

A photograph of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, featuring a large steel arch structure spanning a river. The bridge is surrounded by lush green trees and a grassy embankment in the foreground. The sky is overcast.

As of 2022, **50% of billing in architecture is reconstruction.**<sup>1</sup>

This rate could rise to 90%.<sup>2</sup>

In the last (10) years (2016–2025), **only (1) adaptive reuse project** has been recognized by an ACSA/AIA Housing Design Education Award.

Selma, Alabama has been losing more housing stock than population. Adaptive reuse could provide multi-family housing that **preserves embodied energy** and **celebrates embedded history.**

## ADAPTABLE HOUSING: SELMA, ALABAMA

1. William Richards, “Renovation claims 50% share of firm billings for first time,” AIA: American Institute of Architects, May 8, 2022.

2. Saurabh Mahajan, “Adaptive reuse of commercial real estate,” Deloitte Perspectives, [www2.deloitte.com](http://www2.deloitte.com), September 7, 2017.

EDMUND PETTUS BRIDGE: photo by Madi Huffman

### ABSTRACT:

In January 2023, an EF-2 tornado touched down in Selma, Alabama. Reporting of the damage, however, did not explain the impact of **decades of intentional disinvestment**. Responding to this acute need for housing, two undergraduate studios proposed adding multifamily units through the adaptive reuse of significant but vacant structures.

First, the Good Samaritan Hospital was proposed as a gateway to a severely damaged neighborhood. “Good Sam” **hosted a multi-racial coalition during the Selma Voting Rights Movement** in 1965 including treating injured marchers during Bloody Sunday. Students also researched its longer legacy as a training ground for African American medical professionals including graduating over 350

licensed practical nurses. Revitalizing the building would preserve and extend this history. While the building is deep for apartments—75 feet across—students proved careful planning provides **ample daylight and extra room for aging in place**.

The following year, students studied Selma’s historic downtown to prove the potential of its remarkable but endangered building stock. Students identified two vacant properties with large windows and tall ceilings. Crucially, these historic structures enable an **unusual generosity required for adaptability**. Students discovered a spacious room can convert to other uses but also defines dignified housing. Rather than a single solution for an idealized future, then, each studio anticipated **multiple options**

**for unpredictable futures**. Students ruthlessly nudged competing dimensions into alignment, demonstrating how a few simple modifications—to furniture, doors or walls—can reconfigure units without costly retrofitting. If housing can anticipate, even encourage, different social arrangements, then **residents are extended agency**. Through deep respect—for the place and its people—students approached a **radical and expansive precision** that embraces Selma’s history with optimism while harnessing the deep internal logic of an existing building. While understanding cultural significance is paramount, six inches can make all the difference.

**NOTE:** For comparison, all plans and sections are presented at the same scale.

# Good Samaritan Hospital (FALL 2023)

## DISTRICT ANALYSIS (4 WEEKS)

Anecdotal histories of the Good Samaritan Hospital include significant discrepancies. The studio consulted peer-reviewed scholarship, historic newspapers and online archives to document the history. Students also produced drawings accurate to within 1" for the City of Selma. By researching demographics and mapping existing resources, students proposed a range of community amenities for the ground floor including a food hub with a community garden, business incubator, after-school center and museum.

### KEY ASSIGNMENTS:

**District analysis** (in teams of 2-3): historical research, mapping of community resources, existing condition drawings and landscape + envelope strategies

### FIELD TRIP: 2-days in Selma

Measure + digitally scan building  
Brown Chapel AME with Bruce and Linda Holmes  
Old Depot Museum with Beth Spivey  
Journeys for the Soul (tour) with JoAnne Bland (Foot Soldier during Bloody Sunday)

### READINGS:

"The Scenario-buffered Building," Stewart Brand  
"Storing Memories in the Yard," Walter J. Hood, Jr. and Melissa Erickson



4TH FLOOR: 3D Matterport scan by Junshan Liu, September 2023

1964 HOSPITAL: Elizabeth Boone Aiken, "Good Samaritan Hospital in Selma, Alabama," 1964, Alabama Department of Archives & History, BN0002407\_01, <https://digital.archives.alabama.gov/digital/collection/amg/id/36170/rec/8>

## ADAPTIVE REUSE (11 WEEKS)

### KEY ASSIGNMENTS:

Case Study: Adaptable Housing  
Case Study: Surfaces + Furniture  
Documentation: Booklet

Case studies guided students on appropriate dimensions for dignified housing including typical furniture and strategies for the adjacent landscape.

### READINGS:

"Flexible Housing," Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till  
"Space—Action," Craig Wilkins

### LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Leadership and Collaboration (NAAB PC.6)  
Design (of an urban district) (NAAB PC.2)  
Health, Safety and Welfare (NAAB SC.1)  
Regulatory Context (NAAB PC.3)



# Living Downtown (FALL 2024)

## DISTRICT PLAN (5 WEEKS)

Students worked in teams to identify over 146,000 square feet of “easier-to-convert” housing in the 12-block core of Selma. The studio applied criteria such as access to light and structures that would not require an elevator or second stair by code. Based on this study, the studio pursued the old YMCA—owned by a non-profit hoping to attract a buyer—and the Adler Furniture building—owned by a local developer.

### KEY ASSIGNMENTS:

**District analysis** (in teams of 2-3): site plan, 3D massing, property ownership, historic significance and the condition of each building

**District plan** (in teams of 3-4 and eventually the entire studio): site plan, historical maps, 3D map with scenarios  
 1. housing, 2. new housing, 3. live/work, 4. commercial and 5. streetscape

### FIELD TRIP: 2-days in Selma

Tour with preservation architect Dick Hudgens  
 Studio visit with internationally renowned sculptor **Charlie “Tin Man” Lucas**  
 Edwards Lofts with AC Reeves  
 Arsenal Place with Preston McGee

### READINGS:

*Why the Vote Wasn't Enough for Selma*, Karlyn Forner  
 “The Scenario-buffered Building,” Stewart Brand  
 “Duality and Invisibility,” Craig Barton  
 “Flexible Housing,” Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till

## ADAPTIVE REUSE (10 WEEKS)

### KEY ASSIGNMENTS:

Case Study: Adaptable Housing  
 Case Study: Surfaces + Furniture  
 Essay: Health, Safety and Welfare

### FIELD TRIP: 1-day in Selma

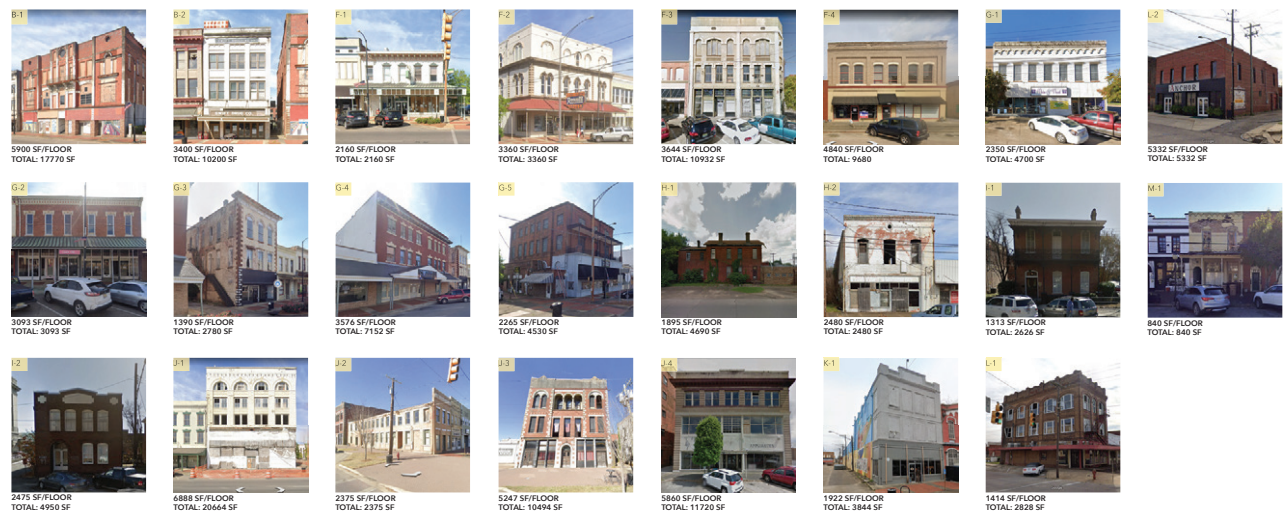
Measure + document YMCA / Adler Furniture  
 Tabernacle Baptist Church with Verdell Lett Dawson and **Kirk Carrington** (Foot Soldier during Bloody Sunday)

### LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Leadership and Collaboration (NAAB PC.6)  
 Design (of an urban district) (NAAB PC.2)  
 Health, Safety and Welfare (NAAB SC.1)



### EASIER-TO-CONVERT HOUSING





**ABOVE:** OLD YMCA (1885) with roofline destroyed by fire in 1930s. Postcard, <https://itoldya420.getarchive.net/amp/media/yymca-selma-ala-010528>.

