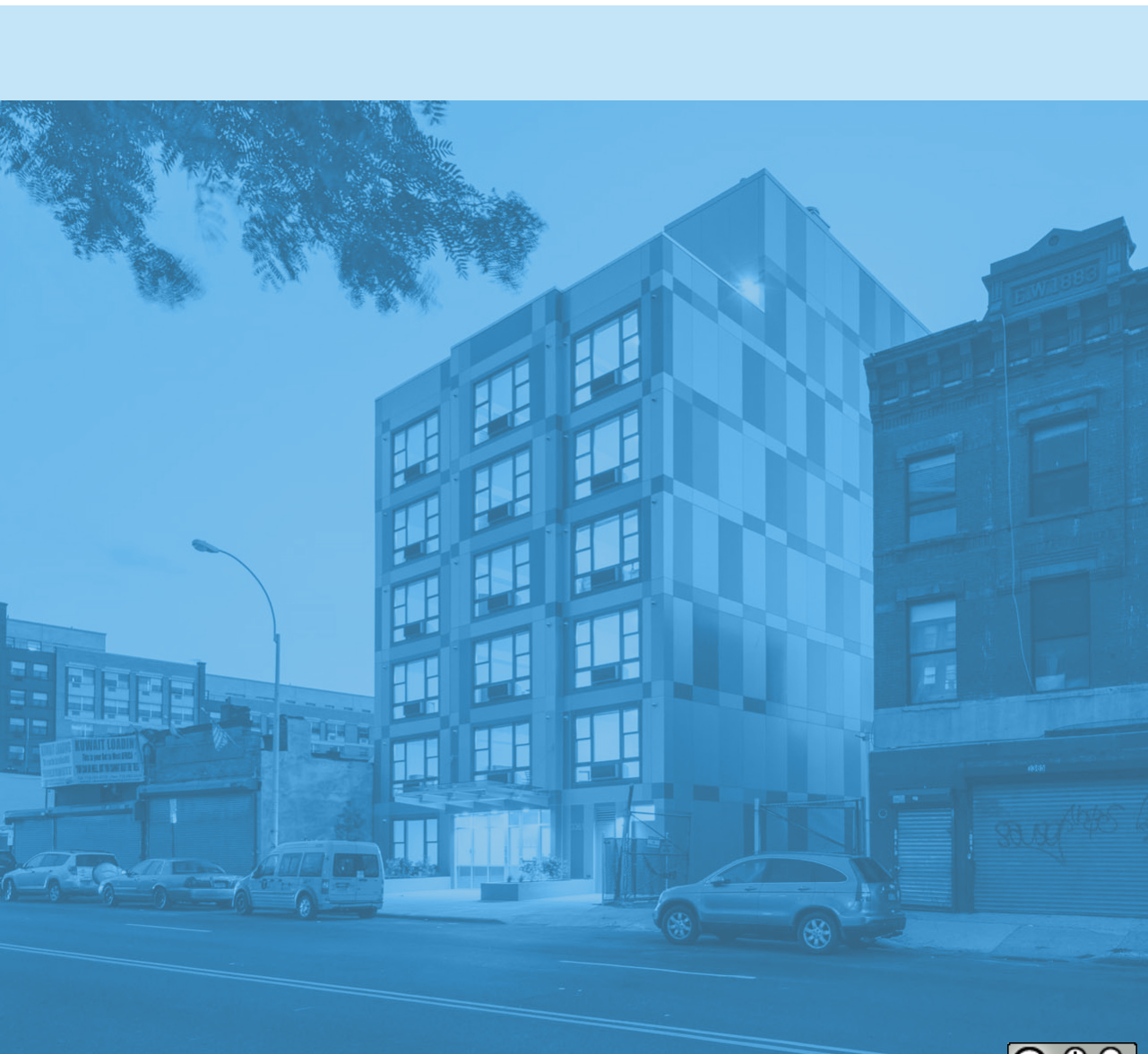




THIRD AVENUE APARTMENTS

New York, NY



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AT A GLANCE

Address

3361 Third Avenue, The Bronx, New York

Managing Organization

Services for the Underserved (SUS), a non-profit agency

Architect

James McCullar Architecture, PC
44 W 28th St. 5th floor. New York, NY 10001
212-206-0622, jimmccullar@jamesmccullar.com

Interior Designer

John Shuman, Director of Design
Services for the Underserved
305 7th Avenue, 10th floor, NY, NY 10001
917-408-5373, jshuman@sus.org

Clients

Single adults, men and women.

