

Ventana by Buckner



Dallas, Texas



2023 Post-Occupancy Evaluation White Paper

Sponsored by  **Mohawk Group**

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Cover image: *Ventana by Buckner, HKS & IDA. Photography by Peter Calvin Photography*



The Society for the Advancement of Gerontological Environments (SAGE) has been conducting post-occupancy evaluations for more than a decade. In late 2022, a post-occupancy evaluation was conducted at Ventana by Buckner, in Dallas Texas. The post-occupancy evaluation (POE) was authorized by Mr. Charlie Wilson, President of Buckner Retirement Services, Luke Crowson, and Danica McGuire, Executive Director of Ventana.

The POE was conducted within the newly constructed 12-story building designed as a planned living community located in Dallas, Texas. While on-site the SAGE POE team was hosted by Grant Warner, HKS Architects, Danica McGuire, Executive Director of Ventana, and Luke Crowson, Director of Construction and Facilities Maintenance.

Members of the SAGE POE team included Amy Carpenter, Migette Kaup, Margaret Calkins, Lauren Tines, Rob Simonetti, and Joe Martere. These individuals represented a broad cross-section of expertise in long-term care, dementia care, design for aging, codes and regulations, nursing, and operational and organizational management related to senior housing (See next page for team-member information).



2023 SAGE POE Team



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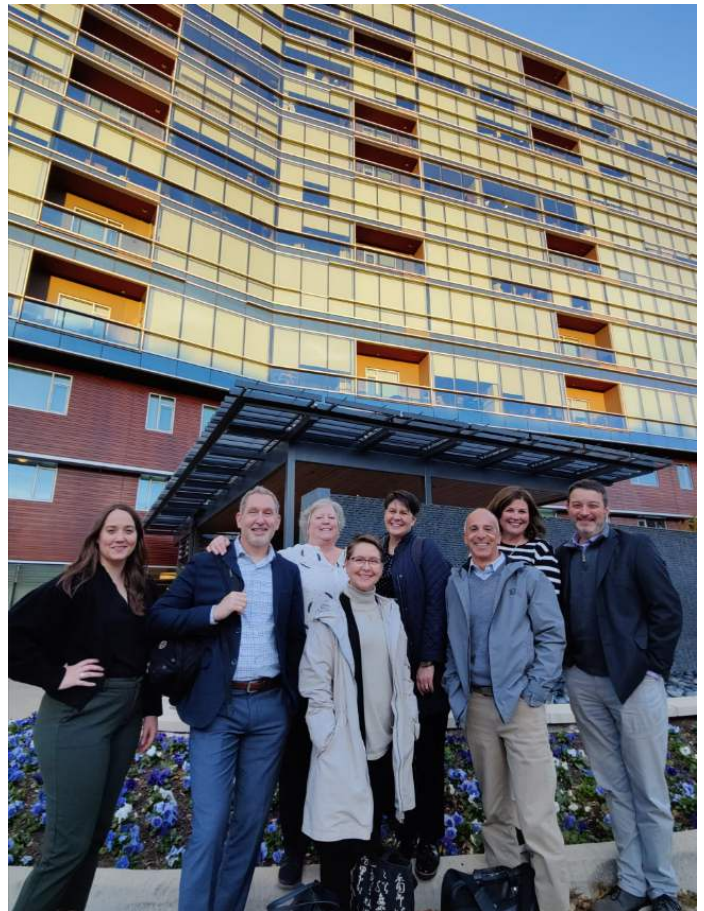


IRB Research Protocols

All POE Team members completed CITI (Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative) Certification for full compliance with Federal Guidelines for Research and the use of Human Subjects in Research. An IRB application for this research POE titled “A SAGE Post-Occupancy Evaluation: An Investigation into What Matters in the Design of Spaces for Older Adults” was submitted to the Kansas State University of Research Compliance and approved January 2, 2022. Project #9080.

Project debriefing information was sent to Ventana three weeks before the site visit and distributed to residents, staff, and family members to provide notification about the SAGE Team’s visit. Ventana administrators also shared informed consent forms with residents interested in participating in interviews and focus groups to allow enough time for families and residents to ask questions and provide signatures in advance. Residents could provide their own consent to participate in interviews. Staff provided informed consent on the day of the site visit.

KANSAS STATE
UNIVERSITY



2023 SAGE POE Team

Ventana by Buckner was designed by the teams at HKS Architects and Interior Design Associates. This project was an Honorable Mention in the 2020 EFA Design Showcase. The awards submission package provided by HKS identified several functional and therapeutic goals (see below). These goals were used as a basic guide for the targeted observations for the POE team.



Design Goals - Ventana by Buckner

Goal 1: Create a residential feel within a progressive urban high rise, and redefine senior Living as Baby Boomers change the definition of life after retirement.

Goal 2: Enhance the quality of life for residents, promote wellness, empower independence and person-centered care, and reinforce personal relationships between all who work, live, and visit.

Goal 3: Create an intentional focus on skilled nursing to create a more consumer-driven experience through a small house design based on the Green House™ model.

Goal 4: Blend the indoors and outdoors with multiple roof terraces to help compensate for the tight confines of the urban site.

Goal 5: Control the sounds of the surrounding highway and protect a quality acoustical environment.









Goal 6: Maximize the use of natural light for all residents of Ventana.

SAGE Design Principles

SAGE has a set of guiding principles and goals that are the basis for assessing the effectiveness of senior housing and for those who also require additional care services. These goals are especially relevant for residents who may have cognitive challenges.

The following are considered important in providing a therapeutic environment for residents and a supportive work environment for staff:

SAGE holds the following values related to gerontological environments.

-  **Physical safety and psychological security:** Provide appropriate safe guards and enhance perception of security.
-  **Environment as a therapeutic resource:** Utilize all aspects of the environment (physical, programmatic and organizational) as a resource for healing and improved functioning.
-  **Holism and well-being:** Focus on needs and desires of the whole person social, emotional, spiritual and physical, vocational and intellectual.
-  **Individual rights and personal autonomy:** Maximize available choices, opportunities for self determination, and accessibility of options.
-  **Communities and relationships:** Generate opportunities for meaningful interactions and relationships among peers, families and staff.
-  **Support of caregivers:** Create an environment that promotes safety, efficiency, and emotional support.
-  **Function enhancing technology:** Harness new technology to increase functionality of the environment.
-  **Creating and evaluating:** Encourage innovation, diversity of approaches, experimentation with new solutions, and systematic evaluation of outcomes.

Architectural/Interior Elements

SAGE team members draw upon their expertise, familiarity with industry best practices and experiences with senior living as they evaluate the effectiveness of the settings. Many of the SAGE principles can be evidenced by architectural and interior elements. The team also considers the historical context and input and feedback from staff as well as family members who volunteered to share their insights and perspectives.

Architectural or Interior Element	Considerations (Selected Examples)
Lighting	Lighting levels, sufficient foot-candles. Control for glare.
Use of Color	Support for depth perception for aging eyes while maintaining residential or homelike aesthetic.
Floor Coverings	Support for ease of mobility while creating a soft surface to reduce potential injury from fall. Aesthetic supports a residential appeal and specification is appropriate for health care setting and required maintenance and life safety.
Window Treatments	Ability to adjust for different daylighting conditions (controlling glare). Aesthetic supports a residential appeal and specification is appropriate for health care setting and required maintenance and life safety.
Acoustical Treatments	Spatial volumes and potential sound transmission between private spaces is effectively designed to reduce negative stimulation and protect privacy.
Circulation Patterns	Movement through the space is supported by spatial layout and features that support autonomy in navigation and stamina (landmarks for reminders, handrails for support).
Fixed Furnishings & Equipment	Furnishings are supportive of frail adults. Aesthetic supports a residential appeal and specification is appropriate for health care setting and required maintenance and life safety.
Moveable Furnishings & Equipment	Furnishings are supportive of frail adults. Aesthetic supports a residential appeal and specification is appropriate for health care setting and required maintenance and life safety.

Elements of the physical environment that contribute to the goals for a therapeutic environment for residents and a supportive work environment for staff.

Documentation/Evaluation

SAGE POEs are conducted at an indicative level which includes gathering basic information on the building, understanding the primary design drivers, and then collecting feedback from key stakeholders in the process. This is also supplemented with a walking tour and photo-documentation of the spaces to capture examples of the building in use.

Grant Warner, Senior Designer and Principal at HKS Architects met with the SAGE POE team to share planning and design decisions as well as constraints and challenges that impacted the final project outcomes. The initial meeting was focused on understanding the context and history of the planning for the building, major factors that impacted the planning and design process, operational goals and challenges, and practices that were guided by internal programs and policies.

During the tour, photo documentation of the spaces and the details of features were recorded. POE team members also record observations of the presence or absence of features, details of design features, and operational issues that impacted patterns of use. These attributes included both desired goals and architectural and interior elements that can be critical for effective use and navigation of a space (see previous page).

Team members met with different users of the space in small focus groups. A group of residents and family members met with the SAGE POE Team and shared their perspectives on how their home felt to them. Staff from various departments met with the POE team to discuss how the building supported their work and operational practices. Two administrators also met with the SAGE team members at the conclusion of the day to provide additional information and answer final questions.



Grant Warner
Principal, HKS Architects



Luke Crowson
*Director of Construction &
Facilities Maintenance
Buckner International*

The Setting / Context

The location for Ventana was selected based on the characteristics and demographics of the surrounding neighborhood. The site was a leftover 3 ½ acre parcel out of a large PUD for Lincoln Park. In addition to its odd shape, there is 27 feet of grade change from one end to the other side of the property. It is wedged in between West Northwest Highway and Interstate I-75. The neighborhood did have restrictions on height and density, as well as several easements that restricted the building footprint. It was a very tough site to develop! These conditions provided some initial challenges that shaped many of the subsequent design features and options for the building.