**BELOW:** ADLER FURNITURE (1860) with cast-iron gallery now stored in pieces inside. Walker Evans, "Main street architecture. Selma, Alabama," December 1935, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2017759335/>.



**ADLER FURNITURE:** interior with damage



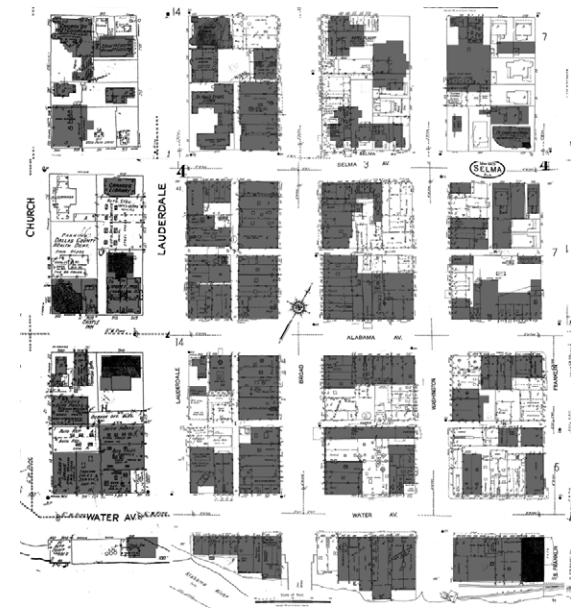
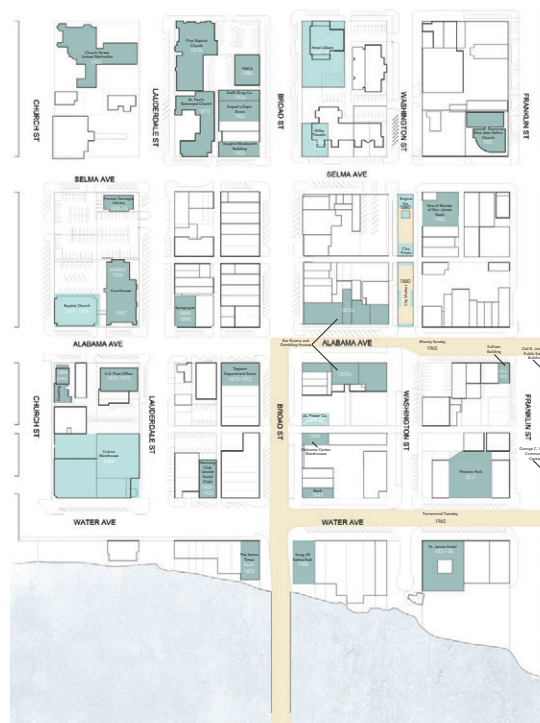
**OLD YMCA:** stabilized interior



**EDISTONE HOTEL:** home of Freedman's Bureau after damage

## SELMA: The Power of Context

Students are initially disappointed to travel to Selma, an iconic if sobering destination. **The city holds, in physical form, the intertwined story of racial terror and redemptive non-violent action.** A corollary to this story is historic and intentional disinvestment. The result has been the slow but steady erasure of physical sites connected to history, particularly Black history. The disrepair can feel beyond recovery. 43% of the population lives in poverty. 28% suffer from food insecurity. The unemployment rate is 14%. These design studios directly challenge traditional perceptions. Instead, they embrace Selma as a **place of unbounded hope**. For our own collective future and memory, we **must** preserve its embodied energy and embedded history. These are transformative lessons for students.



**LEFT:** Historical mapping including location of key existing and demolished buildings and events such as the 1965 Voting Rights Marches.

**ABOVE:** Figure-ground from compiled Sanborn maps.



**SHELVING (A):** “Designed for flexibility, the prefabricated shelving allows easy installation and reconfiguration, promoting versatile layouts and anticipating alternative future uses.”



## GOOD SAM: **Threads of Change**

**SOPHIE HARWARD**

from student: “Intersecting double height spaces also transform residential corridors into communal hubs. Shelving in the residential corridors and units transforms the building into a living museum, perpetually shaped by the residents’ hands. The building becomes a mutable vessel for Selma’s stories.”

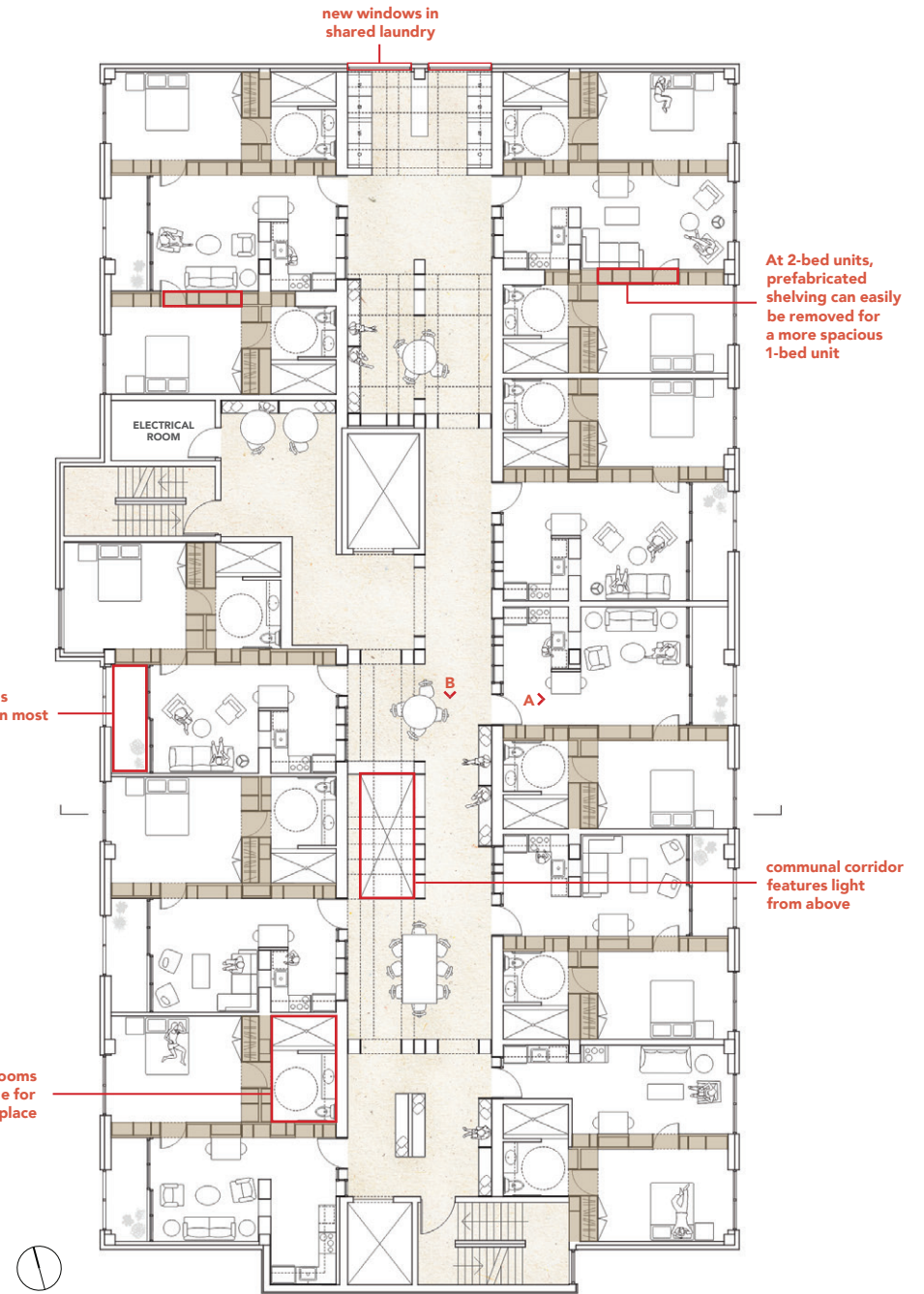




**GROUND FLOOR LIBRARY:** "Local quilts and authentic artifacts enrich a civil rights library, while...abstracted versions of handcrafted quilts serve as bold, translucent curtains."



**COMMUNAL CORRIDOR (B):** taking advantage of the unusual depth, the corridor becomes a sequence of social rooms with light from above.





