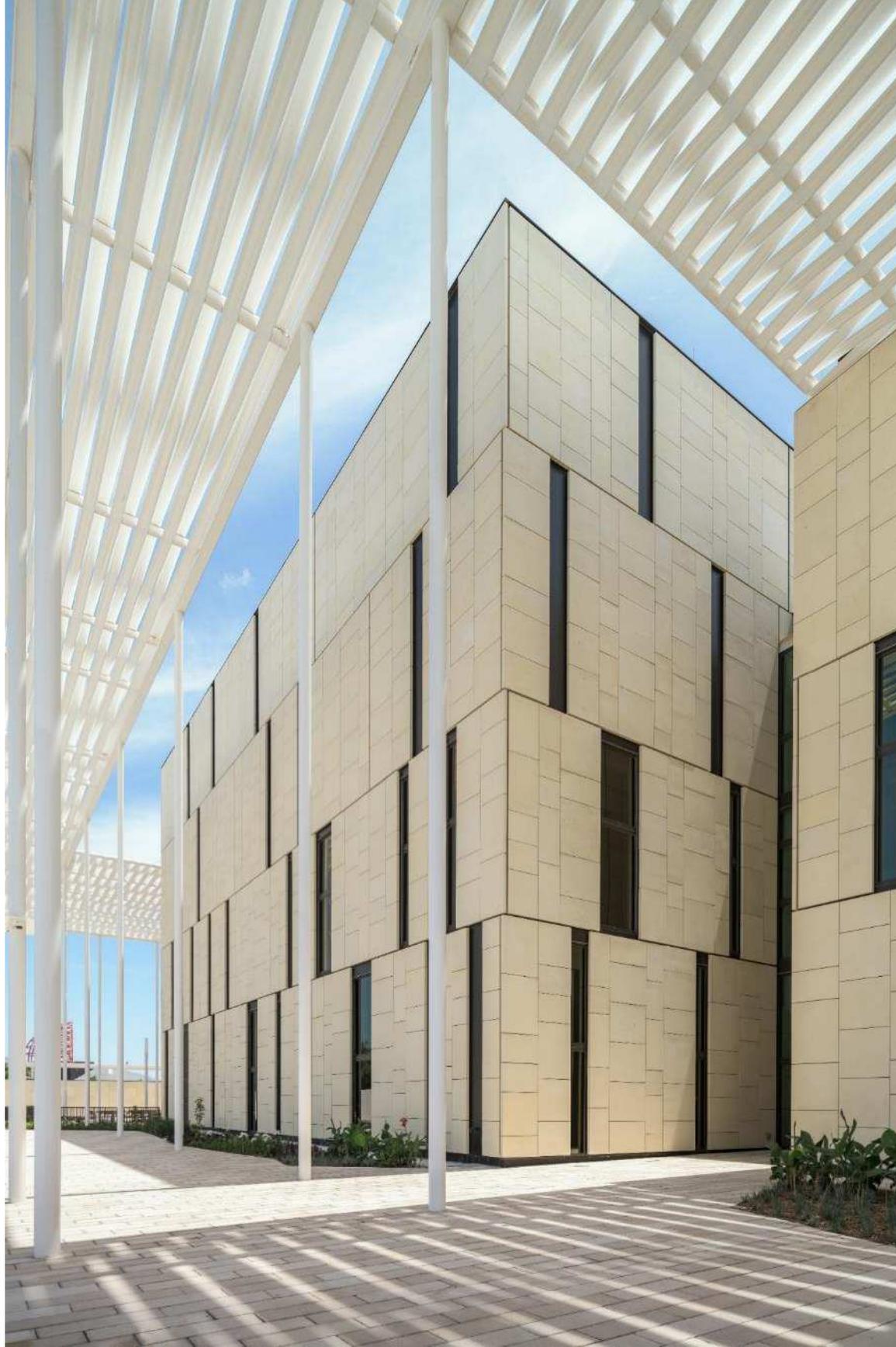
PERSPECTIVE SECTION



## LATILLA

Heat and intense sun are fundamental to the way of life in Matamoros. Compact and closely-knit urban patterns are linked by tree shaded paseos and courtyards. Interior/exterior relationships are blurred by intervening exterior space. The architectural response is one of functional simplicity and earnestness.