Facility Type and Capacity

Permanent supportive housing/housing first. 62 units of 300-315 sq. ft. each. 38 of the units are for supportive housing (formerly homeless) residents. 24 of the units are for community members.

Approximate Square Footage

37,102

Admission

Low demand facility. NY 3 Population A: chronic homeless, mental health issues with co-occurring substance abuse individuals accepted.

Year of Construction / Renovation and Approximate Cost

2015

Number of Floors

7, including roof with garden

Site

Urban

On-site Services and Amenities

Case managers, mailboxes, community/activity rooms, storage rooms, laundry, garden, exterior sitting areas/porches, bicycle storage, urban farm.

GOALS

A glance at the facade of the Third Avenue Apartments project quickly shows that it stands out in the context of its neighborhood. This is not a timid building, but upon extended inspection, it is a facility of meaning and deep intention. Services for the Underserved (SUS), the developer and owner of this permanent housing facility, has long placed emphasis on the physical design of their housing facilities, drawing from their previous years of experience and surveys of residents that showed the importance of doing so. Wanda Cruz-Lopez, SUS's Senior Vice President of Behavioral Health feels strongly that design of these apartments is critical—and that it must be addressed by informed design-oriented practitioners instead of a facility director. To Cruz-Lopez, good design is a prescription that gives residents the opportunity to regain stability and recover from past experiences:

“These individuals have had such a long journey. And they will feel good about themselves from the architecture itself. It affects your mood, what you want to do. For example, residents will take an interest in the gardens. They will water, take care of, and sell the products at the farmer’s market. They beautify by placing flowers. ... Home provides that stability. Nothing can happen without being safe and having a place to lay your head. Home is just instrumental to someone’s wellness.”

Embedded in the Third Avenue Apartments’ expression of home are affordances and gestures big and small for

residents that support dignity and self esteem, such as the ability to exert personal control over one’s surroundings and sensitivity to culture and neighborhood context (see this case study’s photos and captions for specific examples).

Goals of dignity and self-esteem arise from an understanding of the circumstances and backgrounds of many of its residents. About two-thirds of Third Avenue Apartments’ supportive housing residents are referred by psychiatrists and many were formerly homeless. A small number use drugs, while many were former users. Owing to these histories, Michael Cooper, apartment director observes that ordinary things that many take for granted are important here—having one’s own key to an apartment, and a name on a mailbox. Having one’s own bathroom, no curfew and being able to see outside. Residents are encouraged to personalize their apartments, making them their own.

Even with its residents often in need of extra assistance, a goal of the project was not to look ‘special’ nor appear like affordable housing. States Jim McCullar, project architect, “we wanted this to seem like it could be anywhere. Affordable housing, supportive housing should be the best it can be—it shouldn’t be different”.

FEATURES

Viewing the Third Avenue Apartments' exterior introduces the visitor to the facility's urban-sophisticated yet lighthearted mood. Nicknamed "the Lego building" by neighbors, steel panels serve as skin over a modular frame, referencing the plug and play construction method in an honest way. The tiled panel style has also elicited comparisons to a homey, familiar quilt by neighbors, an analogy that Jim McCullar likes. "The fact that it's so different from masonry buildings in the neighborhood has allowed it to be different but not upstage them. The whole result has put a smile on people's faces. I love the contrast to nearby lots that have a lot of charm. It's a cheerful addition to the personality of the neighborhood." Project interior designer John Shuman agrees "there's a strength, a playfulness-- a comfort level, elegance, cleanliness with the modern color. It is not formal, but approachable." By departing from while honoring the neighborhood's existing aesthetic, the project at once makes the statement that low-income persons value beauty, deserve respect, and are worthy neighbors in this culturally vibrant location.