**OPTION 1: SUNROOMS**  
**CIRCULATION:** 1650 sq ft  
**SHARED / EXTERIOR SPACE:** 1930 sq ft  
**TOTAL COMMUNAL SPACE:** 3580 sq ft

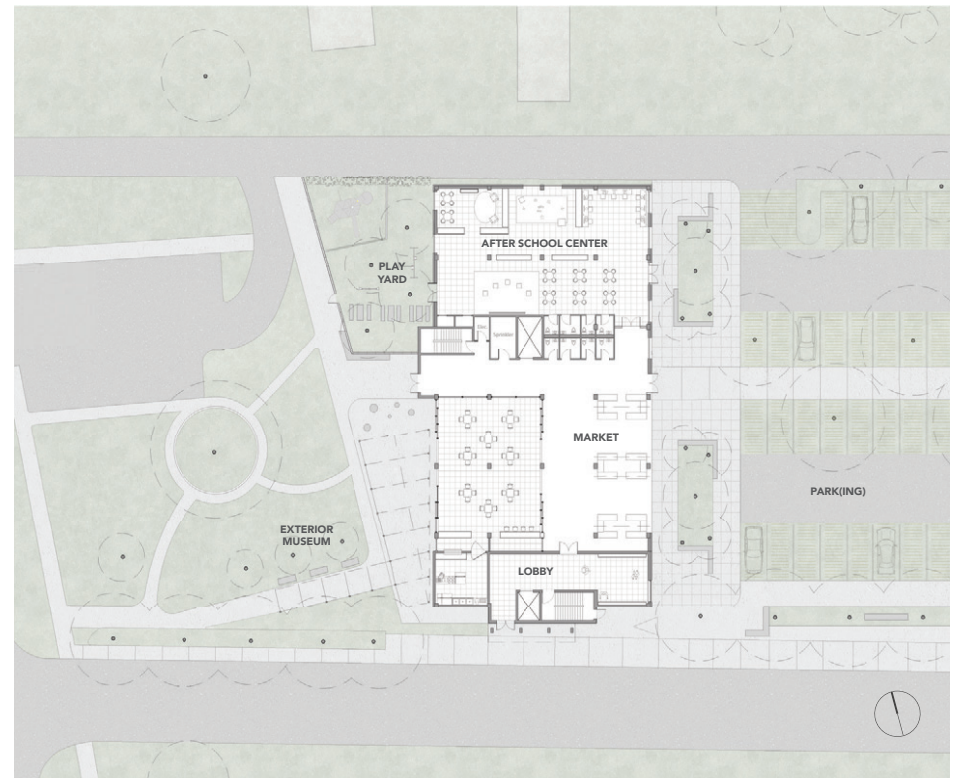


**OPTION 2: TERRACES**  
**CIRCULATION:** 1620 sq ft  
**SHARED / EXTERIOR SPACE:** 1970 sq ft  
**TOTAL COMMUNAL SPACE:** 3590 sq ft

**GOOD SAM: Sharing Space**

**GEORGE BRAVO + TRI NGUYEN**

from students: "The ground floor opens fluidly to its surroundings, and the landscape is designed as a surface for multiple activities. When parking spaces are not in demand, this space acts like a public park capable of accommodating social activities like tailgating or even family barbecues."





**WEST SUNROOMS (C):** "On the west side of the building, sunrooms become a continuous strip of space, pushing the thermal envelope further into the building."

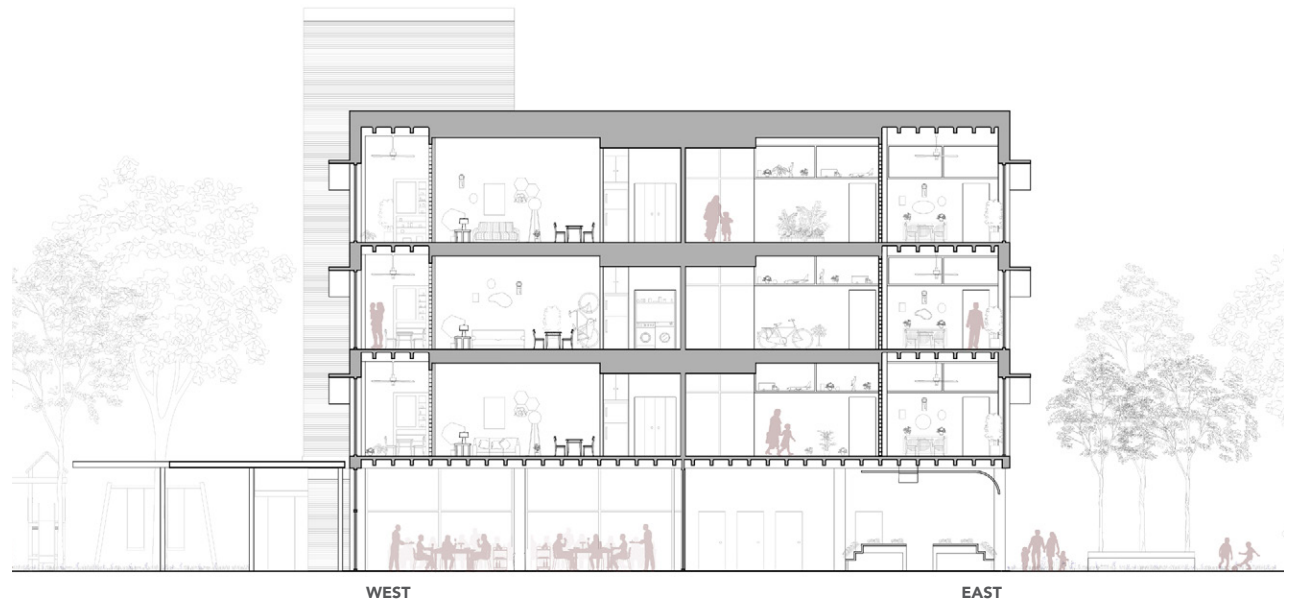


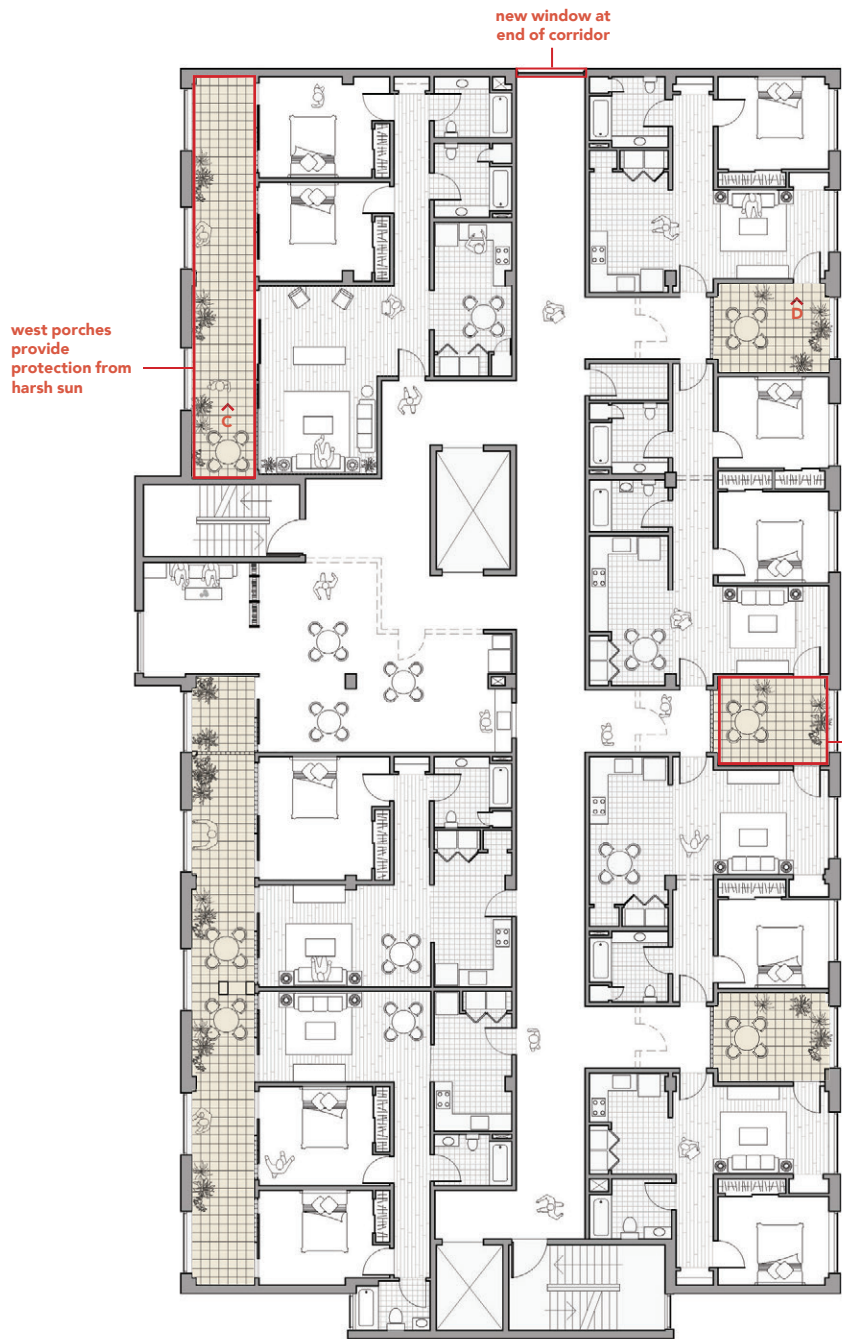
**EAST SUNROOMS (D):** "On the east side, three sunrooms...act as hinges for the future adaptability of the units. While not a traditional bedroom, the sunroom is large enough to accommodate an extra bed for unpredictable circumstances."