The final 12-story building is 684,108 square feet with garage levels underground. The construction costs were \$144 million which equated to about \$211 per square foot. The housing and service options include 189 independent living apartments, 36 assisted living apartments, 26 memory support rooms, 46 skilled nursing beds, and 24 short-term rehab beds.

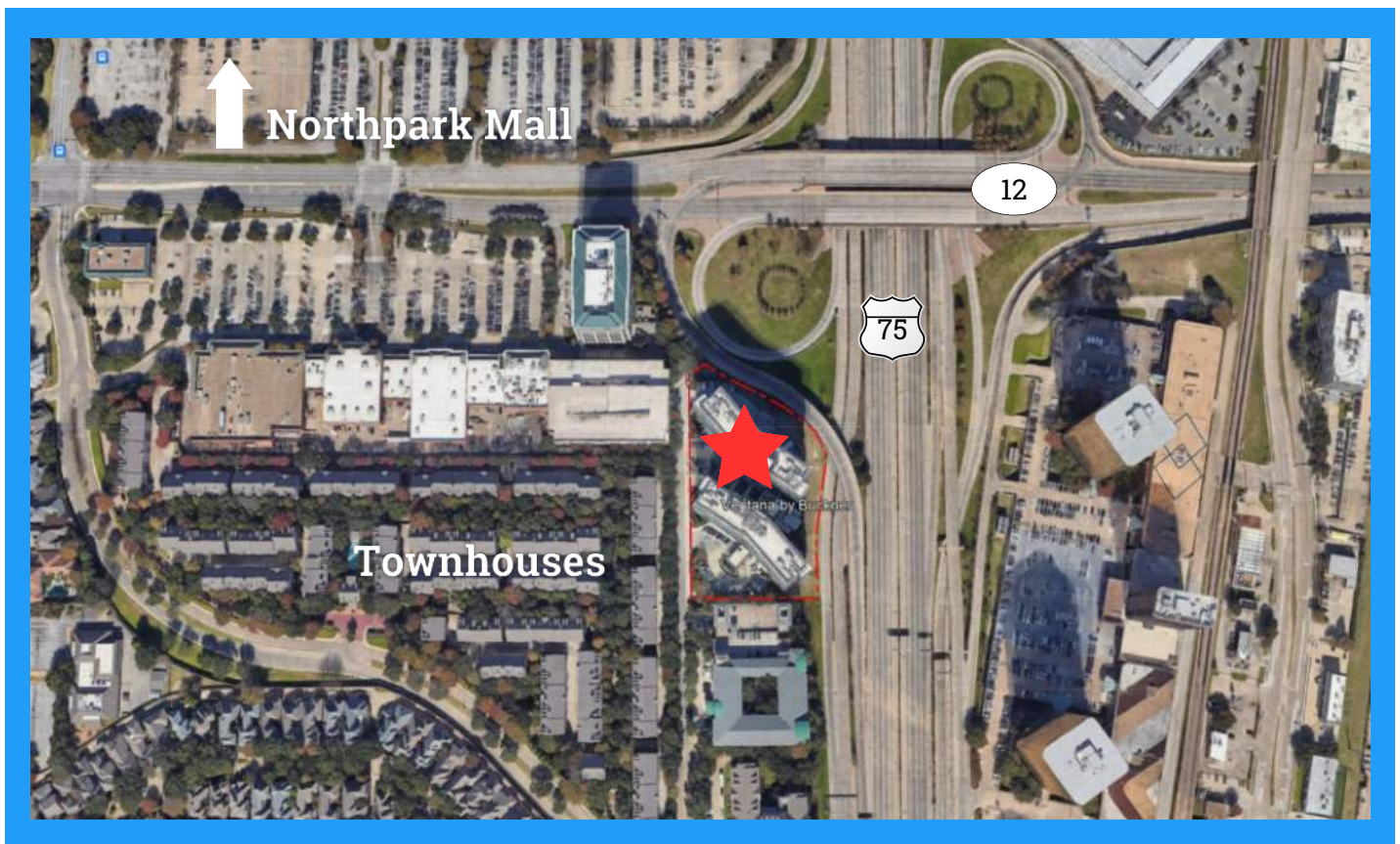


Campus model, street view

The Setting / Context (cont) ● ● ● ●

The community is near the Highland Park and University Park neighborhoods, two highly affluent areas of Dallas. Nearby, the NorthPark Center shopping mall features a notable art gallery that is a draw to the area and acts as a social hub for the neighborhood. Across the street is a townhouse development, and there is a commercial office building adjacent to the site as well. Sidewalks are limited in this area, but vehicle traffic in the residential area is speed-controlled.

The construction of the building was completed in August of 2019. Unfortunately, the Executive Director for Ventana passed away unexpectedly just before the building opened. This loss resulted in a gap in the knowledge of how the building was supposed to operate based on the architectural program and operational priorities, specifically, the Green House model of operations was not carried forward. The Long-term care floors did not receive their license until Early March 2020. Danica McGuire, the Executive Director at the time of the POE visit, started at Ventana in March of 2020, the day before the Covid shut down. Danica actually had to live in the building for several months. In addition, Ventana experienced changes in the top five leadership positions around the time of the opening. Like other senior housing and care providers, Ventana was also managing a staffing crisis. A rocky start to be sure.

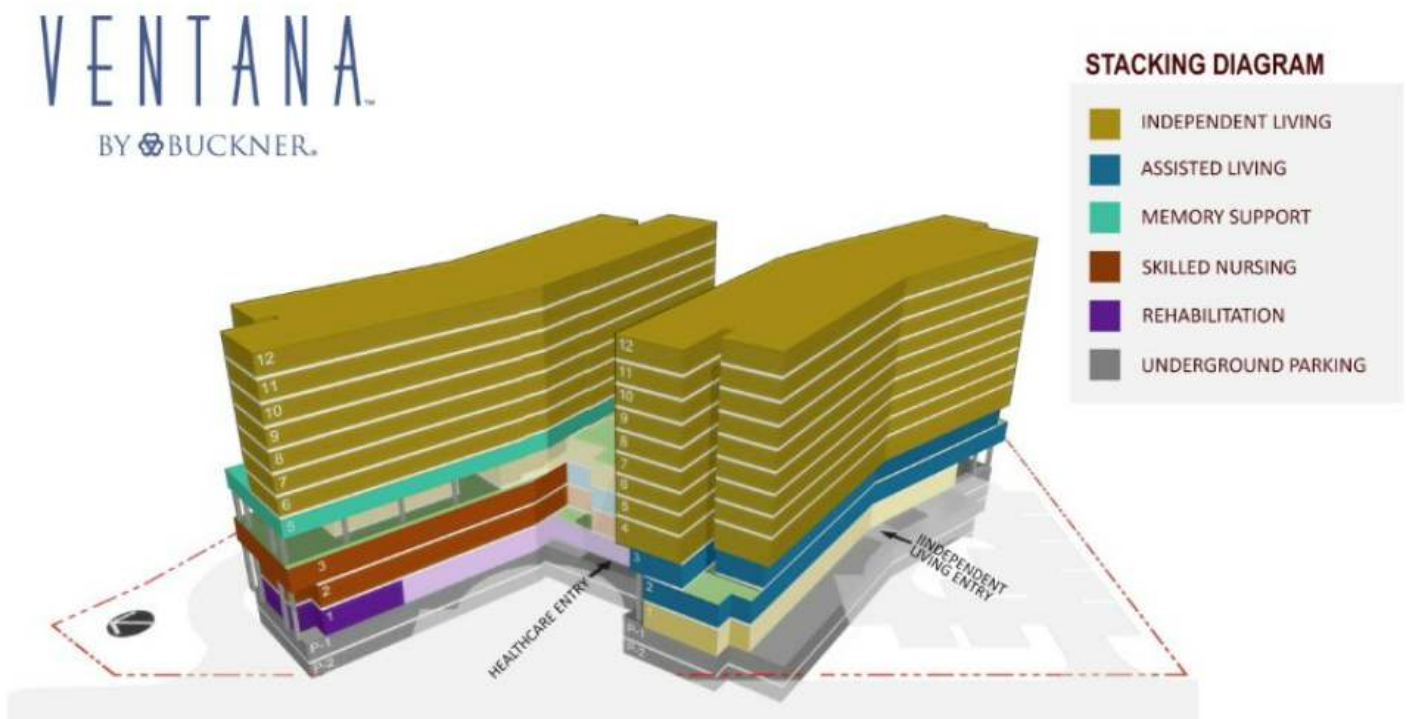


Using the criteria for goals and environmental features, the POE team identified distinct features and supporting practices for Ventana that had notable outcomes. These are summarized as they relate to each of the design goals. Specific attributes for each of these assets and opportunities to enhance their experience are highlighted below.

Goal 1: Create a residential feel within a progressive urban high rise, and redefine senior Living as Baby Boomers change the definition of life after retirement.

Key Features

For such a tight site and limits on building height, the design of Ventana is packed with excellent amenity spaces and creates a high-end residential experience (See Stacking Diagram, below). It should be noted that the Independent Living residents are referred to as “Members”, which fosters that high-end feel. The Staff want them to feel as if this is an exclusive club they belong to. The entry for the independent living tower has a nice water feature and the arrival spaces support socialization. There are also amenities such as a dog park, a generous swimming pool, and a sky lounge on the 12th floor with a stunning view of the city.