The latilla visually echoes the colonnaded entrances of traditional Beaux-Arts government buildings. The colonnade is a reinterpretation of the classical staccato rhythm and geometry of columns on civic buildings in the United States. The design moderates the interstitial space between the building and the perimeter: creating a permeable extension of program space, extending the building into the conversation with its context.



## SHADE

The PTFE fabric panels of the latilla play an important role in improving the energy performance and resiliency. The latilla allows rising heat to pass through, while reducing solar gain, thus reducing the amount of energy required to cool the buildings. On the north side of the compound, the canopy pulls away from the building, allowing more diffuse natural daylight into the workspaces without meaningfully increasing the solar gain.



## ARRIVAL

After passing through the main entrance, visitors slowly rise up to the diplomatic entrance court, shaded by the expansive canopy structure. The change in grade provides a natural separation from the traffic at street level, and an ideal location for outdoor events off of the multipurpose room.

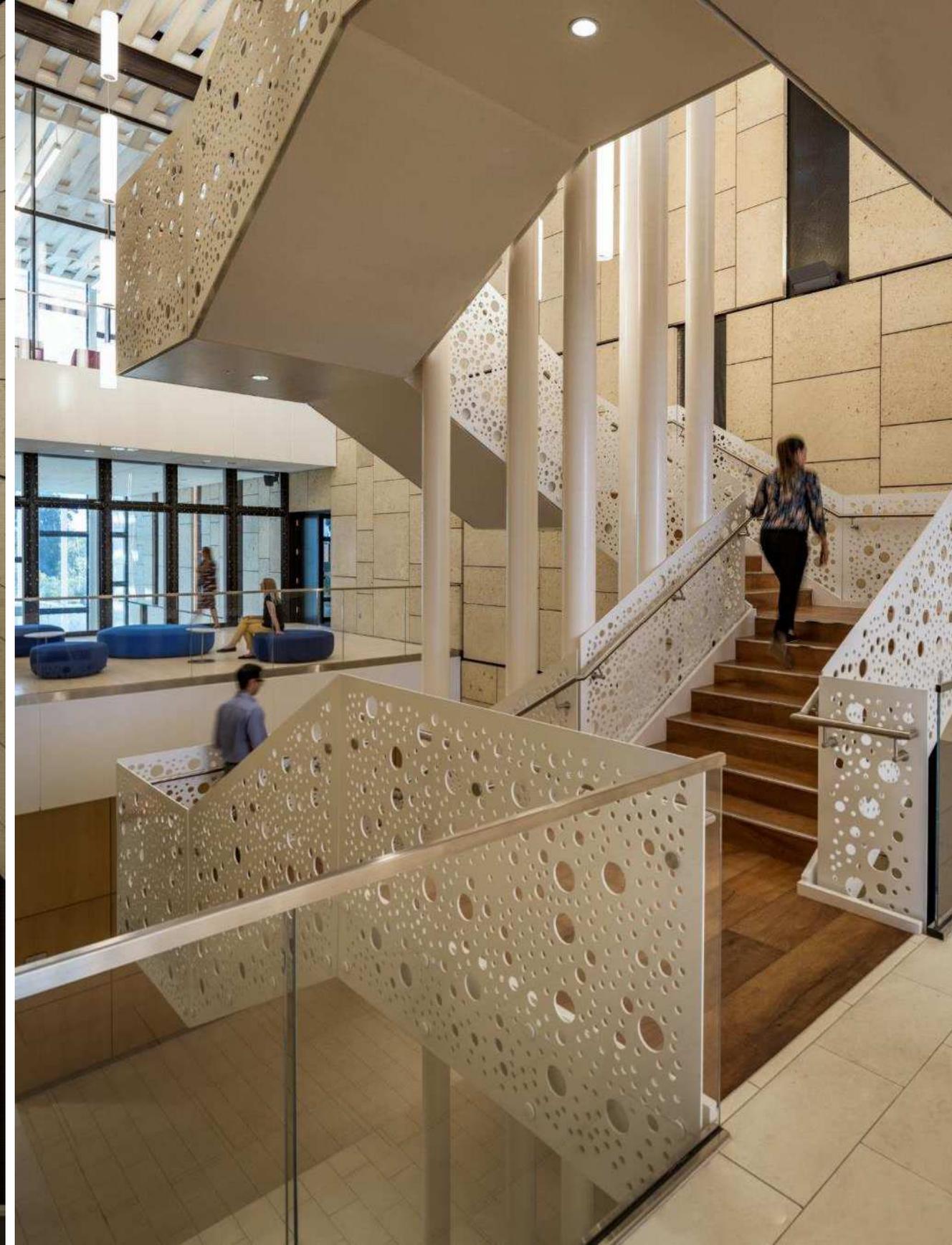
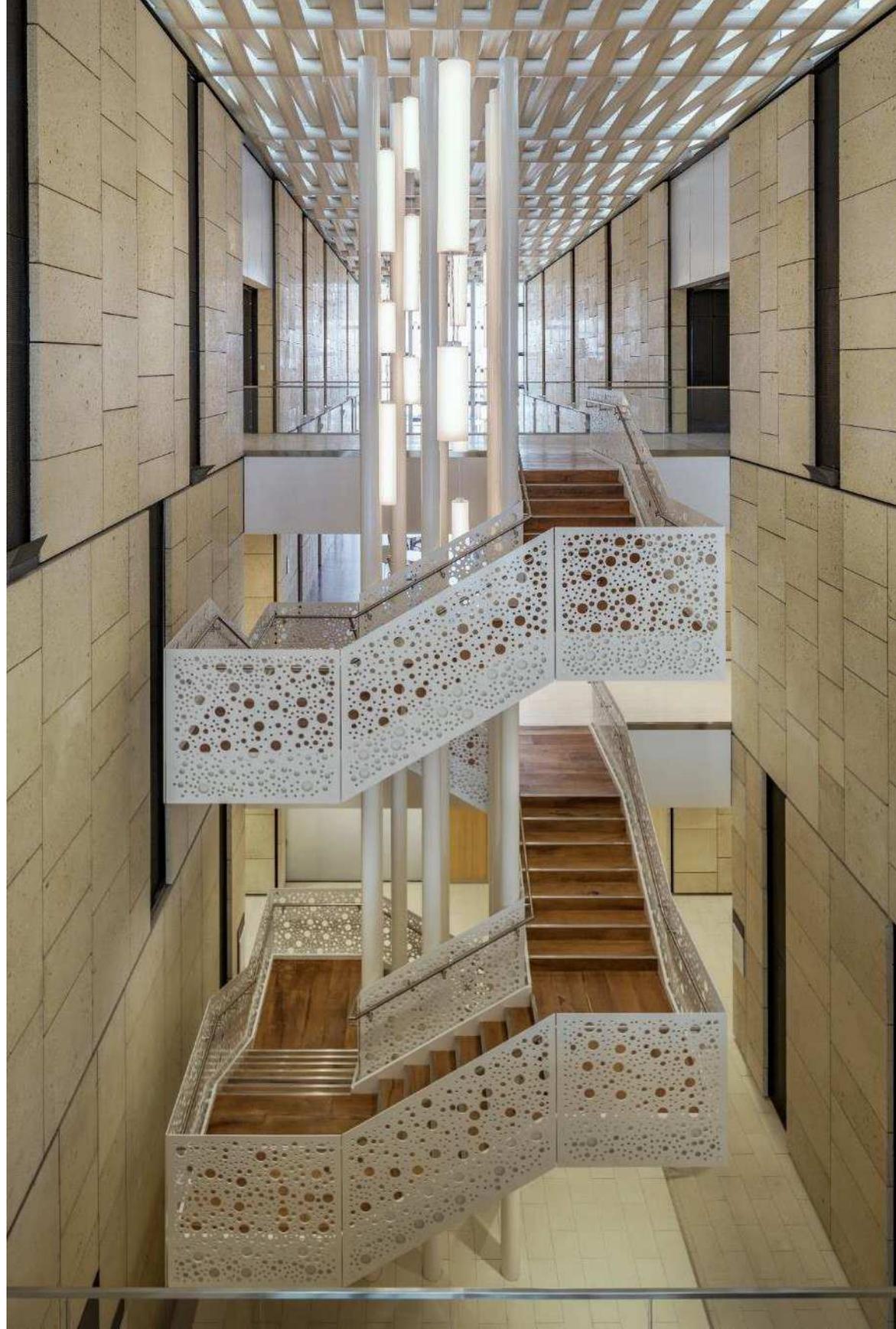
In keeping with the context of the city, the materials are simple and robust: cast concrete perimeter walls, a local limestone façade, and dark metal accents. The bright white tubular columns and latilla are inspired by the color of the adjacent amphitheater and library.



