

ARCHITECTURAL RECORD



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Photo © Tom Powel

Navy Green Supportive Housing

Architecture in Formation

Brooklyn, New York

Red Hot Property: Boldly designed housing for the chronically homeless anchors a mixed residential development in a rapidly changing neighborhood.

By Josephine Minutillo

It was the scene of incredible industry and a symbol of American might: just across the East River from lower Manhattan, the Brooklyn Navy Yard turned out some of the world's most celebrated warships throughout its 150-year-history, employing 70,000 workers at the peak of its production during World War II. When the 300-acre facility closed in 1966, dozens of its buildings fell into disrepair, as did the area surrounding it. After decades of neglect, that part of Brooklyn, like much of the rest of the borough, has transformed dramatically. First it became home to artists who located their studios within the vast warehouse spaces left behind; now its skyrocketing rents are pricing the middle class out of the neighborhood.



PEOPLE & PRODUCTS

- **Metal panels:** Atas International
- **Roofing:** American Hydrotech
- **Glass:** Oldcastle BuildingEnvelope

Navy Green is a unique residential development occupying almost an entire block and rising on the site of the former Brig, a naval prison built immediately outside the Navy Yard's confines in the early 1940s and demolished in 2006. The project's mix of low- and moderate-income rental and ownership units and market-rate co-ops, dispersed across large, multi-unit buildings and small townhouses, provides affordable housing in a newly desirable stretch of land sandwiched between the elevated Brooklyn-Queens Expressway and the industrial buildings currently being adapted in the Navy Yard.

The beacon of Navy Green is a bold red eight-story building whose cheerful disposition belies its serious mission. Sheathed in a colorful patchwork of corrugated metal panels, it is a supportive-housing facility for chronically homeless

- **Resilient flooring:** Marmoleum
- **Furnishings:** Ikea, Blu Dot, Knoll, Emeco

people with mental illness and substance dependence. "Life's too short for subtlety," explains Matthew Bremer, principal of New York-based Architecture in Formation. "We designed a billboard building to have a presence from the highway and on the street."

This is the largest project Bremer and his small firm has done to date. FXFowle Architects, Navy Green's master planner and designer of some of its buildings, recommended the young Texan, who oversaw design development and worked with architect-of-record Curtis + Ginsberg on construction documents. Bremer's choice of metal for the main facade reflects the gritty nature of the area, but it also helps to inexpensively achieve his design statement: for the building to stand proud. The simple block-and-plank construction allowed the structure to go up quickly and economically, "like a cheap airport hotel," according to the architect, who says the building was put together with "clumsy precision." Owned and operated by the nonprofit Pratt Area Community Council (PACC) and built in part with funding from New York City under the supervision of its Department of Housing Preservation and Development, budget was obviously a concern.

Despite that, Bremer found ways to infuse the building, affectionately known as Big Red, with thoughtful design to help provide its long-term residents with a home, not just a shelter. Each of the 97 single-occupancy studios, many of which were awarded through a onetime lottery, is furnished with simple contemporary pieces. Beds, dressers, and lighting fixtures, as well as conference room furniture on the first floor, were acquired well below retail price with the help of the manufacturers.

The 285-square-foot identical studios line double-loaded corridors, painted a different sunny hue on each floor and punctuated with bold graphics. On the ground floor, a gracious double-height lobby provides a daylight-filled meeting area. To mitigate a 42-inch grade change from the lobby entrance to the courtyard behind the building, Bremer designed what he calls the "amphitheater." The innovative gathering spot incorporates bench seating around a snaking concrete ADA-compliant ramp. Creeping up the wall and ceiling around this feature is a vine of T8 fluorescent tubes that illuminate it at night. A bridge spanning the double-height space contains a small informal lounge for residents, which Bremer fought to include.

Past the lobby are offices for caseworkers from the Department of Social Services, with whom the residents must regularly check in. A community room accommodates classes and more formal tenant meetings. The controlled environment restricts guests and also limits units to single residents without children, but the building's position within the larger Navy Green development offers occupants access to the shared central courtyard. "That is uncommon for an American paradigm," explains Drew Kiriazides, PACC chief real estate development officer. Landscape architects Todd Rader and Amy Crews designed this coveted amenity as an open tree-lined plaza.

"This was not a top-down development," Kiriazides points out. "It was planned in full by the community, which came together years ago to decide on best uses for this location." As the Brooklyn Navy Yard draws upon its illustrious past to restore and rebuild, collaborative, mixed-use, nonexclusionary projects like Navy Green—and, in particular, design-conscious pursuits like Big Red—point to the neighborhood's promising future.