Observations / Design Goal 1 (cont)



The North Tower houses rehabilitation services (purple), two floors of skilled nursing (red), fourth floor is common space, the fifth floor is memory care, and sixth through 12th floors are independent living apartments. The South Tower is the location of the main entry for independent living on the ground floor along with administrative and common space. There are two floors of assisted living (AL, blue) and floors four through 12 are more independent living apartments.

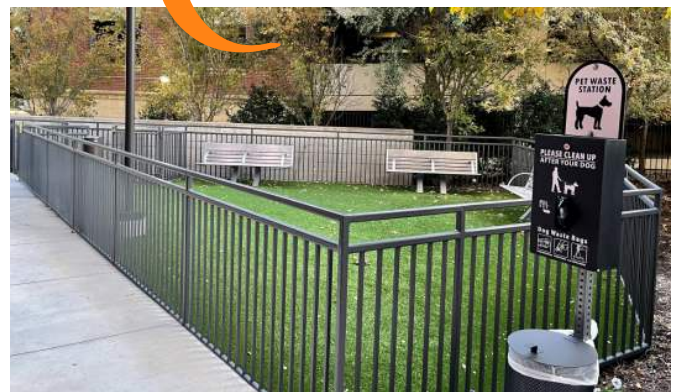
The AL wings on the second and third floors are primarily apartments, a common dining room, and a small fitness space. Assisted Living residents are meant to travel between the two floors, with different amenity spaces provided on each floor.

The nursing home (NH) living areas on the same floors follow a household model, with 12 residents sharing living, dining, and kitchen spaces. There is a general pattern that AL and NH residents primarily stay in their respective sections of the building, and do not regularly use the amenities primarily intended for the IL members, with the occasional exception of the Grand Hall for special events.

For the IL members of the community, six different apartment models vary in size and amenities to accommodate different personal preferences. There are also many options for customization, so residents can personalize their space to meet their preferences. The resident population at Ventana is highly engaged in setting the programming for the community. There are regular exclusive social events that are hosted at Ventana and residents have an active voice within the community. The interior building materials and finishes have a consistent feel and quality throughout almost all of the spaces regardless of the part of the building one resides.



Campus model, highway side



Dog park



Pool

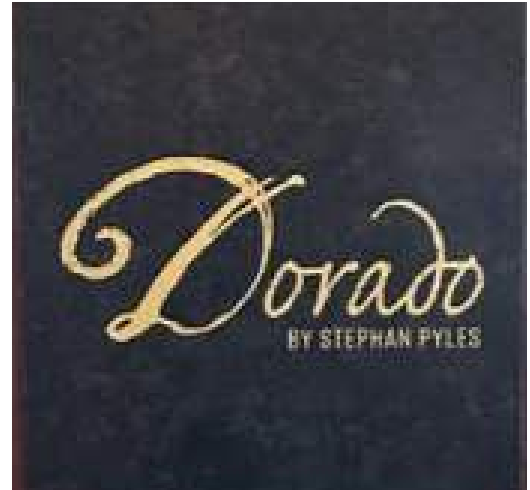


Goal 2:

Enhance the quality of life for residents, promote wellness, empower independence and person-centered care, and reinforce personal relationships between all who work, live, and visit.

The collection of both social and wellness-oriented spaces supports an active lifestyle for the residents of Ventana, regardless of whether they reside in independent living, assisted, memory care, or skilled nursing care.

There are multiple dining venues, primarily for IL members, ranging from casual to quite formal. The dining program is enhanced by the participation of celebrity chef, Stephan Pyles, which brings a level of quality that makes members proud to invite guests for meals. It was noted that engaging a high-profile chef requires also hiring kitchen staff who are trained to work with complex recipes and menus. This can be a challenge (especially during a pandemic).



There are a variety of dining venues, each with a different vibe. The exhibition cooking station for Mediterraneo is reservation only, dinner only, with a Mediterranean-inspired menu



Mediterraneo dining room



Open kitchen

Observations / Design Goal 2 (cont) ● ● ● ●



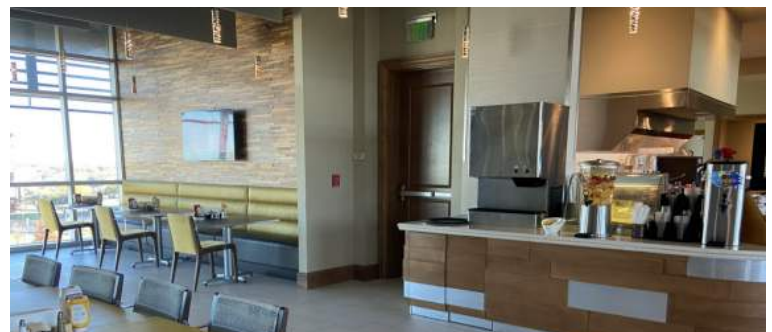
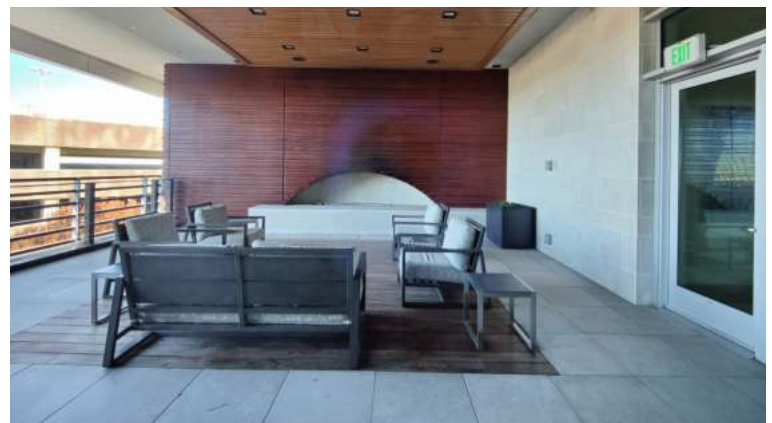
Dorado dining room. Ventana by Buckner, HKS & IDA
Photography by Peter Calvin

Then there is Dorado, also a reservation-only, dinner-only high-end steak-house menu.



Café Americano

The bistro, Café Americano, offers a fast-casual option that is open for lunch and dinner, and offers a lovely, generous outdoor terrace for dining.



Observations / Design Goal 2 (cont)



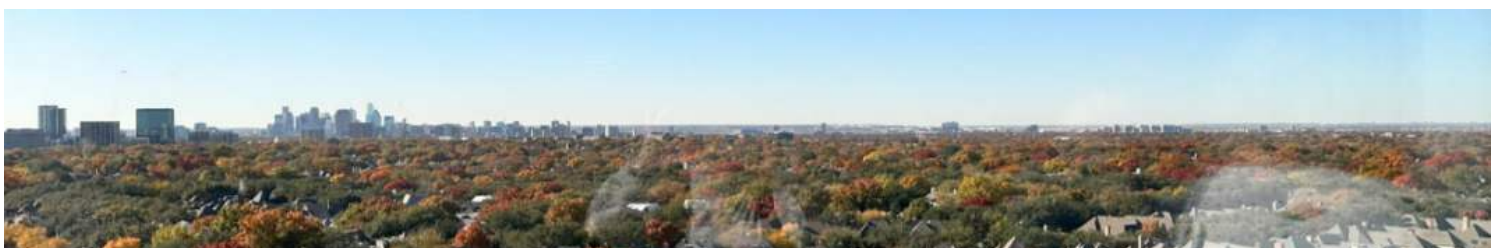
The Landing

Mediterraneo

Photo: HKS

Coffee and continental breakfast are offered at The Landing, adjacent to Mediterraneo, and this space transforms into a cocktail bar in the evening.

The Sky Lounge, on the 12th floor, has amazing views of Dallas and has the feel of an executive lounge in a high-end hotel, suitable for both morning coffee and a drink before dinner.



Sky Lounge. That view!

Observations / Design Goal 2 (cont)



For special gatherings, The Reserve private dining space is available to members.

On the first floor, there is a Grand Hall floor for larger events. It was noted, however, that it is not quite big enough and it lacks adequate banquet/food support space. This is the space that outside groups often use, bringing a connection between Ventana and the surrounding neighborhood. To support the acoustic quality in this space, a hearing loop technology was installed and there were acoustical panels on almost every wall.

The Reserve



Grand Hall

Observations / Design Goal 2 (cont)



After touring Ventana and having conversations with residents and staff, the POE team noted these opportunities for enhancing person-centered care services.



Assisted Living Dining:

Prepared food for assisted living comes down from the main kitchen, via a service elevator, for plating at steam tables. This limits their options of choice at mealtimes, and there are no accommodations for any cook-to-order meals. The food is not perceived by the residents as being the same food quality as what is served in the IL dining venues.



Several residents and staff mentioned that the AL dining room space is quite tight where there are multiple people who use wheelchairs. There is an alcove that allows for more of a private dining experience, that is separated from the main corridor with a glass partition. If this partition was removed, it would allow an alternate circulation path and could ease some of the congestion experienced in this dining room area.