Walking inside the apartments instantly reveals a stylistic unity with the exterior, a goal that Shuman prioritized early on in the project. For example, the flooring in key public spaces and corridors is composed of 4 types of warm gray ceramic tile of various finishes, subtly referencing the play of external gray panels on the

building. With its anticipated durability, this flooring serves is an apt example of three priorities of beauty, economy and practicality Shuman maintains for these projects.

While the studio apartments are small at 300 to 315 square feet each, care taken in the design visually expands their space and in so doing, respects the dignity of residents. High ceilings and floor to ceiling windows maximize volume while wood references in laminate flooring and kitchen millwork warm the space's ambient mood. Conscious of the one-room configuration, Shuman made a conscious effort to design the apartments so that they are not exclusively a bedroom space by adding removable bolster cushions to the single beds, doubling as sofas for entertaining. A narrow entrance sequence was achieved by placing the bathrooms next to the apartment main door, evoking a foyer arrival sequence for visitors.



THIRD AVENUE APARTMENTS / *New York City, NY*



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An Online Knowledge Solution



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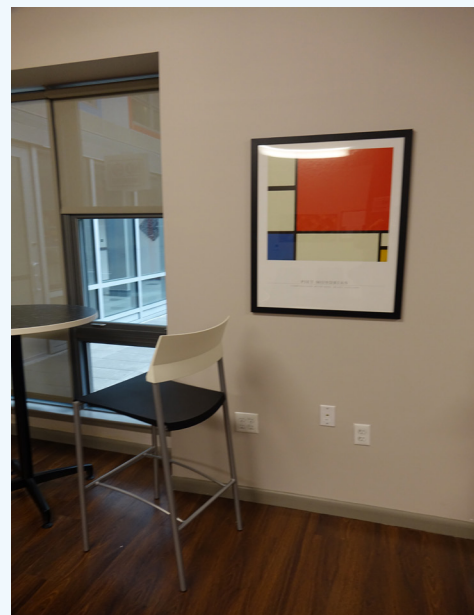
LESSONS LEARNED

1

As the Third Avenue Apartments opened only three weeks prior to the writing of this case study, it is too early to say how and in what fashion the facility will settle in and begin to get to know its new staff and resident users. One asset the project has realized, however, is a significant flexibility that may serve its progress through time. For example, the interior's neutral color palette enlivened by strategic, colorful art will likely complement the longevity of its durable materials used in high-traffic areas such as ceramic tile, commercial upholsteries, powder coated metal furnishings and laminate flooring. An art gallery wall near the elevator lobby extends an open hand to change through time, as do the various gardens at both the ground level and roof. The project's LEED Gold certification also demonstrates its respect for residents as well as earth resources, reflecting decisions that will reap payoffs in the future.

2

On the whole, the Third Avenue Apartments exudes a sense that the project team worked closely together, showing deference for each other as well as to the shared consensus goals of the project. Notes John Shuman, "you need to work with a sense of appreciation, cooperation and respect—respect for the architect and his vision, respect for the program director and what he is doing as a caretaker. You need to put your heart behind it, hold to the good and carry this through to your actions and decisions." A deep care for residents' well being is a pervasive undercurrent here, which in turn holds the potential to usher residents back to a place of equality in personhood.



3

Projects such as the Third Avenue Apartments also have a payoff for the designers themselves. A veteran of residential and commercial projects alike, project architect Jim McCullar is drawn to the public giving-back nature of projects such as the Third Avenue Apartments. “We all live in a house, an apartment. Everyone understands these needs. This is gratifying for me and I like the idea of helping a community make a change. This will help change people. And that’s a good thing.”



FACILITY TOUR

Attendance to Human Needs

Use this key on the following pages of the facility tour to learn how the design of the building and its spaces contributes to the well-being of its residents.



Dignity and Self Esteem



Empowerment and Personal Control



Security, Privacy and Personal Space



Stress Management



Sense of Community



Beauty and Meaning



Front Façade

The street-facing façade of the building contrasts from those around it yet respects the massing of nearby structures.



