

Two Shades of Green Spotlight



Active Design

SOUTHSIDE UNITED HDFC (LOS SURES®)



Active Design

- Modifies buildings and neighborhoods to make daily physical activity and healthy foods more accessible and inviting.

The Benefits

- Enhancing access to and design of outdoor areas increases use and improves health for older residents. ^{1,2}
- More appealing stairways can increase stair use by 39%. ³
- Improved common space design promotes physical activity and social interaction. ⁴

Our Story

Working with Two Shades of Green, a collaboration to help affordable housing owners and managers create cost-effective green and healthy property management practices, Southside United HDFC (Los Sures®) has worked to incorporate active design elements into one of their projects. Los Sures, a community-based, non-profit organization in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, owns and manages 38 buildings and 822 units of affordable housing.

As part of a renovation of a 56 unit senior housing development, Los Sures wanted to tackle building design and use patterns to make it easier for residents to access and use community and outdoor spaces, engage in physical activity, and connect with other tenants to decrease social isolation. A survey of residents suggested that opportunities exist for improvements.

1. Most (89%) residents live alone.
2. The majority spent most of their time indoors (89%); few use outside spaces (6%).
3. While about one quarter (26%) had visited the lobby, almost none had used the community room (3%).
4. About one quarter (26%) had done activities that caused them to breathe hard or increase their heart rate in the last week.
5. The majority (68%) are able to climb one flight of stairs; but fewer report climbing one flight (40%) or two flights (29%) per day.



“Our residents are excited and motivated by the changes that created better spaces for community. Residents love the stairway mural, they walk up and down the stairs admiring it.”

Nilsa Gonzalez, Building Service Coordinator



“It was easy to include active design in our renovation. It will make our senior tenants happier and healthier, which is what we want.”

*Sandy Rozario,
Director of Real Estate
Development*



“We have had a very positive experience and are excited to incorporate active design in many of our projects moving forward.”

*Ian Pinto,
Design AIDD Architects*



The Project

Community Room Upgrades Created More Usable Space and Connection to Outdoors

1. Relocated handicapped bathroom freeing up space.
2. Pantry moved to be more accessible and visible thru glass door.
3. New programming includes: zumba dancing, potluck suppers, building bingo, and holiday activities.

Stair Access to Outdoor Courtyard Improved

1. Improved path and installed stairs providing direct access from building to courtyard.
2. Provided seating and activity tables for eating and recreation.

Stairwells Upgraded to Encourage Resident Use

1. Tenants designed and painted inspiring mural.
2. Installed improved lighting, stairs feel beautiful and safe.
3. Installed signage to encourage stair use.

The active design features represented 7% of the total project costs, \$210,500 of the \$2.9 million dollar project. The team worked with their financial advisors to increase the loan to support the work. Moving forward, both Los Sures and Design AIDD Architects plan to include similar design strategies in new construction and rehabilitation projects.

Two Shades of Green Project Team

The [New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene](#), [The Local Initiatives Support Corporation \(LISC\)](#), and the [NYC Coalition for a Smoke-Free City](#), partnered to assist affordable housing owners in New York City adopt green and healthy property management practices that both reduce operating expenses and create healthier living environments for residents and staff. **Two Shades of Green** focuses on water conservation, smoke-free housing, integrated pest management, green cleaning, and active design. For more information contact: Colleen Flynn at cflynn@lisc.org or go to http://www.lisc.org/nyc/programs/green_and_healthy_neighborhoods/two_shades_of_green.php.

References:

1. NYC Active Design Guidelines. www.nyc.gov/adg. Accessed August 11, 2014.
2. Jacobs. Going outdoors daily predicts long-term functional and health benefits among ambulatory older people. *J Aging Health*. 2008;20(3):259-72.
3. Boutelle KN. Using signs, artwork, and music to promote stair use in a public building. *Am J Public Health*. 2001;91(12):2004-6.
4. Joseph. Presence and visibility of outdoor and indoor physical activity features and participation in physical activity among older adults in retirement communities. *Journal of Housing for the Elderly*, 19 (3/4).

Prepared by:

Ellen Tohn, Tohn Environmental Strategies, LLC
Sarah Wolf, Active Design Manager at the New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene
Colleen Flynn, Director of Green and Healthy Neighborhoods at LISC New York City