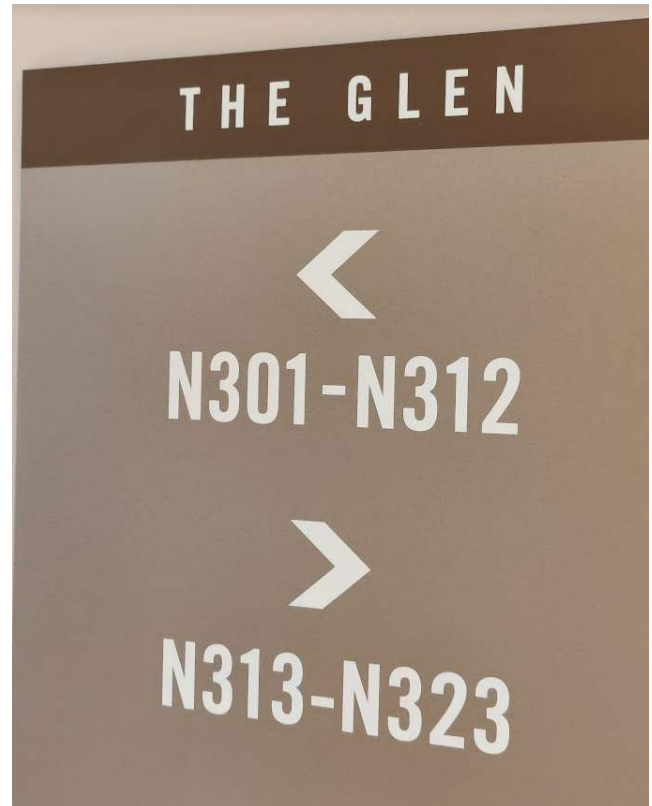


Additionally, the floor in the AL dining room was replaced, sometime after opening, with a wood-look ceramic tile. Unfortunately, the tile that was used is slightly uneven and it was installed with wide grout joints. Residents complained that it was very difficult to move chairs in/out when sitting at the table. Others felt it was challenging to navigate with mobility devices. A smoother, more regular surface would have been better. Perhaps using LVT plank or a resilient sheet-good that gave the look of wood, would be easier for the residents.

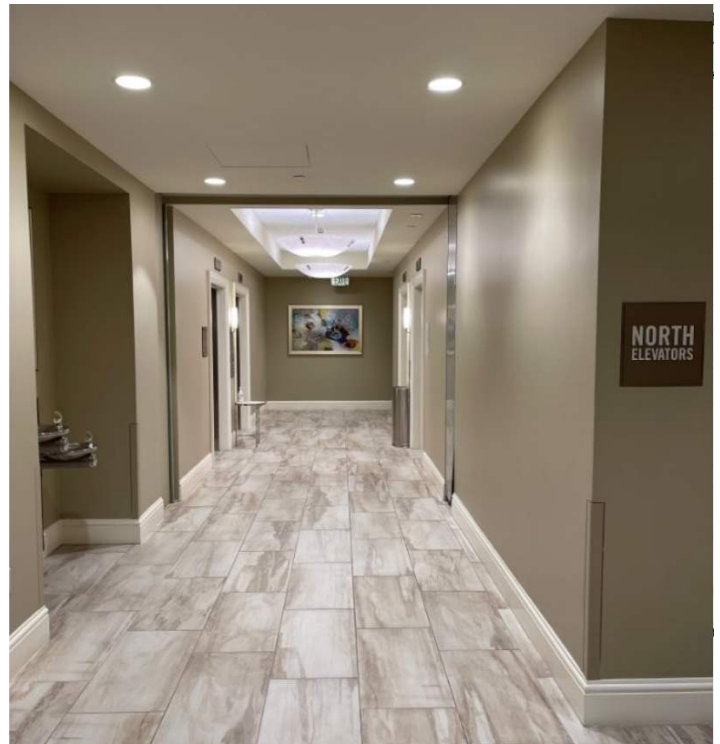
Observations / Design Goal 2 (cont) ● ● ● ●

There are some fairly significant wayfinding challenges throughout the building, particularly on the lower connected floors, though it extends to the upper floors as well. It can take new staff a week or more of shadowing someone to begin to learn their way around the building and the two towers. Having IL social and wellness spaces on the first and fourth floors, but not the second and third floors, is conceptually confusing, since they are typically grouped more closely together.

The numbering of the apartments also presents challenges. The apartments in each tower have the same numbers, preceded by N or S. So if one isn't paying close attention, it is easy to go up the wrong tower and try to get into the wrong apartment. Renumbering so even numbers are on one tower and odd numbers on the other might alleviate some of this confusion.

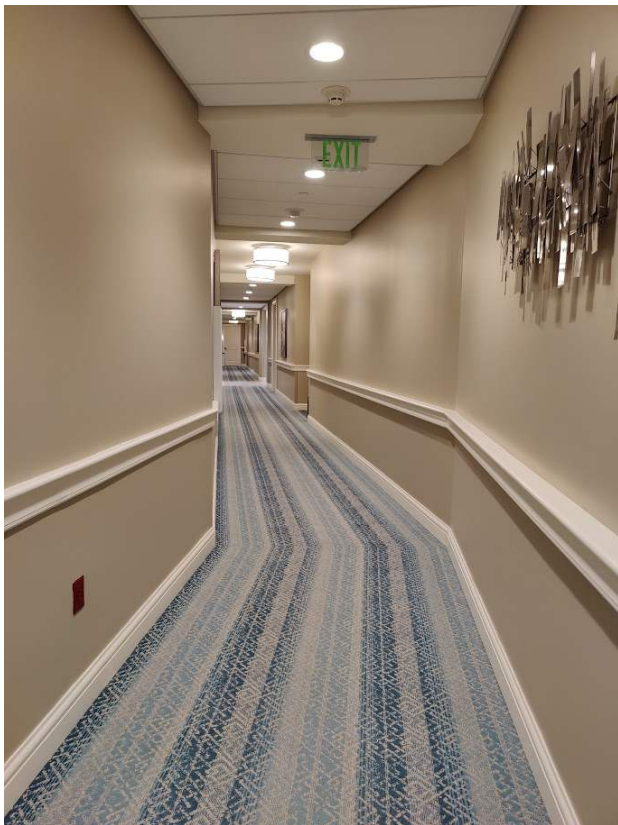


This confusion is compounded by the fact that the elevator lobbies in both towers (and on all floors) are virtually identical, so it is difficult to determine which part of the building you are in.



Observations / Design Goal 2 (cont) ● ● ● ●

Corridors all have similar design and décor adding to the confusion, and signage in these areas is not very helpful. It appears to be primarily for the IL members, and, for instance, the directory near the elevator doesn't even list the second and third floor destinations. Often distinctive artwork could be used to aid in wayfinding, but so much of the artwork is visually abstract in nature that this--while interesting and beautiful-- is not an effective cue.



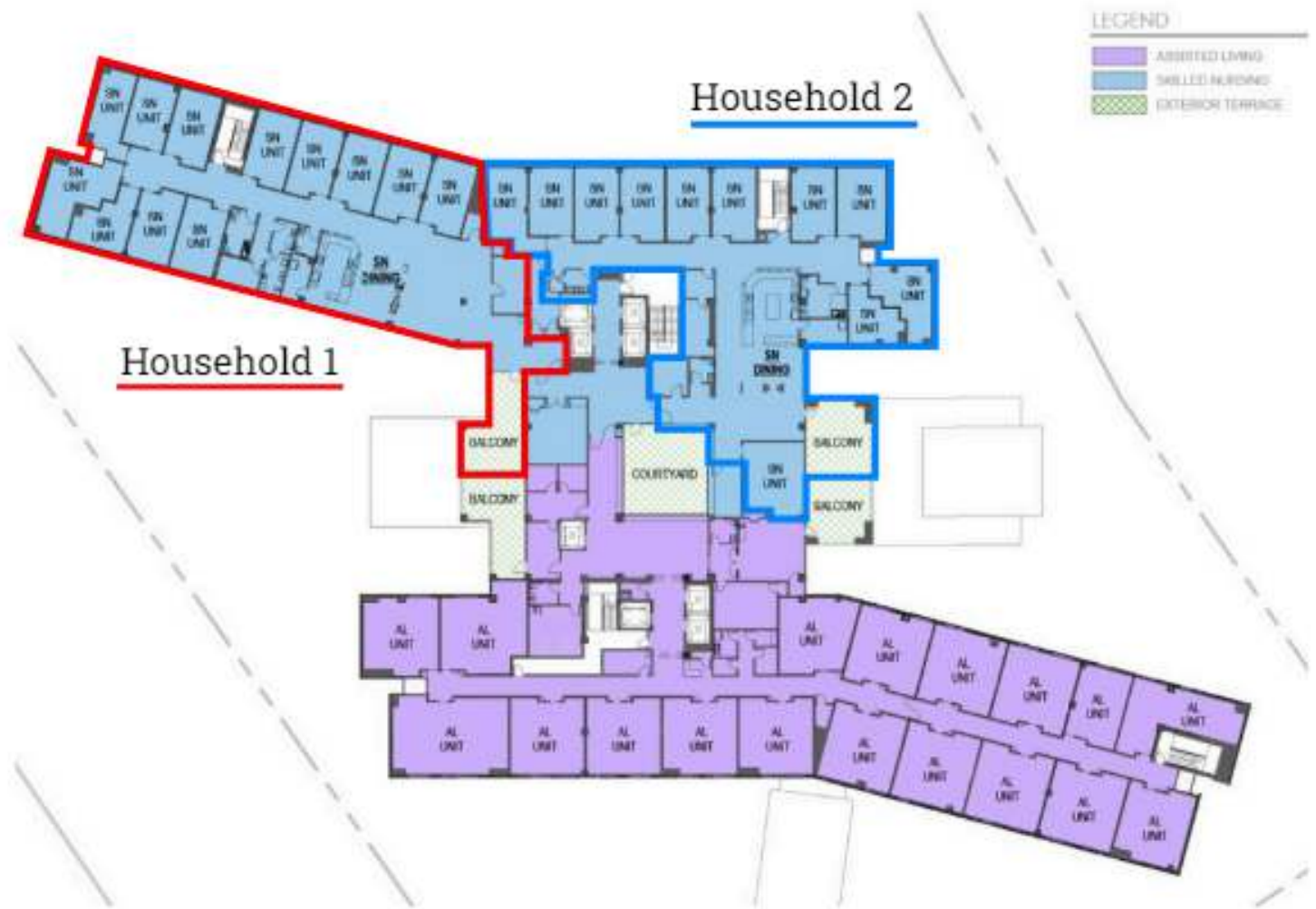
The Assisted Living gym could be larger and with more equipment (it has only two pieces of equipment) to better accommodate all the residents who want to participate in wellness classes. However, there is a nice outdoor patio space adjacent to this space, with can provide an opportunity to stretch outside or just sit outside to cool down.