## GOOD SAM: Sharing Space

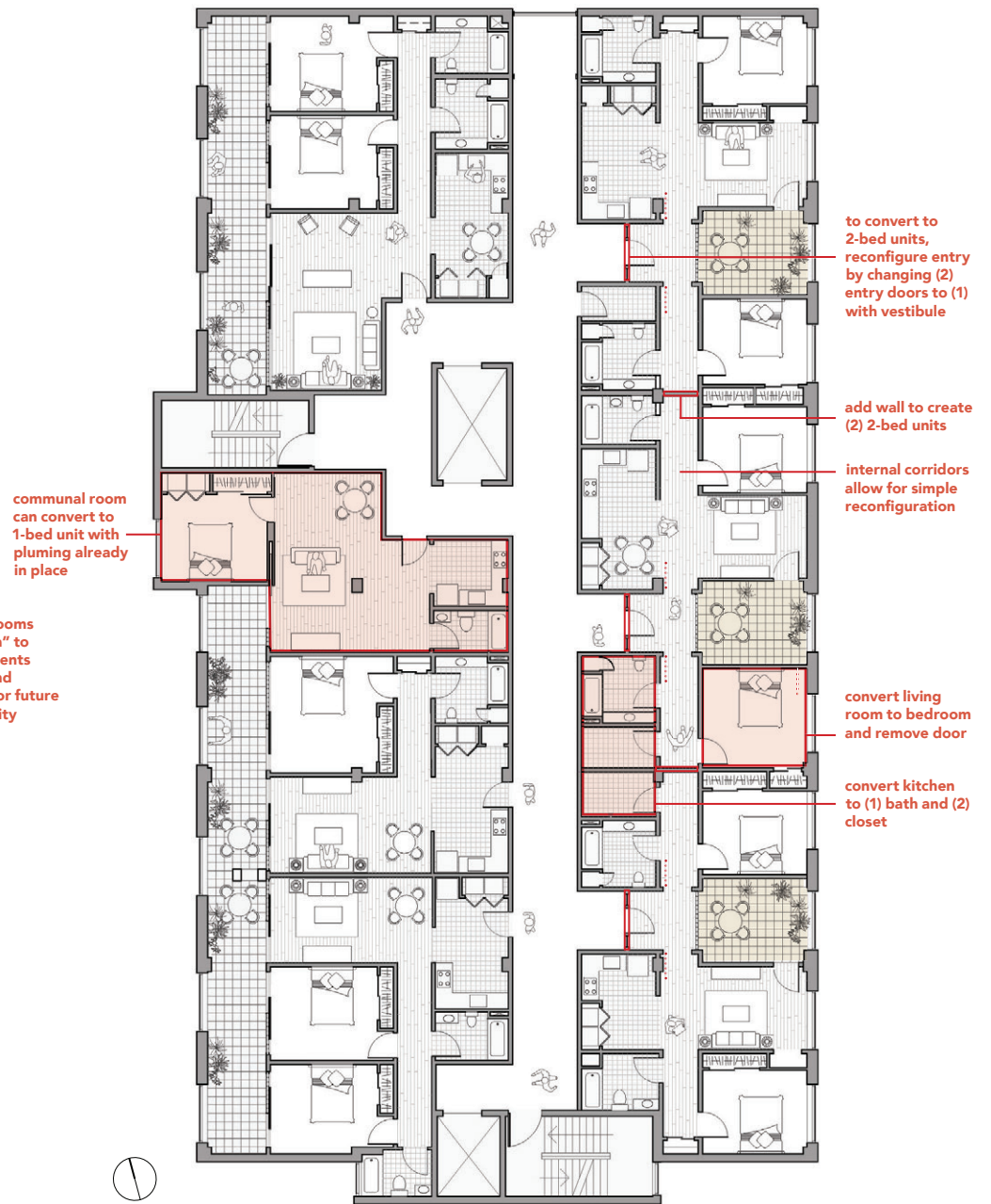
### OPTION 1: SUNROOMS

from student: "Sunrooms act as a place for relaxation and socialization, similar to traditional porches. These areas also provide...circulation of air, protection from harsh western light, space to engage with neighbors and the ability to occupy extra rooms when needed."





**BASIC PLAN:** mixture of 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom units



**ADAPTED PLAN:** all units on east transformed to 2-bed 2-bath



LIVING ROOM (E)

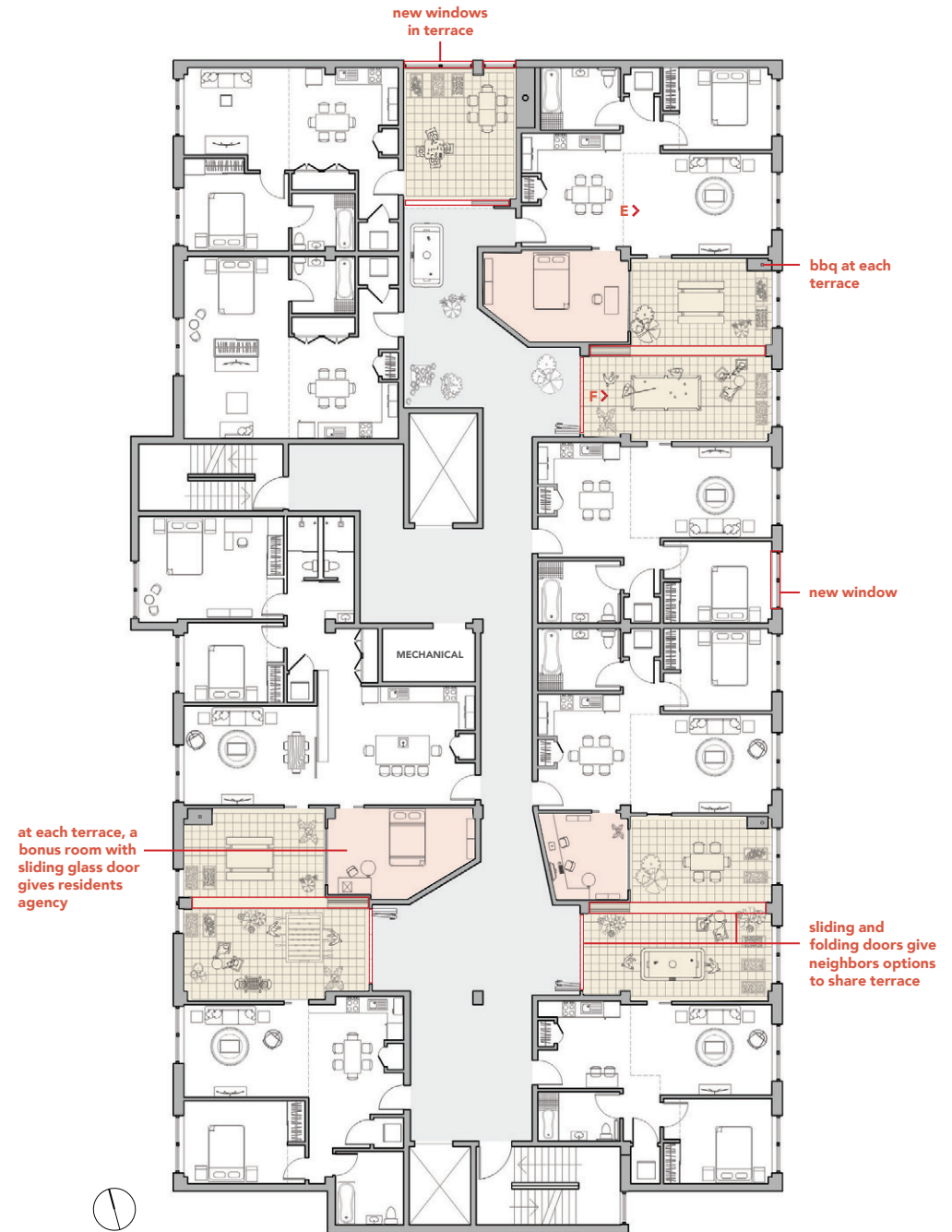


TERRACE (F): "Many of the units have an extra room connected to the terrace that serves as a home office or supplemental bedroom. This supports untraditional living arrangements including extended families, friends and live-in caregivers."