Front Entrance

The vibrant palette reflects the modular constructed nature of the building, serving as a wayfinding feature for neighborhood residents.



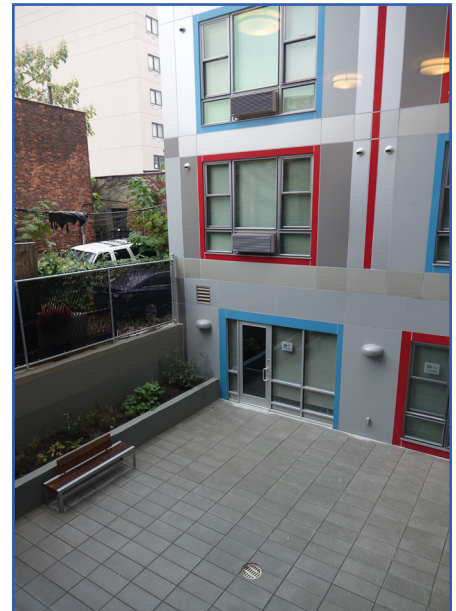
Exterior of Building From Rear

The external metal skin's palette of warm grays enlivens this featureless wall without overpowering it. The hues will likely withstand inevitable effects of pollution in a better way than brick, and will require less maintenance.



Middle Courtyard

The courtyard's below-ground position gives the building a sense of nestling into its site, providing a reassuring grounding within its sense of place.



Back Courtyard

The rear courtyard permits residents to grow gardens. In this urban location, access to unpaved ground is the exception rather than the rule.





Entrance and Reception Desk

Clear sightlines characterize the entrance, lending residents peace of mind through the presence of 24/7 staff. Extensive walk-off mats minimize tracked-in dirt and moisture.



Mail Area and Corridor

The mailroom's layout and placement also permits residents to gather, encouraging community.





Main First Floor Corridor

Four types of ceramic flooring create a mosaic that echoes the building's external metal skin. Mid-tone grout extends the visual sense of cleanliness longer than white tones would permit.



Corridor Overlooking the Middle Courtyard

A glass shed roof extension widens the main elevator corridor, increasing the effect of light and openness within the corridor and gallery.





Community Gathering Room

The activities space is situated to form a link to the middle courtyard and main elevator corridor public zone. Furnishings, finishes and art evoke residential form and textures, but are commercial in their durability.



Computer Room

The computer laboratory's visibility from the main corridor reminds residents of this valuable resource.

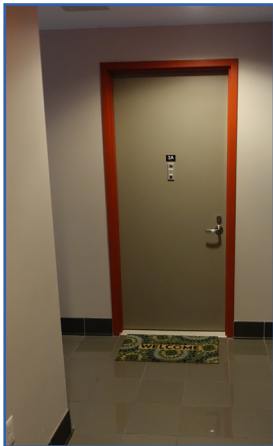




Apartment Corridor

Finish, fenestration and color enliven necessary corridors. Sight-impaired residents benefit from the orientation of floor-wall and door surround contrasts.





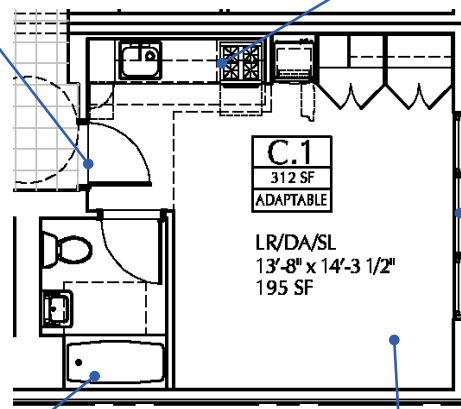
Apartment Threshold

Lighting within the corridors is soft-edged, avoiding overly harsh, shadow-less treatments that often characterize low-income housing.



Apartment Entrance and Kitchen

Task lighting and wood finishes warm the 300 square foot studio apartments.