Goal 3: Create an intentional focus on skilled nursing to create a more consumer-driven experience through a small house design based on the Green House[®] model.

The original programming for the skilled care portion of the building was to implement the Green House model of small household design and operating practices. With the loss of senior leadership to fully execute this operational model and then the subsequent onset of the pandemic, this approach had not yet been realized at the time of the onsite evaluation.



The design of the two skilled households on each floor follows the shape of the towers as dictated by the constraints of the site. Household 1 is a more linear orientation and Household 2 benefits from its position and ability to wrap the corner putting more of the resident rooms around the hearth area. Additionally, the balcony is directly off the living room which is a significant benefit in household 2. Although the balcony is still a part of household 1, it reads as an away space at the end of a hall and is not well utilized.

Observations / Design Goal 3 (cont)



Upon entering the households, visitors are greeted by the living room. This is very nice and sets up a strong, warm, and welcoming residential image. The material colors and details are rich and attractive and very consistent with all the other finishes of Ventana.

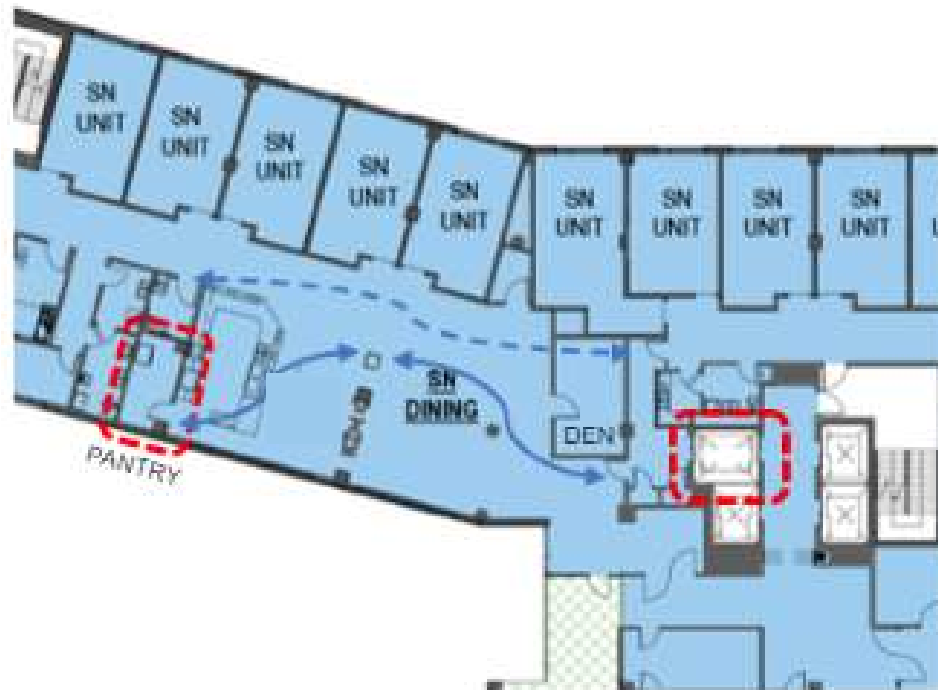


The dining room is just beyond the central fireplace feature of the living room and has ample room, daylight, and a strong connection to the kitchen area. The shared feature fireplace creates a nice separation between the living room and dining, and while this defines the space it may also create an impediment to knowing what is happening in the living room for staff who may be spending time in the kitchen. Design in the Green House model is always a balancing act of creating intimate and separate spaces while maintaining the transparency through the household so that the staff and residents feel secure and engaged.

Currently, food is being transported down from the central kitchen on the fourth floor three times a day. This requires that carts come off of the elevator, through a side door and across the living room space, then through the dining room to get through the kitchen into the pantry. Then soiled dish carts and trash are all going back in the same manner. If they switch to operating on a Green House model, this circulation pattern would be mitigated because food would only be brought to the pantry once every two to three days and all meals prepared right in the Household. This design is not faulty, though, in that it was designed based on upon being run on the Green House model.

Observations / Design Goal 3 (cont) ● ● ● ●

If the household continues to be operated in the current traditional model there are a couple ideas for future change that could be of benefit. The service door to the household could be separated from the main entry by reconfiguring the den and the pantry could be made accessible from the corridor allowing cart traffic to bypass resident spaces rather than moving through them.



The kitchen is separated from the dining room by a partial wall with a working counter. This wall is a bit high for creating an engaging kitchen experience for residents and promoting interaction with staff as well as a sense of a normal home environment. The kitchen is well set up for cooking meals in the household with an induction cooktop and residential appliances. Should they move to operate on the Green House model they will be well served by the kitchen design.



Observations / Design Goal 3 (cont)



The location of the icemaker should be reconsidered. It is currently in the open kitchen next to the refrigerator. This is often very impactful on the ability of residents and staff to have conversations. To reduce noise that directly bounces into the hardscape of the kitchen and the dining room the icemaker should be relocated into the pantry. While the hood over the stove is a small commercial unit, there are different, NFPA-compliant hoods that are completely residential in nature with fire suppression, and which can blend right in.

The pantry behind the kitchen appears much more institutional than we would expect for Green House homes. The Green House model utilizes a unique staffing model and staff cannot really afford to be tucked away in the back pantry doing dishes for any amount of time. Placing a three-basin sink in the front-of-house kitchen would allow staff to do their cleaning while still being engaged with the residents.

The resident hall which appears long in plan is well handled with generous width, undulations in the wall, and an attractive handrail. Residents have good sightlines to the Hearth which is not far when coming from their rooms.



Observations / Design Goal 3 (cont)



The bedrooms are very spacious with ample room should a resident want to bring in some of their own furniture. The rooms all have overhead lifts going to the toilet and shower. The design team handled the bathroom door very well by carefully detailing the transition between the overhead lift track through the bathroom door header.



The furniture in the bedrooms is far more institutional than anything else in Ventana and might be difficult for residents moving from within the building to accept. Very often Green House adopters are using double beds and true residential furniture in the bedrooms.

Observations / Design Goal 3 (cont) ● ● ● ●

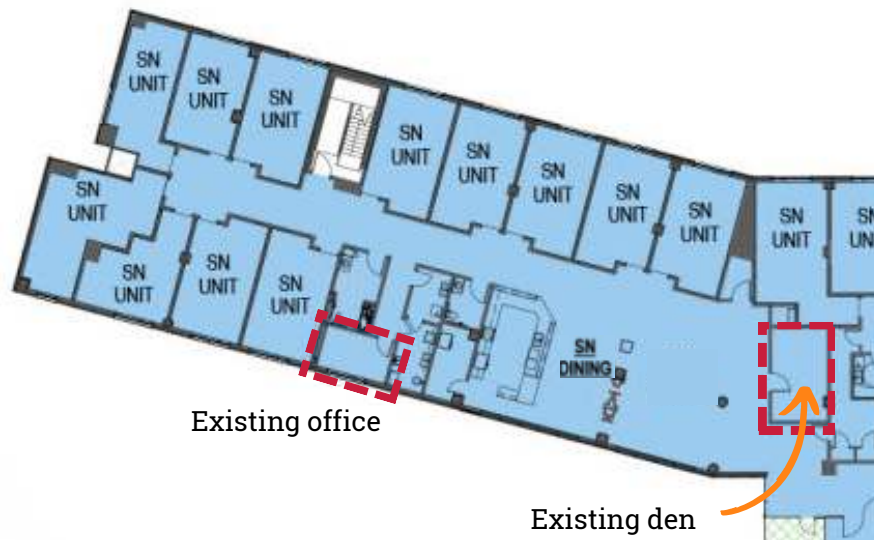


The bathrooms are excellent, with everything needed for resident use and safety. The vanity area is large for personal belongings. There is nice storage which could be used by residents and staff for supplies.

The toilet is on a line of sight from the bed and has ample clear room around it for maneuvering although it does not employ either a location 24" off the wall nor fold down grab bars to aid a two-person assist. The overhead lift in some rooms has a turntable to get into the shower while some go directly to the toilet. The shower is well laid out with controls where staff can easily assist a resident and has a flush threshold with linear drain to help keep water off the bathroom floor. The shower is in an alcove and reads as a traditional residential space.



Observations / Design Goal 3 (cont)



The home office in household 1 is at the end of a short “staff” hall which makes it more difficult for residents and staff to engage easily. In the household model with smaller staff numbers it's best to keep the staff visible and engaged with residents by locating the office immediately off the Hearth area. The den we found to be typical of many dens or spaces that lack from not being intentionally themed as a residential space. What is often a multipurpose space for staff meetings, care planning, or a resident TV room is not purposefully themed and therefore may go unused by residents. In household 1 we might suggest the office be moved to the den space which would be an ideal location for resident and staff engagement.