## GOOD SAM: Sharing Space

### OPTION 2: TERRACES

from student: "Each unit can easily combine an exterior-like terrace with their neighbor by simply sliding open doors...providing the opportunity to transform the terraces from communal spaces to private porches or even an additional bedroom."



PLAN: the double-loaded corridor is now a spacious internal street



**UNITS (G):** a bedroom can easily convert to a living room for a couple living together



**UNITS (H):** "Hidden sliding screen doors within a core, paneled as a large piece of pine furniture, can be extended to close off spaces...New window boxes transform existing concrete sunshades into extensions of the interior."

## GOOD SAM: Assisted / Independent Living

HUNTER NISWENDER + SEAN DOLAN

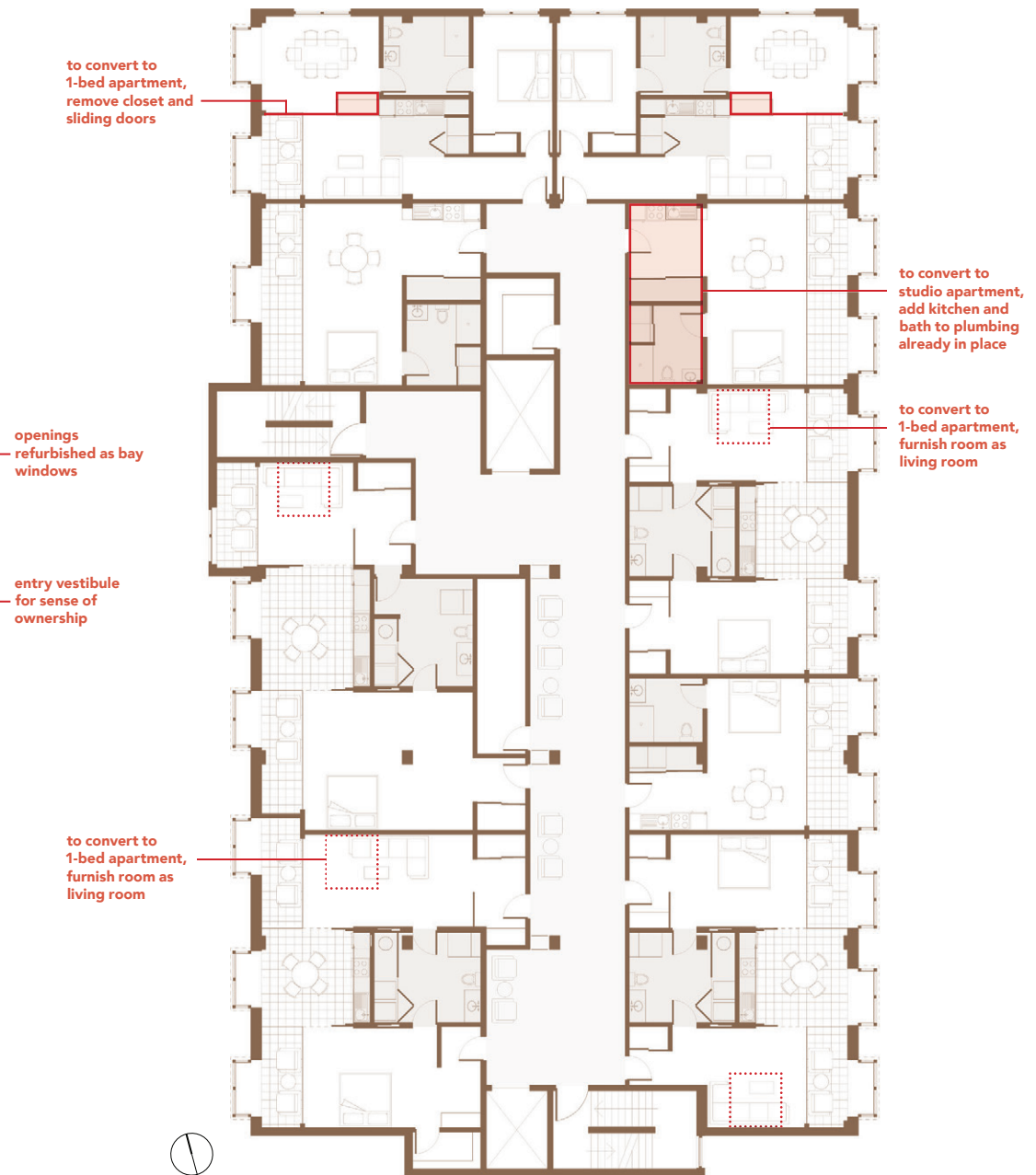
from students: "Because each bedroom supports more activities than sleeping, it is spacious. In the event assisted living is converted to apartments, one of the bedrooms simply transforms into a living room by changing furniture. Whether assisted living or apartments, the units embrace universal design principles to accommodate residents with various physical abilities."



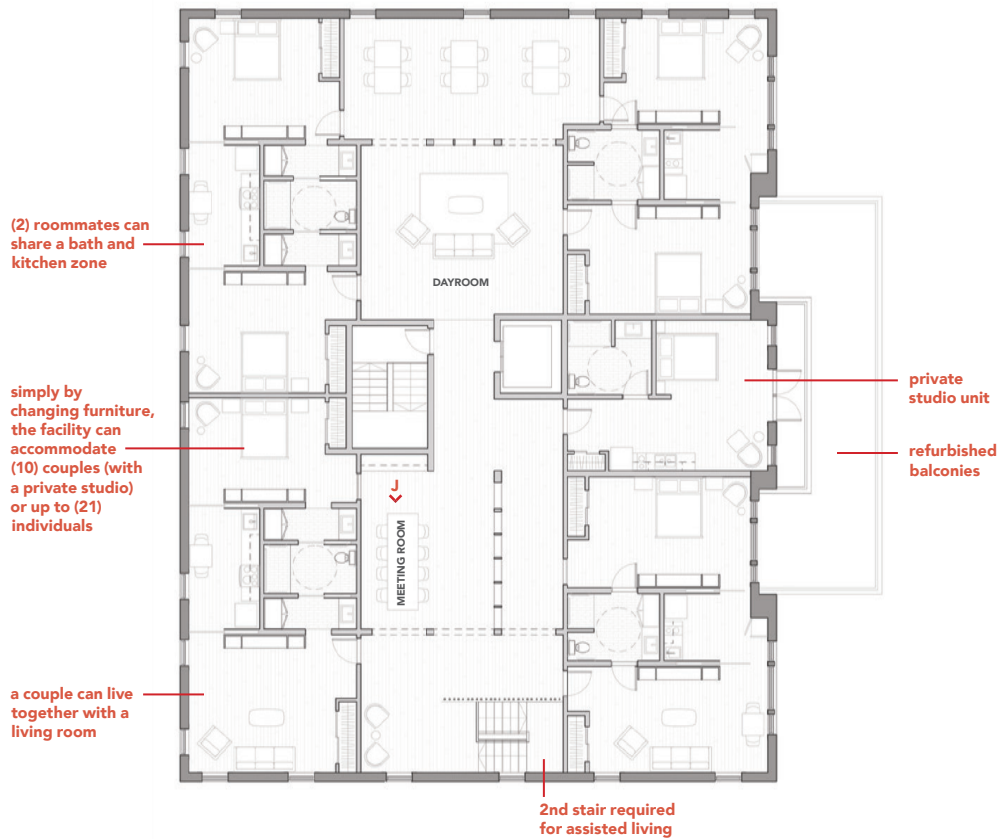
**GROUND FLOOR:** "A dining room caters to the assisted living residents, with the flexibility to be repurposed as a restaurant. A community garden provides positive physical activity for residents, and a fenced portion cultivates fresh produce directly for the market."