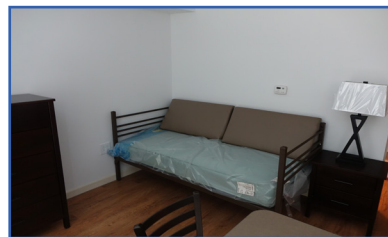
Apartment Fenestration

Daylight reach through large fenestration was a priority of the project, here incorporated in the studio apartment to counterbalance its small square footage.



Apartment Bathroom

Generous lighting at the vanity can help preserve sense of self-esteem by avoiding shadows under the eyes and nose.



Apartment Bed/Sofa with Bolster Cushions

Bolsters for the bed send cues to residents' visitors that this single room is not strictly a bedroom, but also intended for entertaining others.



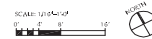
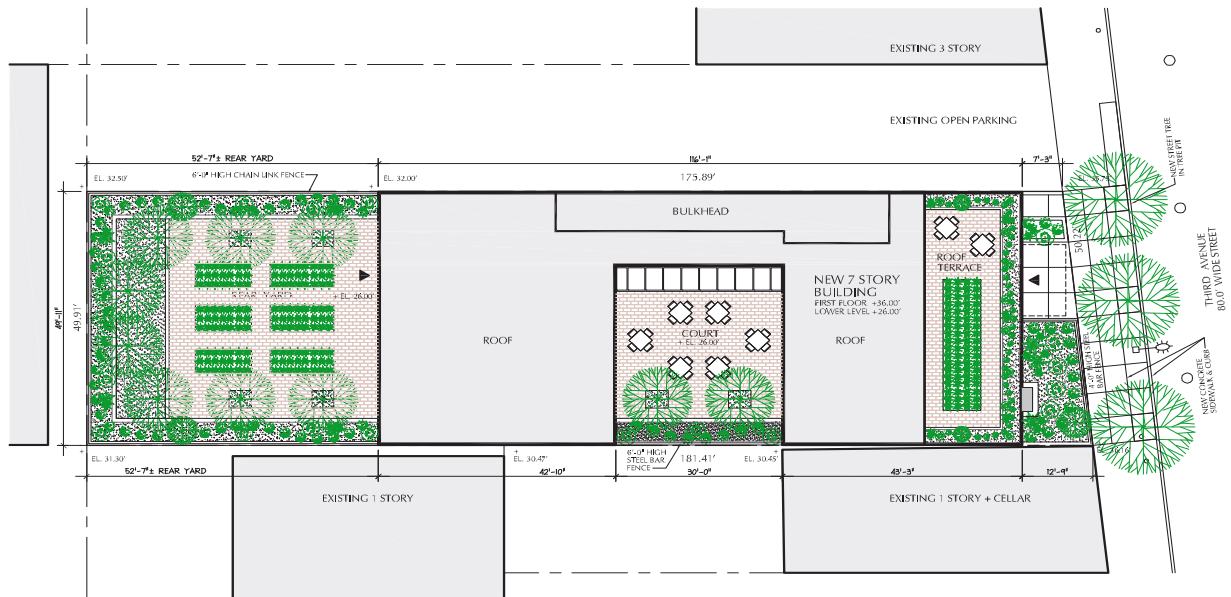


Roof Garden

A roof garden with raised planters gives residents the opportunity to grow food for use in their apartments, as well as a protected, open-air community space.



Floor Plan: Site and Roof Plan



SCHEMATIC DESIGN ONLY

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SDGG Strategic Development & Construction Group
BRONXPRO GROUP
SUS Services for the Underserved
Opening doors to independence