The elevator lobby on each of the Skilled Nursing floors serves two households. This is one spot in all of Ventana that does not seem to match the lush and rich aesthetic of the overall project. The lobbies here are stark and read almost institutional which is unfortunate as it is the entrance to the skilled nursing households.





Goal 4: Blend the indoors and outdoors with multiple roof terraces to help compensate for the tight confines of the urban site.

In the overall design of the building and public spaces, there was a strong emphasis on connections to nature and outdoor space, which can be tricky in a tight, multi-story urban location. The design team created multiple spaces that are distributed around the building and at all levels so residents living throughout the building can get outside.



The design team did an excellent job maximizing outdoor space on such a tight site.

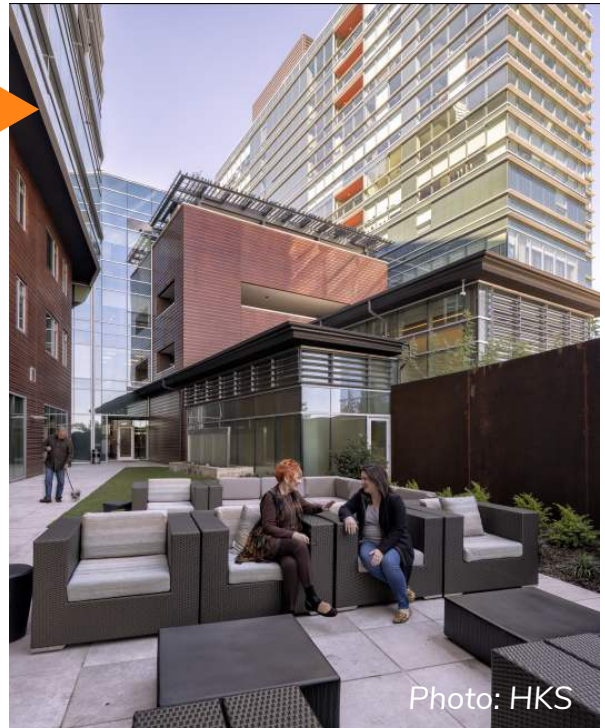


At the ground level, there are several green spaces, including a dog-walking garden to support people with pets. These are generally well-screened from the adjacent highway, though highway noise can be heard.

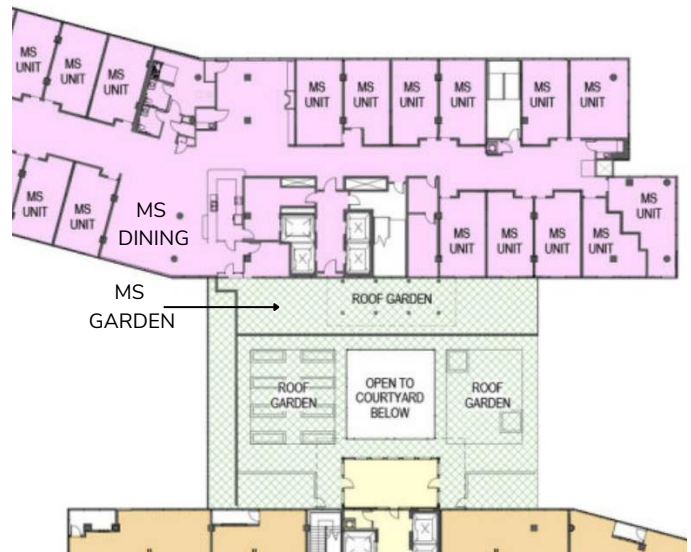
Observations / Design Goal 4 (cont)



Perhaps the most inviting and dynamic outdoor space was the space on the first floor, right outside the Great Hall. This space, unfortunately, was only accessible from the great hall or with one small door from the fitness hallway. The POE team felt that if this space had more of a direct connection to the main lobby, it would be more impactful and, perhaps, better used.



On the second and third floors, each of the assisted and nursing home living areas have direct access to balconies. This was very clever planning by the design team to make this happen.



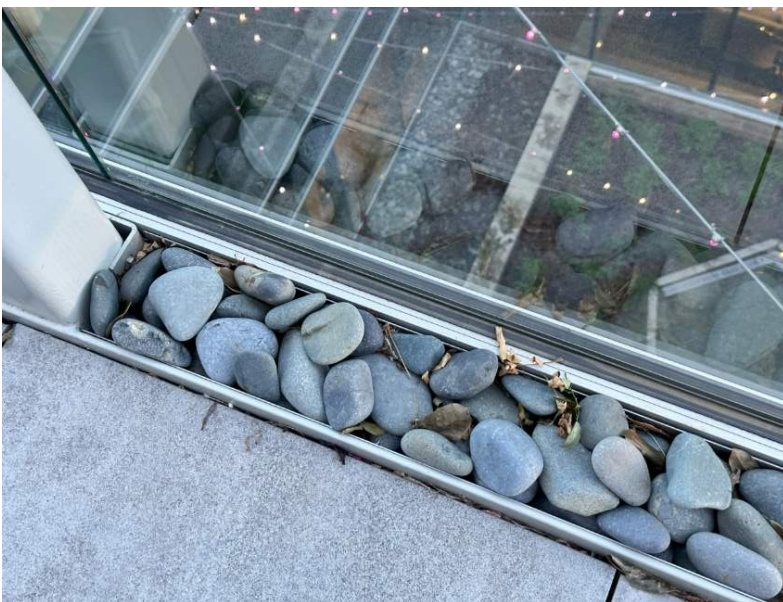
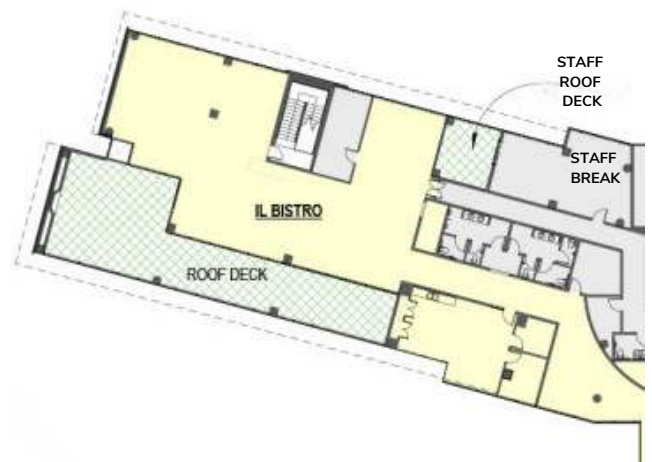
The fifth floor, which accommodates the memory care program, also has access to a roof-top garden area, though their portion of the space is limited. We wish that there was more of a direct, visual connection to this outdoor space from the dining room area. However, due to a zoning restriction that dictated the roof setback and the placement of a screening wall, it could only be a tangential connection. However, we applaud the design team for finding a way to get any connection to the outdoor space for residents.

Observations / Design Goal 4 (cont)



On the fifth floor, there is a roof garden, accessed through a sun room/lounge space with an adjacent putting green for the IL members (and fun-loving POE team members!).

Even the staff have a patio adjacent to their lounge on the fourth floor. This is a rare and thoughtful detail!



All spaces were shaded from the sun and provided protection from rain and heat. The challenge for accessing the patios was the wind combined with the weight of the doors. Opening the doors was sometimes difficult and probably requires staff assistance especially for AL and NH residents. The flooring surfaces on some patios created some risks with edges between the tiles and decorative gravel.



Goal 5: Control the sounds of the surrounding highway and protect a quality acoustical environment.

As we mentioned in the description of the building site, the project is wedged in along a major highway and another very busy road. The design team knew that controlling traffic noise would be highly important for the residents' quality of life.

A special glazing assembly was used for all of the windows and exterior doors that has laminated glass. This glass dramatically reduced the road noise. You can really tell how much it cuts the noise as soon as you open a door to a balcony.



The only downside of the laminated glass is that it is heavy, and makes the balcony doors a little harder to open. Additionally, the wind pressures that can build up along a high-rise building also make certain doors harder to open than others. Some of the outside doors to the public patio spaces were blocked off at the time of our visit because of higher winds.



For the large outdoor space, off the Great Hall, on the ground level the design team added a lovely curving steel wall that not only shields the space from direct highway noise, but also provides rich visual detail and helps to define an outdoor room. This wall, with assistance from a solid concrete wall behind it, really does a good job of blocking the straight-line of highway noise to the space.

Interestingly though, it set up an odd effect where instead you experience the highway noise as coming at you from above. The noise bounces off the hard, flat plane of the building and comes back at you from the other side. This feels very odd. The POE team wondered if there are any strategies that would help minimize this noise bounce-back effect. Perhaps, using a perforated rainscreen system with some sort of acoustical backing? Perhaps a more angular facade treatment to "scatter" the sound? It would be a good research opportunity for someone.



Goal 6: Maximize the use of natural light for all residents of Ventana.



All of the IL members' apartments, in the two towers, had dramatic floor to ceiling windows that flooded the apartment with natural light. Thoughtful details included a muntin near waist height to minimize the feeling of "vertigo" or the fear of falling, motorized light filtering blinds in the living room and motorized black-out shades in the bedroom.

At the base of the towers, on the second through fifth floors, the floor plate is a lot wider and wouldn't allow as much natural light to penetrate the center. For this reason, the design team created a large light well to drive light down into the lower floors. At the base of this light well, they created a Zen garden space to be accessed from the Skilled Nursing Households on the Second Floor. This garden is lovely and tranquil. We wish that there was some seating provided, though.