## INTERIOR

A central staircase of perforated metal connects all three levels, which contain open-plan work spaces for over 100 diplomatic staff, as well as a range of conference spaces and private offices

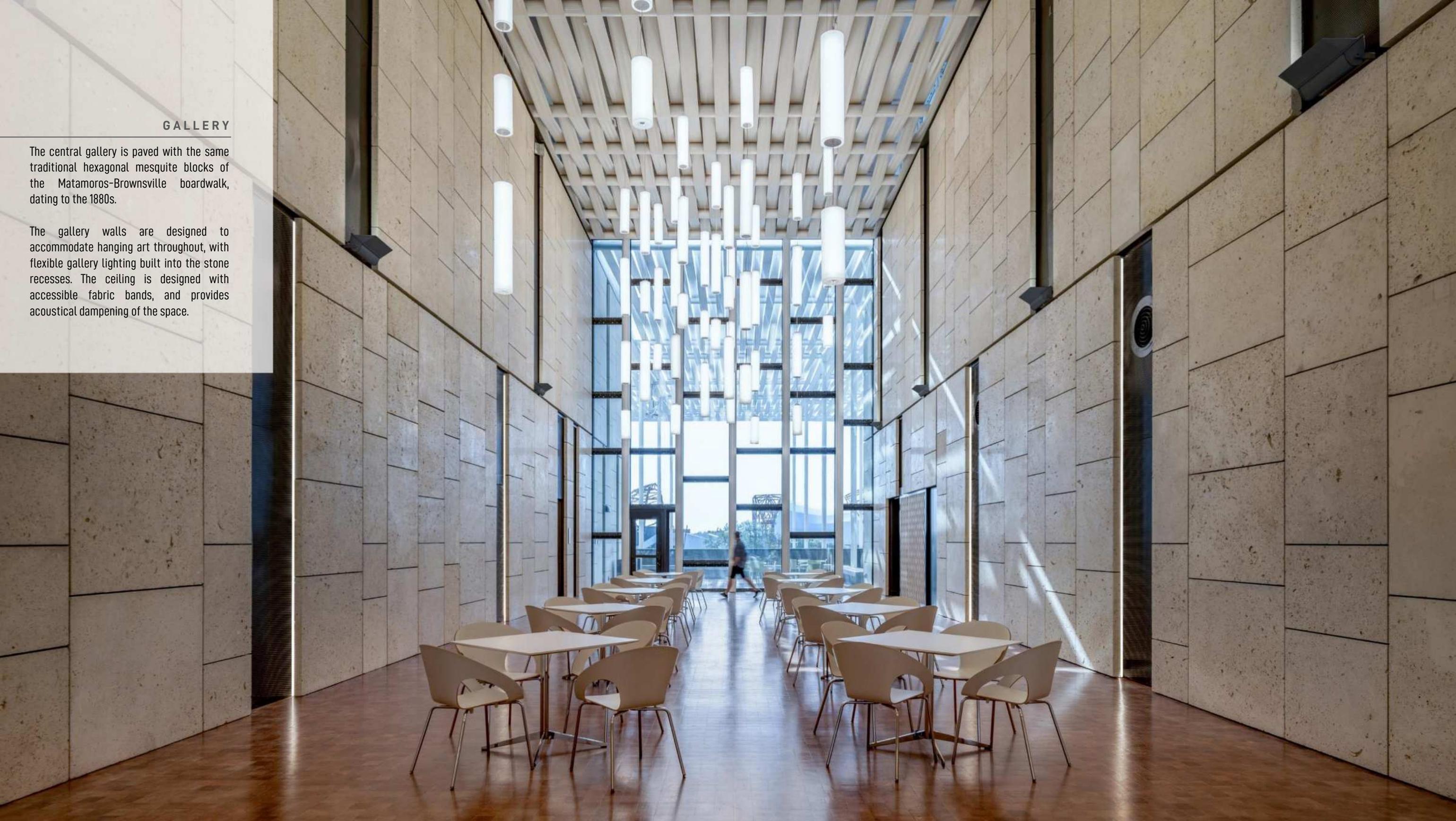
A central gallery unites all three levels of workspace, and is suffused with natural light from clerestory windows.



