Healthy Urban Garden Oasis for the Aging

In this Drexel University community design build venture, trans-disciplinary teams of interior design and architecture students and faculty, gained skills in community building. Centered on the needs of an aging population, occupancy, team design, and team construction; the project took place at Mantua Presbyterian Apartments a HUD senior housing facility. Consisting of community interface, intensive collaborative design sessions and element prototyping followed by on-site construction and fabrication; the process included receiving advice from Drexel biomedical engineering students on designing for the elderly. Residents took part in user driven charrettes to identify working solutions for the space.

Project methodology involved engaging with community members, prototyping solutions and user centered resolutions. In considering a space for residents to come together, the clients requested gathering, gardening and relaxation spaces. Considerations for accessibility, such as safe paving and maintenance were also incorporated. The garden paths designed are a “loop” that the residents can repeatedly stroll to increase outdoor time and movement-their “lifespace”. The project is undergoing post-occupancy observations, in collaboration with Drexel’s Department of Public Health. This poster will document the interdisciplinary process, community engagement and also emerging data from the post occupancy study.

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Full time Interior design Faculty, Ms. Nicholas is a registered architect, and has taught Interior architecture and design for 14 years. Her current research practice is focused on fabrication and analysis in both art and design. She has had scholarly works published in the following design-based peer-reviewed journals: EDRA, ACSA, ARCC, Arch-InForm and ICBDS.