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3361 THIRD AVENUE
 SUPPORTIVE HOUSING
 BRONX, NEW YORK

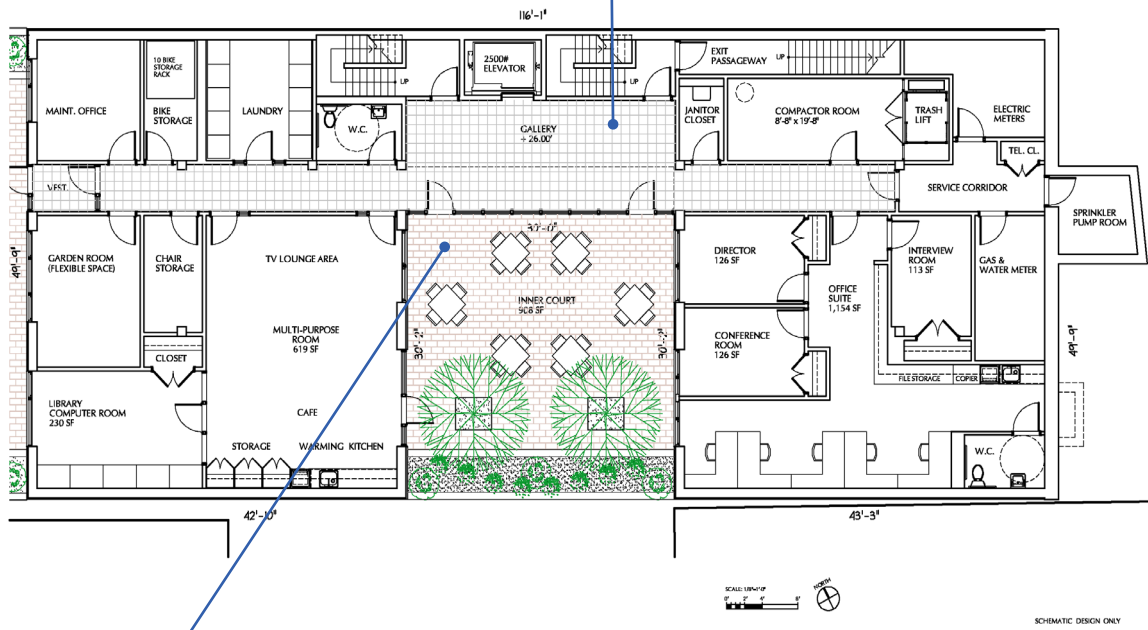
SITE PLAN

MARCH 8, 2013

A-1

Floor Plan: Lower Level

Art gallery provides opportunities for individualization and change



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LOWER LEVEL PLAN
 GROSS FLOOR AREA: 4,967.42 SF

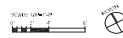
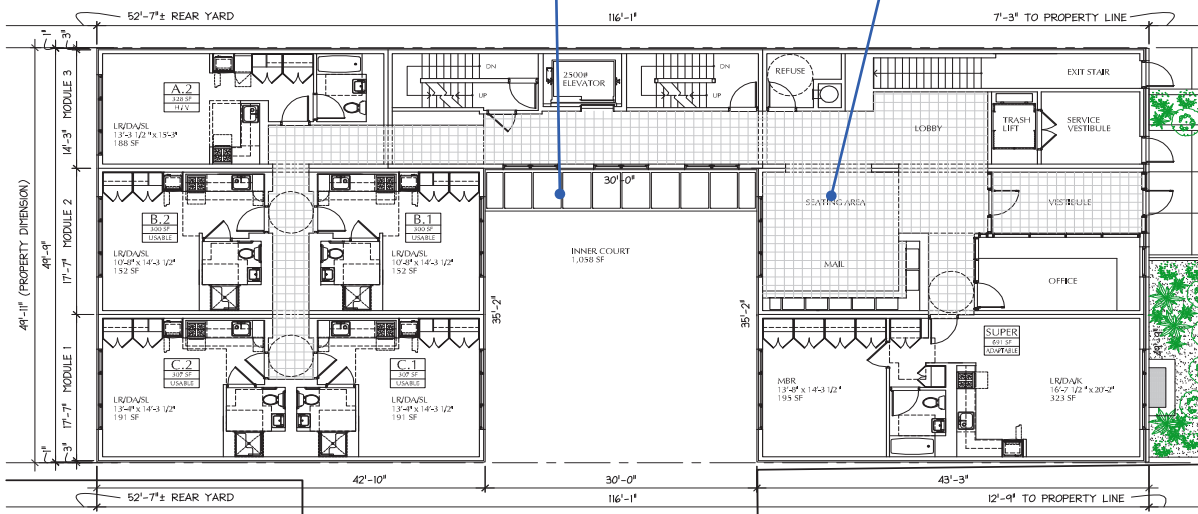
MARCH 8, 2013 A-2

Visual permeability between inside and outside gathering spaces provides seasonal flexibility. Visibility from the elevator corridor prompts chance encounters.