## GALLERY

The central gallery is paved with the same traditional hexagonal mesquite blocks of the Matamoros-Brownsville boardwalk, dating to the 1880s.

The gallery walls are designed to accommodate hanging art throughout, with flexible gallery lighting built into the stone recesses. The ceiling is designed with accessible fabric bands, and provides acoustical dampening of the space.



## EXTERIOR CONNECTION

Shaded courts anchor each end of the building. The primary axis of the gallery transitions from the main lobby up through the day-lit gallery above the consular section. This organization maximizes the use of the gallery for community functions. The extension of the consular floor below creates the terrace off the end of the gallery for exterior dining under the canopy.



## FLEXIBLE OFFICES

The coral limestone exterior cladding extends inside, and a range of other local materials and references occur throughout the building. Carpet tile in the office spaces references the city's pebble-paved pathways.

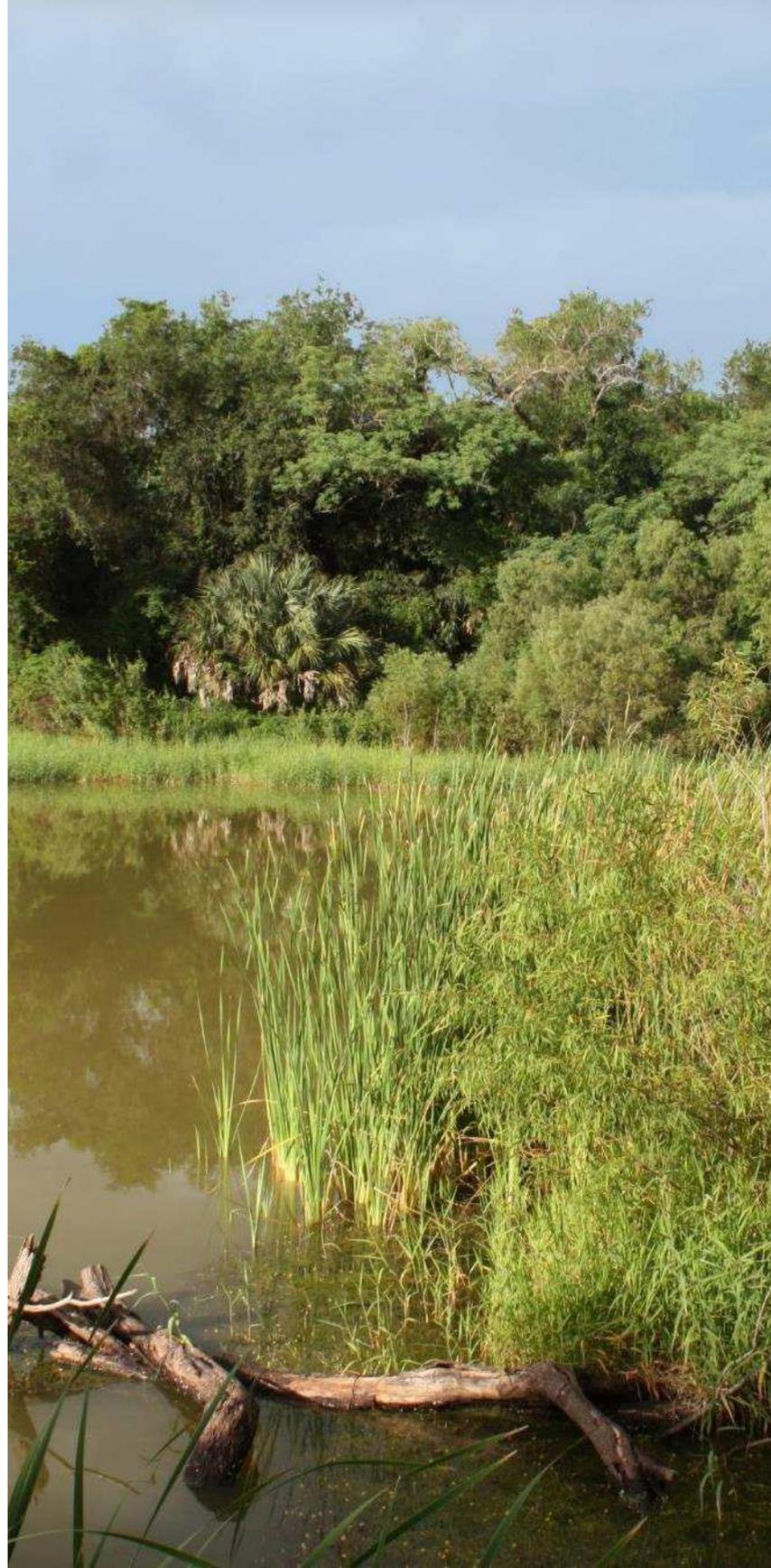
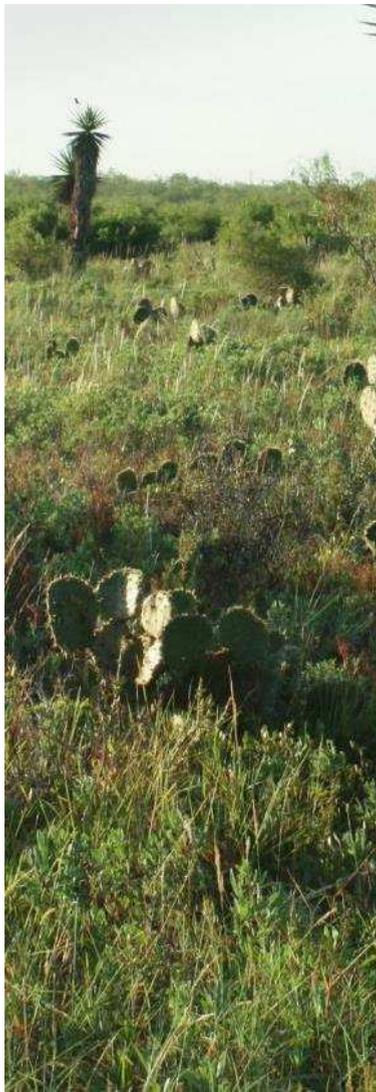
Site lines between individuals are maintained by lowering the height of system furniture in open work areas. Work areas utilize a low-profile access floor to maximize future flexibility. Open work areas allow for exchanging of information, decision making and discussion amongst users. Clerestory glass illuminates areas deep into the floorplate.