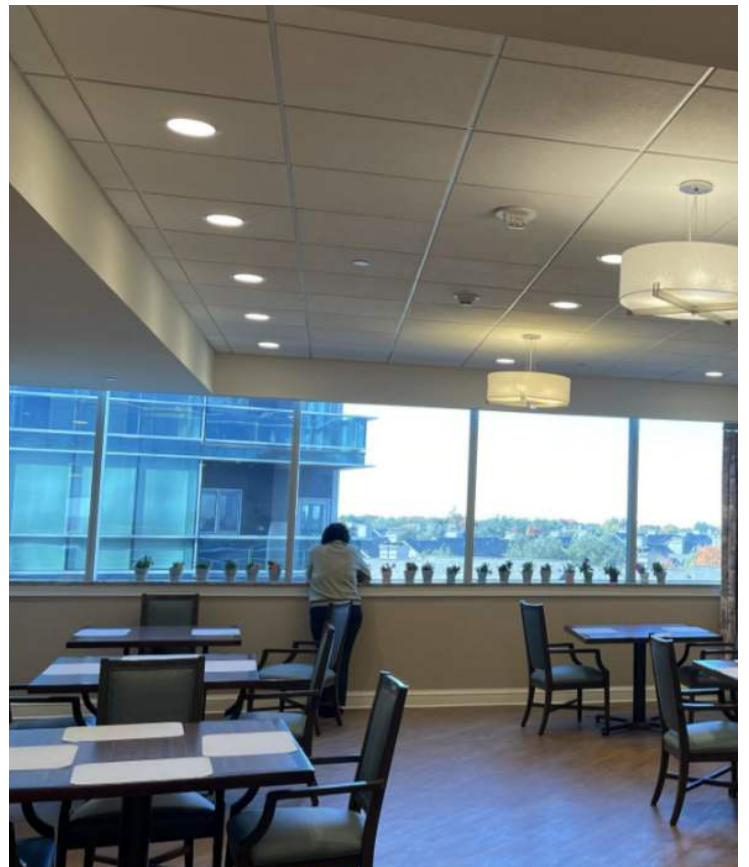
The upper part of the light well was criss-crossed, both vertically and horizontally, with string lights, providing a very nice effect at nighttime. The design team said that the installation is called "Constellation" which was inspired by Buckner Children's homes.

Observations / Design Goal 6 (cont) ● ● ● ●



The one curious feature we noted, when it comes to natural light, is on the Fifth Floor Memory Care neighborhood. All of the windows were set with the sill very high, probably between 42" - 48" above the floor. When we asked the design team about this, they said they raised the sills to help minimize any "vertigo" or fears of heights.

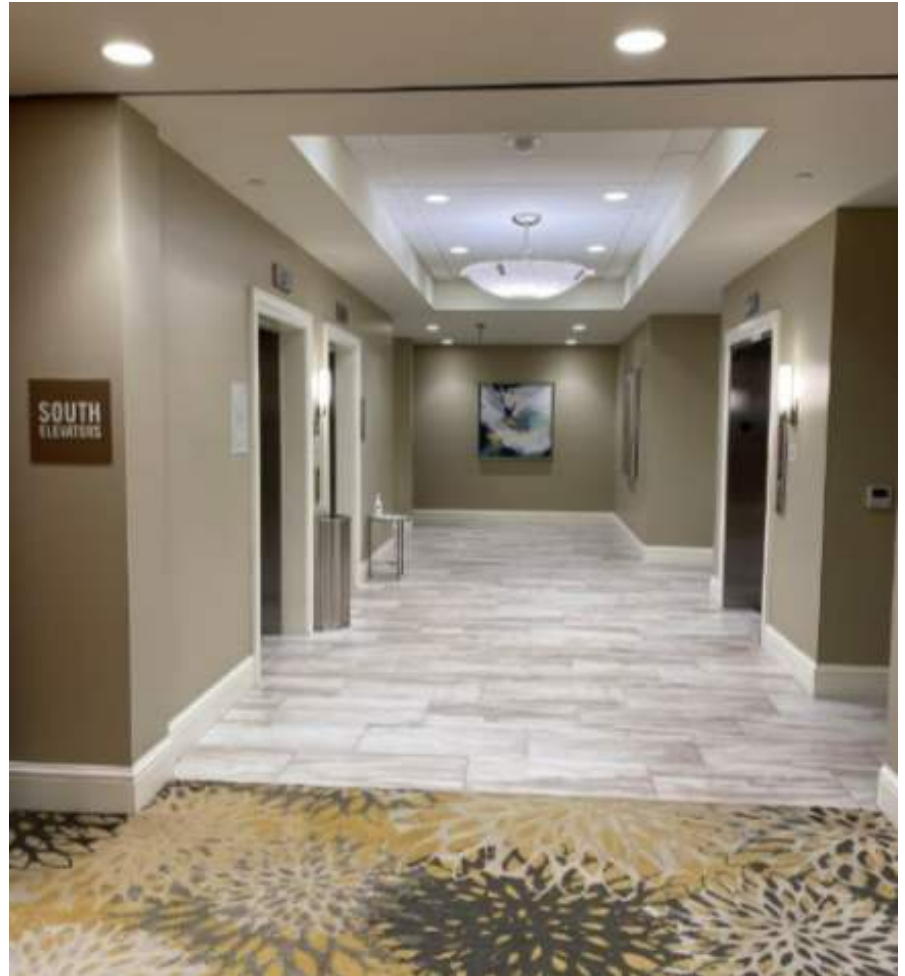
However, the impact is that it greatly restricts the resident field of view, especially when seated or lying in bed. For all the attention paid to light and views elsewhere, we felt that this was a missed opportunity.



Other Design Details of Note

Hold the elevator

Tall buildings need effective and convenient circulation, and nobody likes to wait too long for the elevator. One of the challenges for this building developed when the intended service elevator was opened up for passenger use and residents began to expect that elevator to only serve their needs. They have expressed disappointment in sharing the elevator with contractors and staff. For a building of this scale and high customer service values, a dedicated service elevator would be ideal. A bench in the elevator lobby would also be a recommended addition. The interior design team noted that the original furniture install provided benches in all the lobbies and it was likely moved during COVID to encourage social distancing. We think it is time to put that item back.



Material wear & tear

Every project has budget limitations, even higher-end work. A common target for value engineering is the finishes. The consequence can be seen in the wear and tear, especially in high-use areas. There were spots where the flooring was taking a bit of a beating, such as carpet zippering. The consequence of not having a dedicated service elevator also resulted in maintenance and other services having to use all of the elevators to do their work in a timely manner. The heavy carts were cracking the tile on the elevator floors and they have replaced that flooring multiple times.

Other Design Details of Note (cont)



Art as wayfinding

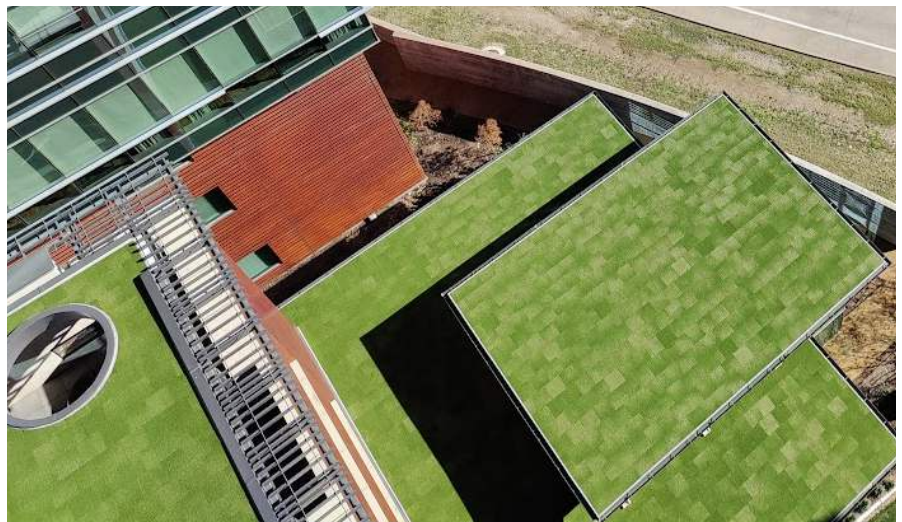
The art complemented the other finishes and design details in a truly elegant manner. Multiple three-dimensional pieces were installed across the building. One area that could have benefitted from the placement of distinctive pieces was the elevator lobbies. The finishes in each elevator lobby were identical and the pictures that were located for the lobbies of the north and south towers were very similar. The POE team recognized how easy it was to confuse their location.



Just some of the impressive artwork throughout the Ventana campus

Dress it up

There are many lower flat roofs that could have been left as is. However, the design team used them as opportunities to introduce the feel of more green space on the site. By using simple tiles of artificial turf, they took what could have been eyesores and turned them into features that are nice to look down onto.



The SAGE POE team concluded the following about the Ventana project.

- Stated goals in their award submission are clearly evident in the resulting design and are supported by the feedback of their users.
- Excellent application of many of the SAGE principles that support both residents and staff.
- Design carefully incorporates both functional and beautiful details into the spaces, while beautifully working with a tight site with many restrictions.
- Outcomes are strong because of the strong leadership at Ventana.
- We are hopeful that the operational and programming efforts will bring the Assisted Living and Skilled Nursing households up to the same experiential level as the IL members enjoy.

The SAGE POE team is very grateful to the administration of Ventana and the staff for inviting us to review their new building. There is a strong sense of community at Ventana. As with all dynamic organizations, there is always a desire to continue to explore new ways of improving and living the vision and mission. We commend the administration and staff for their persistence during COVID and their vision for evolving their operational strategies to match the environmental features they have been provided through this design.