Floor Plan: First Floor

Glass shed addition brings light into corridor and connects to exterior

Mail room near lobby provides convenient place for resident hello's



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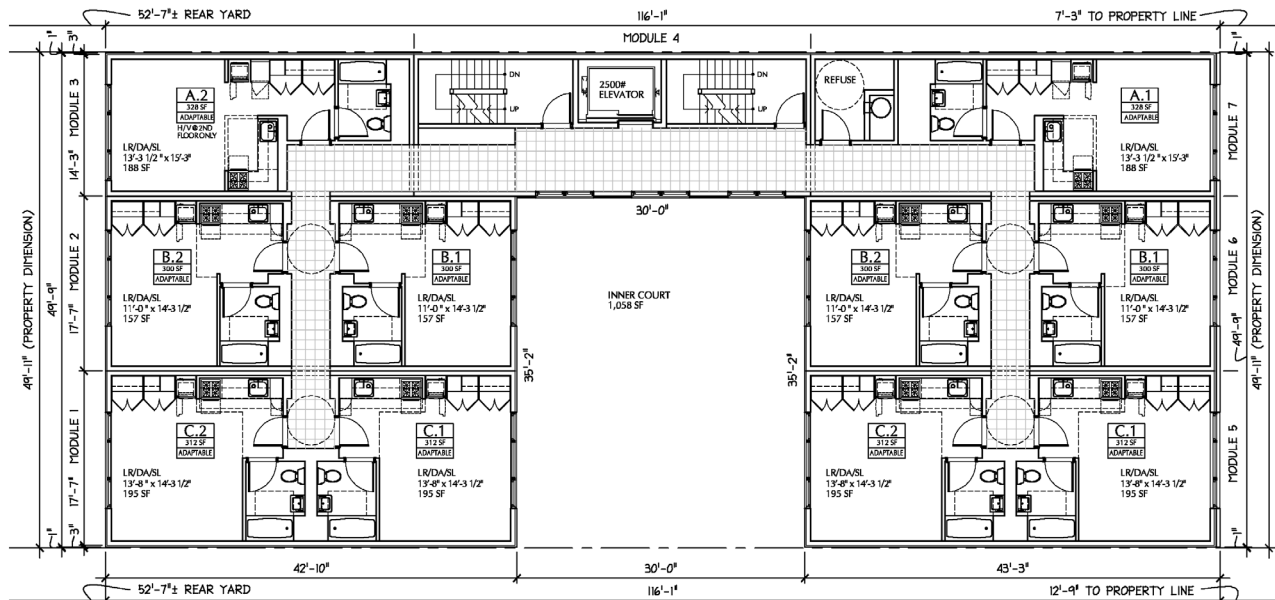
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FIRST FLOOR PLAN
 GROSS FLOOR AREA: 4,720.15 SF
 MECH. DEDUCTIONS: 182 SF
 ZONING FLOOR AREA: 4,538.15 SF
 MARCH 8, 2013
A-3

Floor Plan: Floors Two Through Six



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3361 THIRD AVENUE
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FLOORS 2-6
GROSS FLOOR AREA: 4,720.15 SF
MECH. DEDUCTIONS: 245 SF
ZONING FLOOR AREA: 4,475.15 SF

MARCH 8, 2013

A-4

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank these individuals for their contributions to this case study:

Services for the Underserved (SUS):

Wanda Cruz-Lopez, Senior Vice President of Behavioral Health

John Shuman, Interior Designer

Michael Cooper, Third Avenue Apartments Director

Veronica Person, Peer Specialist

James McCullar Architecture, PC

James McCullar, Principal

Select images courtesy of James McCullar Architecture, Aislinn Weidele, photographer



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