**ASSISTED LIVING:** based on demographic research, assisted living meets current needs of an aging population but with options for future adaptability



**APARTMENTS:** a few simple modifications convert assisted living units to a mixture of studio and 1-bedroom units



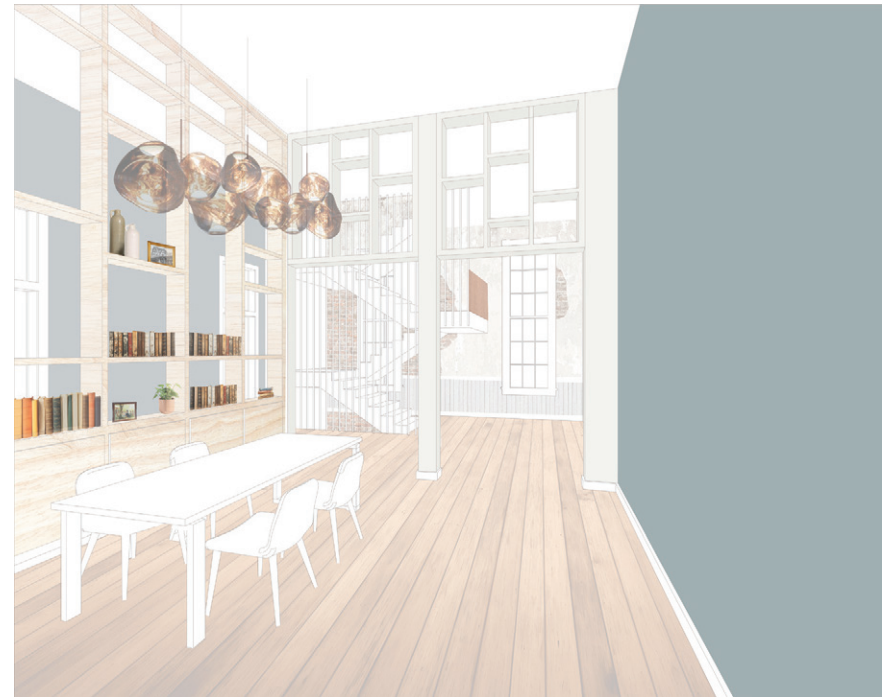
**ASSISTED LIVING:** 3rd floor with sleeping rooms and shared facilities



## OLD YMCA: Assisted / Independent Living

MATTIE MILANOWSKI

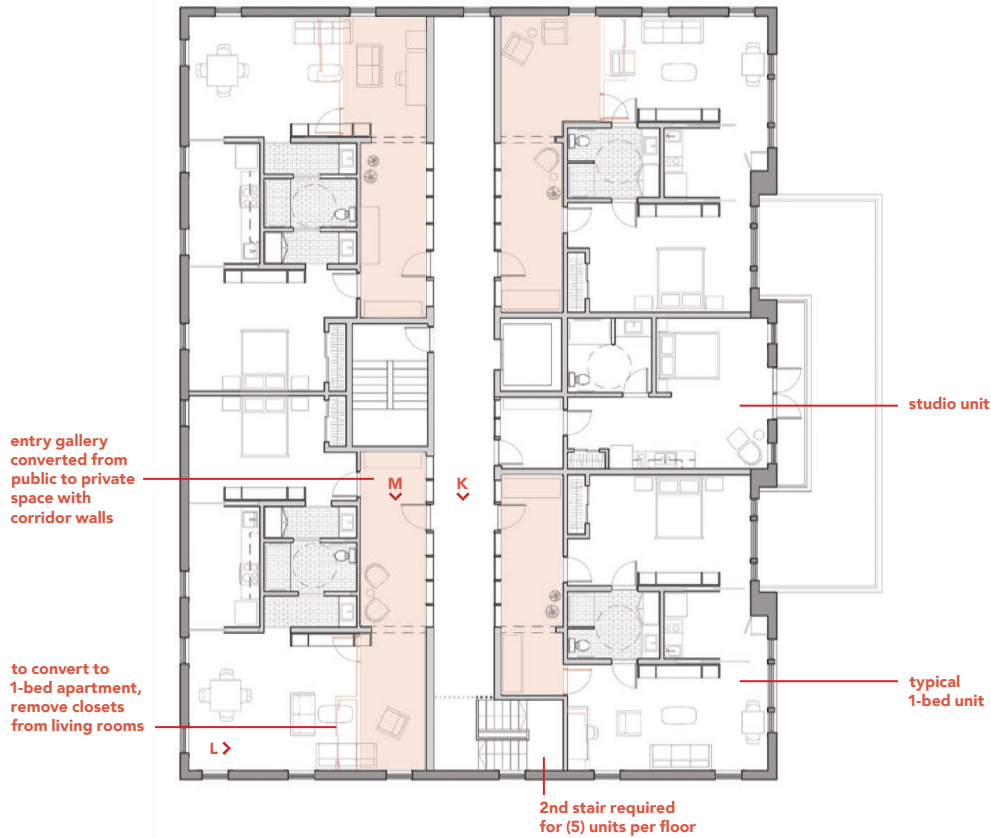
from the student: “[Each floor is] designed for change as it can flip from an assisted living facility into an apartment building by changing only a few walls and moving furniture while converting 59% (1,000 square feet) of communal space to private space within units.



**VISITING ROOM (J):** for small groups and families



**ROOM FOR GATHERING:** 2nd floor dining room



**APARTMENTS:** 3rd floor converted to 1-bed and studio units



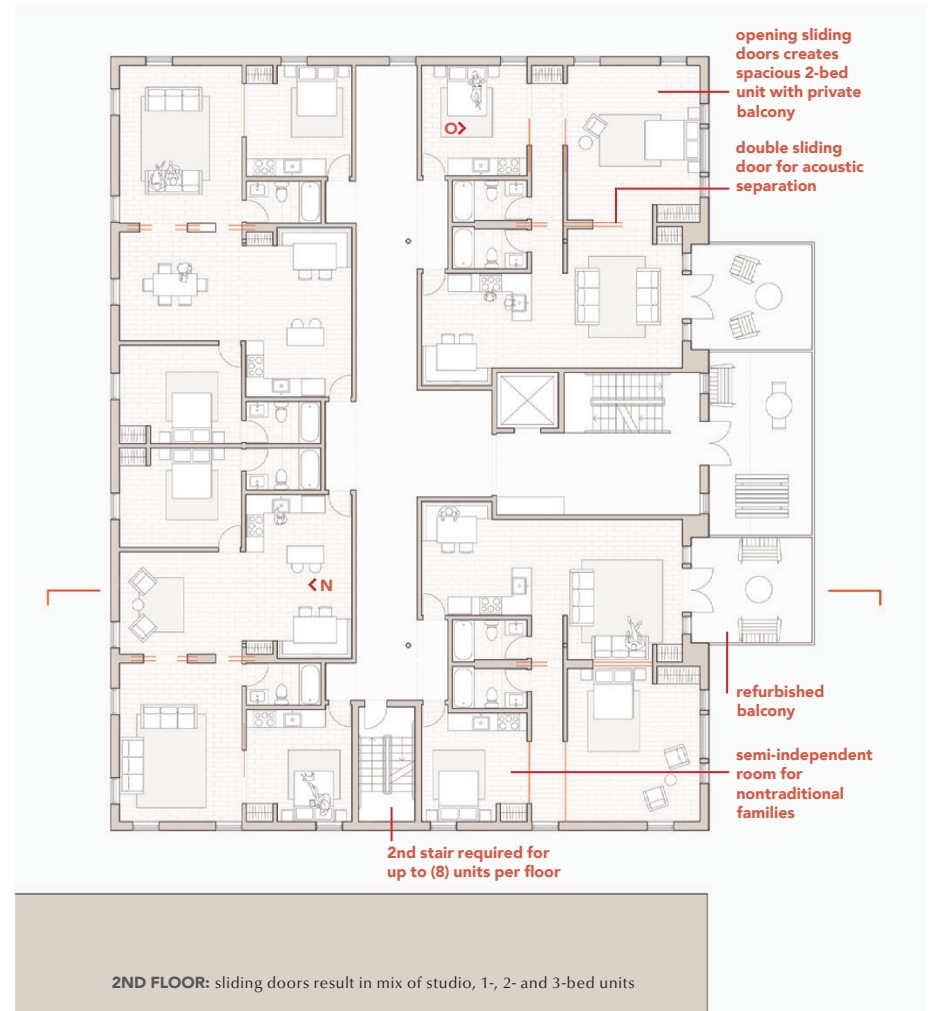
**CORRIDOR (K):** to apartments



**LIVING ROOM (L):** millwork shelves are carefully dimensioned to work in both assisted living and apartments



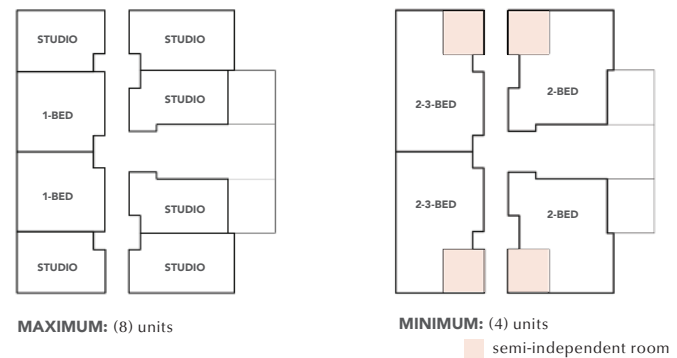
**ENTRY GALLERY (M):** acoustic buffer with space for art, books, heirlooms and furniture



## OLD YMCA: Hyper-Adaptability

### MADI HUFFMAN

from the student: "Studio units can combine with another studio or 1-bedroom unit to form a 2- or 3-bedroom unit depending on the resident's needs. Each 2- or 3-bedroom unit has a bedroom with a kitchenette to allow for a semi-independent unit for extended family, a caregiver, or a roommate. Further, if housing fails to work in downtown Selma, this building can be configured into 20 Airbnb rentals to support tourism."