The SAGE POE team interviews members of the design team and Buckner leadership

A Message from Our Sponsor



Joe Martere

Sr. Director of Strategy
Senior Living
Mohawk Group

Mohawk Group was the proud sponsor of the 2023 SAGE Post-Occupancy Evaluation (POE) which was conducted at Ventana by Buckner in Dallas, TX. The SAGE POE program is an integral part of SAGE's overall mission, specifically as it relates to Research and Education.

During the POE process the SAGE team, which consisted of researchers, architects and designers, spent an entire day and a half thoroughly examining and evaluating the world-class community at Ventana, as well as interviewing administration, staff and residents. The process is truly collaborative with the primary goal of identifying best practices along with possible design improvements for the overall benefit of the community.

I personally found the process to be one of the most enlightening and rewarding experiences in my professional career. The commitment and care in which the SAGE team approaches all aspects of the evaluation was truly exceptional to witness. In the end, I had the extreme pleasure of participating in a process that I know will result in lessons learned and ultimately provide guidance and inspiration for generations of Senior Living providers, practitioners, and SAGE members for years to come!



We can neither confirm nor deny if Joe made this shot on the Ventana putting green. You be the judge! 😊

About SAGE

Founded in 1994, the Society for the Advancement of Gerontological Environments (SAGE) is a membership-based organization that represents excellence in all facets of the senior-living industry industry.

Our mission: "SAGE is a diverse network that is committed to inspiring and creating environments where older adults can thrive. To accomplish this, our members leverage collaborative opportunities to engage in research, education, advocacy and innovation." To achieve this, SAGE:

- Provides a nexus for collaboration among all disciplines involved in the development, operation, and regulation of settings for older adults;
- Offers educational forums that feature current research and best practices for the design of living environments;
- Evaluates senior living environments based on SAGE's design principles and shares results through conferences and publications; and,
- Promotes regulatory change and research that supports resident-directed care.

SAGE members enjoy networking and design-jury opportunities, free AIA-approved monthly webinars and TECHTalks, committee participation to advance the SAGE mission and initiatives, exclusive member discounts, and more. To learn more about the benefits of SAGE membership, visit www.sagefederation.org.



SAGE members love to connect with other great minds, including at the SAGE booth during the recent Environments for Aging Conference + Expo!

President's Message

We are so proud to publish the latest SAGE post-occupancy evaluation white paper summarizing the 2023 SAGE POE of Ventana by Buckner.

It is a priority for SAGE to lead meaningful research for the senior living industry. To facilitate innovation, we share the data that is relevant to our community of professionals to help inform design with new ideas, fresh approaches, and creativity.

SAGE strives to be the platform for evolving environmental improvement for aging adults, enabling our community to implement both small and grand strategic elements of research-informed design. We are honored **Mohawk Group**, our sponsor, shares that vision and recognizes the value of this important work.

On behalf of SAGE, and in accordance with our research initiatives, I am so pleased to present to you this publication.



Jill Schroeder

SAGE President



SAGE Webinar Recording :
Notes from the Field: A SAGE Post-Occupancy Evaluation of Ventana by Buckner
Presented September 27, 2023

Click below to learn more about the organizations involved in the 2023 SAGE POE.



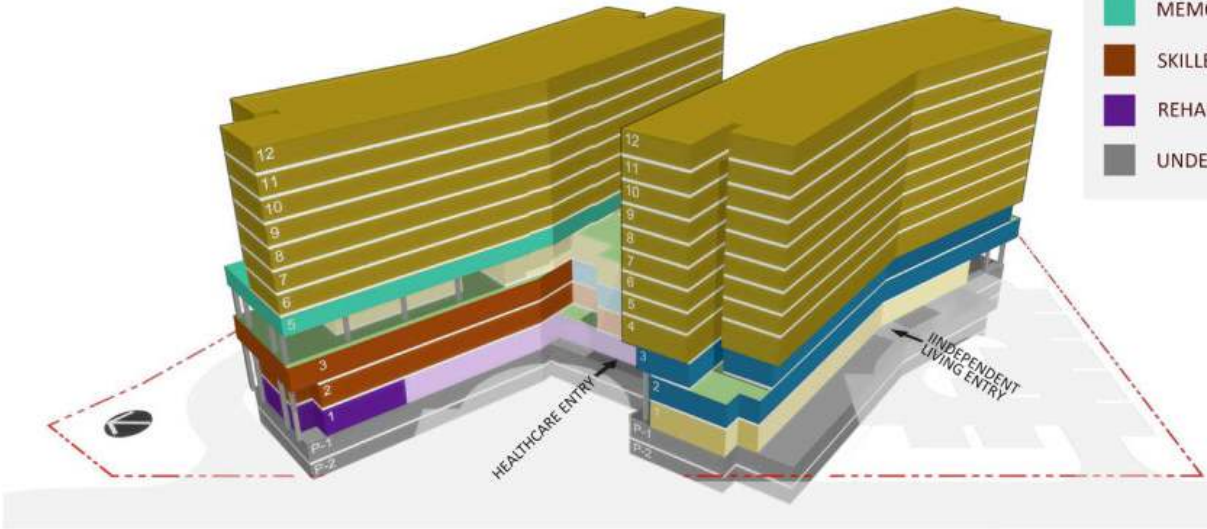
Media Partner

Floorplans/Diagrams

VENTANA™
BY BUCKNER.

STACKING DIAGRAM

- INDEPENDENT LIVING
- ASSISTED LIVING
- MEMORY SUPPORT
- SKILLED NURSING
- REHABILITATION
- UNDERGROUND PARKING



LEGEND

- RESIDENT STORAGE (4,871 S.F.)
- GARAGE MECHANICAL AND CIRCULATION (932 S.F.)
- 210 PARKING SPACES

Parking Lower Level

Floorplans/Diagrams (cont)



Parking Entry Level



Level 1

Floorplans/Diagrams (cont)



LEGEND

- ASSISTED LIVING
- SKILLED NURSING
- EXTERIOR TERRACE

Level 2



LEGEND

- ASSISTED LIVING
- SKILLED NURSING
- EXTERIOR TERRACE

Level 3



Floorplans/Diagrams (cont)



LEGEND

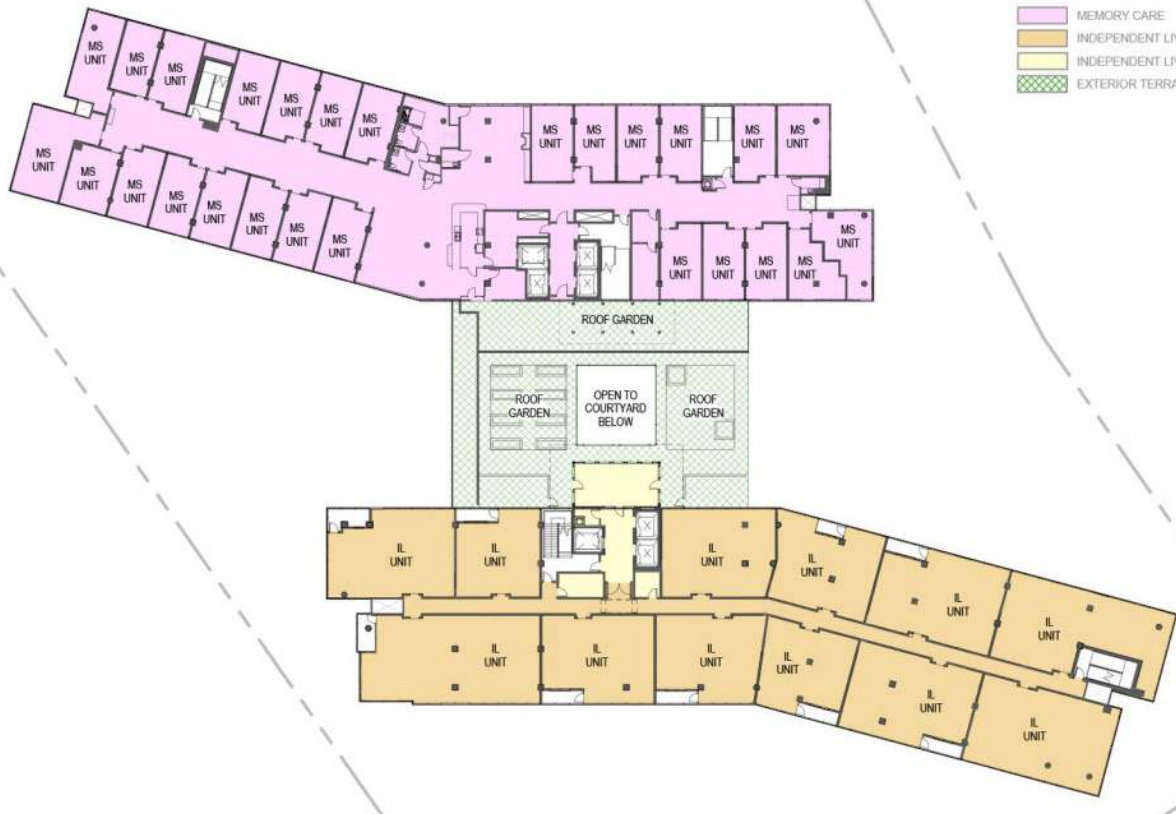
- INDEPENDENT LIVING UNITS
- INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES
- BUILDING SERVICES AND B.O.H.
- EXTERIOR TERRACE



Level 4

LEGEND

- MEMORY CARE
- INDEPENDENT LIVING UNITS
- INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES
- EXTERIOR TERRACE



Level 5

Floorplans/Diagrams (cont)