## SUSTAINABILITY

While the climate in Matamoros is typically hot and dry, heavy rains in early fall can cause the Rio Grande to rise and flood the city's streets. To address this issue, the landscape and water catchment system were designed to absorb or capture 90 percent of rainwater runoff. In drier seasons, wastewater from the buildings is treated and used to supply all of the irrigation needs. The project achieved LEED Gold certification.

The site is planted with a range of native plants, shrubs, and trees that provide food and habitat for monarch and other migratory species that arrive spectacularly each winter.



## A LINKED CAMPUS

The design language permeates the entrance pavilions and other buildings on the campus. The residential structure is a simple volume focused on a shaded exterior terrace (bottom left). The residence (top left) is sheathed in light bronze anodized panels with accents of coral stone, reversing the palette of the consulate office building.

The scale, form and palate of the main entry pavilion (top right) is reminiscent of the consular pavilion (bottom right).



## CONSULAR ENTRY

By siting the consular entrance across from Parque Olímpico, visitors experience the same sense of arrival and respect as the formal diplomatic entrance on the alternate side of the compound. Arriving from the park, visitors enter the large shaded and planted plazas, and can rest there while awaiting their appointments.





↑  
Chancery  
Cancillería

Main Campus Access Pavilion  
Pabellón de Acceso Principal  
a Campus

←

Recreation Center  
Centro Recreacional

Marine Guard Residence  
Residencia Guardias de Marina

Support Annex  
Anexo de Soporte

Utility Building  
Edificio de Servicios

Service Center  
Pabellón  
de Servicios