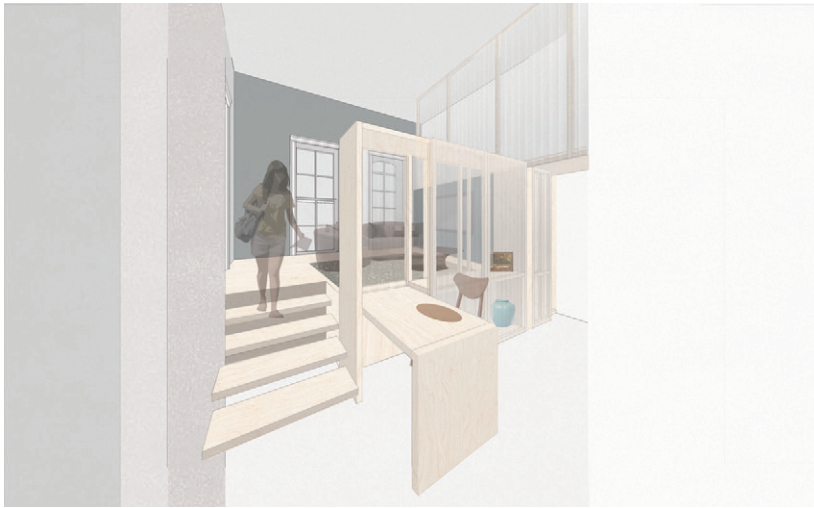
**SECTION:** "Each bedroom and living area has at least one 12-foot tall existing window...Additionally, each unit has interpreted an historical double parlor to allow for natural light from the living area to reach the kitchen and dining area."



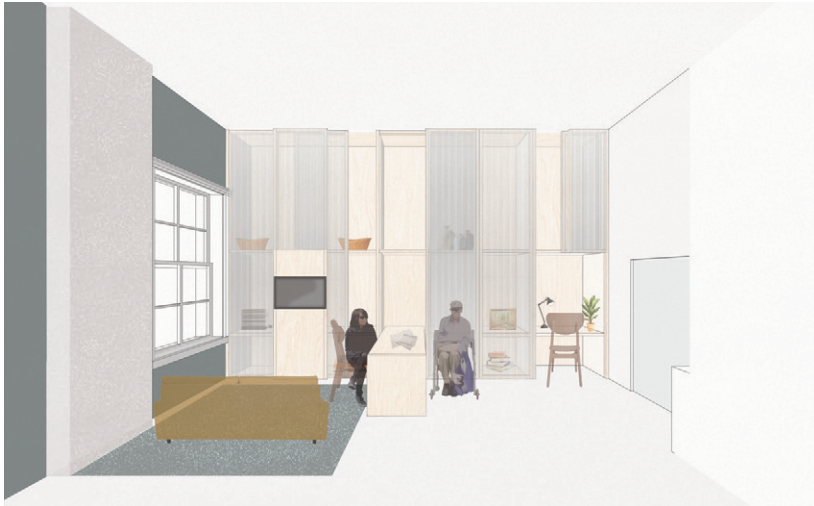
**UNIT (N):** sliding doors create double parlors while assuring future adaptability



**UNIT (O):** historic colors and picture rails unify contemporary elements with existing wainscots and window trim



**LOFTS (P):** a raised floor provides access to the stair up to a bedroom above and the balcony while preserving the historic windows

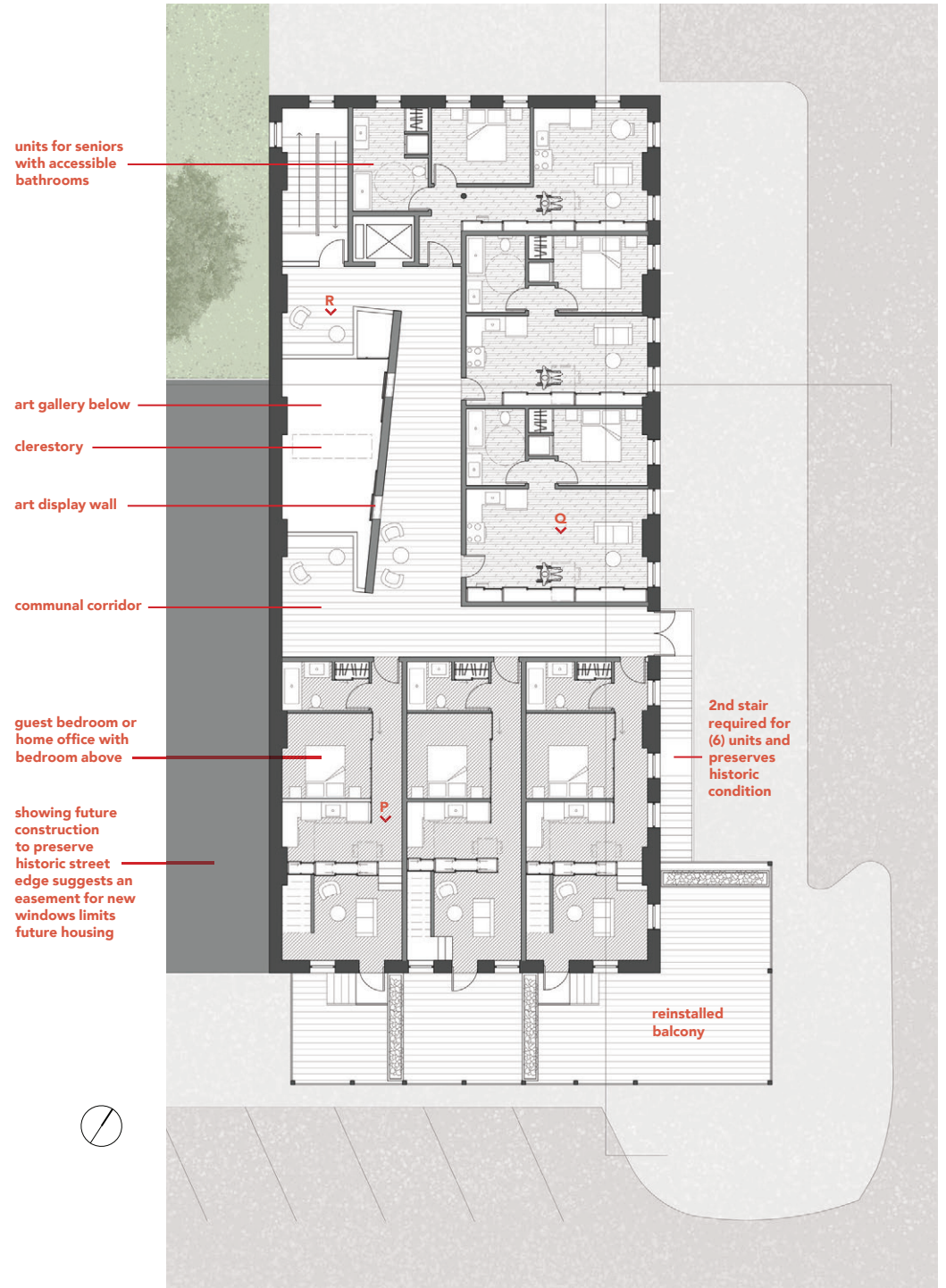


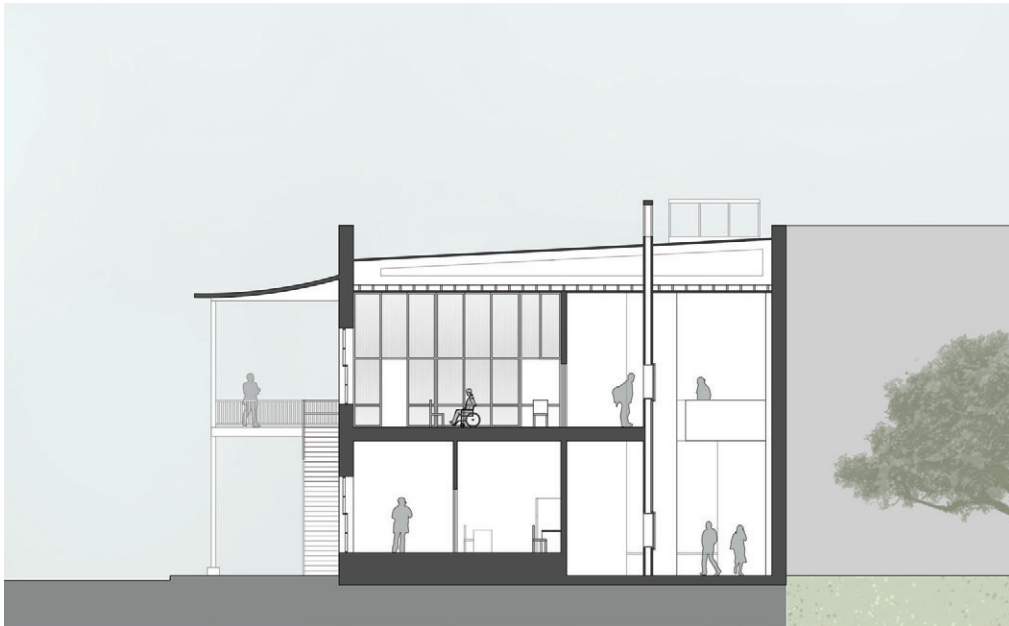
**ACCESSIBLE UNITS (Q):** a millwork wall stores and displays heirlooms and mementos

## ADLER FURNITURE: Multi-Generational Lofts

### SARAH MAY

from the student: "The [restored] balcony provides views of Water Avenue, while the accessible senior units overlook a quieter street with deep ties to African American history in Selma. [An art gallery] encourages residents among different age levels and within the community of Selma to interact..."

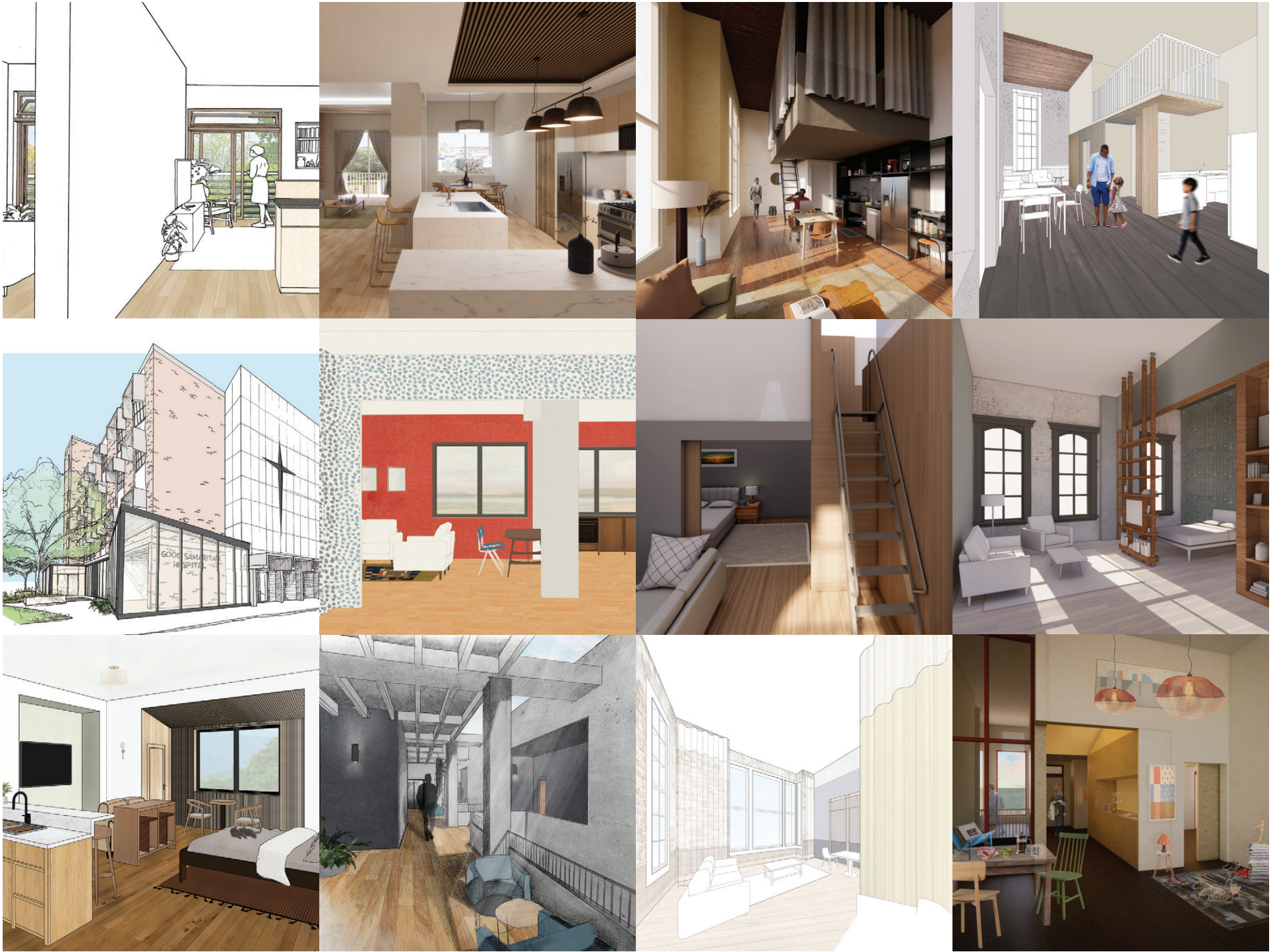




**SECTION:** generous ceilings allow ground floor apartments to be raised above the sidewalk for privacy



**GALLERY (R):** "A clerestory window provides natural lighting in the gallery in addition to two skylights piercing down the display spaces within the wall."



**PREVIOUS PAGE:** projects top to bottom, left to right—GOOD SAM: Isaac Haynes, Caroline Hurry, Michelle Davis, Shengcheng Fu + William Tang, Aynsley Norris, Kristine Fernandez; OLD YMCA: Garner Tibbitts, Eliza Wilkins, Reyna Foslien, Katie Zou; ADLER FURNITURE: Shanna Fortier, Rebecca Assen



**BOOKLET:** Student research and design proposals for the Good Samaritan Hospital were collected in a 252-page booklet and delivered to the City of Selma, Delta Regional Authority and Byron Evans, Black Belt Outreach Coordinator for U.S. Congresswoman Terri Sewell.

## Adaptable Housing: Selma, Alabama

### Month/Year Completed:

Good Samaritan Hospital completed December 2023;  
booklet completed August 2024

Living Downtown completed December 2024

**Role of Nominee:** Instructor

### Collaborators + Funding Sources Expenses:

No funding venues supported this project.

(1) professor of Building Science, Junshan Liu of Auburn University, donated his research time—accompanied by (1) paid research assistant—to complete digital scans of the Good Samaritan Hospital. Tours on which students met Foot Soldiers—JoAnne Bland and Kirk Carrington—were paid as an invoice or donation through a gifts fund or by the instructor.

Guest critics who donated their time include Candace Rimes from Fogarty Finger and Christian Ayala, Betsy Garcia, Rusty Smith and Mackenzie Stagg from Auburn University's Front Porch Initiative. Auburn University School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape Architecture faculty who participated in reviews include: Gorham Bird, Mark Blumberg, Sarah Coleman, Jim Doerfler, Eilis Finnegan, Margaret Fletcher, Aurelie Frolet, Kelly Homan, Il Kim, Cait McCarthy, Rebecca O'Neal, Jennifer Pindyck, David Shanks, Robert Sproull and Xavier Vendrell.

### Student Compensation:

In 2023, the following (16) undergraduate students contributed to this project for a 6-credit studio course: George Bravo, Michelle Davis, Sean Dolan, Kristine Fernandez, Shengcheng Fu, Sophie Harward, Isaac Haynes, Caroline Hurry, Tri Nguyen, Hunter Niswender, Aynsley Norris, Kate Powers, Jackson Reece, Olivia Smith, Emily Swartzter and William Tang.

In 2024, the following (16) undergraduate students contributed to this project for a 6-credit studio course: Rebecca Assen, Lawson Faulk, Shanna Fortier, Reyna Foslien, Layla Harbison, Madi Huffman, Sarah May, Hannah Mierzwa, Mattie Milanowski, Yesenia Serrano, Jacob Smith, Gia Linh Thach, Garner Tibbitts, Patrick Voight, Eliza Wilkins and Katie Zou.

All images are produced by the students or nominee unless noted otherwise. Redactions—[REDACTED]—removed after submission.