Josephine Minutillo writes about design, architecture, art, and real estate for numerous online and print publications.

Size: 56,000 square feet

Total construction cost: \$16.8 million

Completion Date: May 2012

Design Architect:

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June 2014

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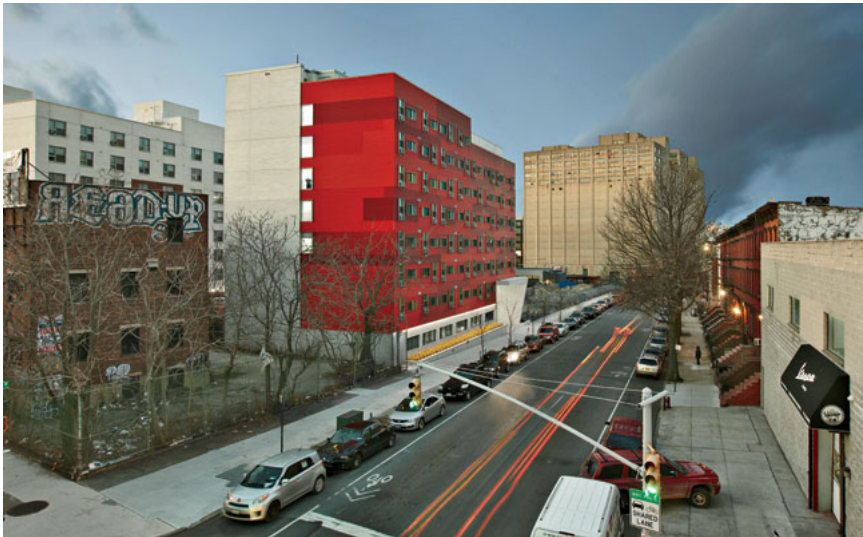


Photo © Tom Powel

Navy Green Supportive Housing

Architecture in Formation

Brooklyn, New York

People

Owner: Pratt Area Community Council, Deb Howard, Executive Director, Drew Kiriazides, Chief Real Estate Development Officer, Tammy Ferlisi, Director of Housing Development

Architect:
(Design Architect)

Architecture in Formation PC
526 West 26th Street, Suite 422
New York, NY 10001
212 714 1006
mail@aifny.com

Personnel in architect's firm who should receive special credit:
Matthew Bremer AIA, Principal-in-charge (Registered Architect)

Design Team:
Paulo Flores
Ricardo Kendall
Victor Ortega
John Zeien

Products

Structural system

Concrete block and precast concrete plank with steel framing and cast concrete at the entry/lobby.

Exterior cladding

Masonry:
Kingston Block (Concrete facing brick)

Metal Panels:
Fabricator: ATAS International, Inc.
Installer: United Panel Technologies Corp.

Metal/glass curtain wall:
Kawneer

Precast concrete:
Oldcastle Precast Building Systems

Roofing

Built-up roofing:
American Hydrotech Inc.

Windows

Tom Zook

Architect of record: (Executive Architect)

Curtis + Ginsberg Architects

Mark Ginsberg FAIA, LEEDAP, Partner-in-charge (Registered Architect)

Project Team:

Graig Donnelly (Project Manager)

Christine Yoon (Project Manager – Construction Administration)

Jon Bagnall (Project Manager – Construction Administration)

Tyheem Joiner

Daniel de la Cruz

Engineer(s):

Structural:

GACE Consulting Engineers, PC

Andrzej Okolski, PE, Principal-in-charge

Brad Kiefer, PE, Associate Principal

Xhevdet Celso, PE, Project Manager

MEP:

Rodkin Cardinale Consulting Engineers, PC

Simon Rodkin, PE, Principal-in-charge (mechanical)

Dominic Cardinale, PE, Principal-in-charge (plumbing, fire protection)

Basma Basiliou, PE, Department Head (electrical, fire alarm)

Consultant(s):

Landscape: Rader Crews Landscape Architecture LLC, Todd Rader

Lighting: Filament33 Inc., Marianne Maloney, Principal

Energy & Environmental: Steven Winters Associates

General contractor: Mega Contracting Inc.

Photographer(s):

Tom Powel

526 W 26th St #405, New York, NY 10001

(917) 701-7717

Metal frame:

Peerless Architectural Windows & Doors

Glazing

Glass:

Oldcastle Building Envelope

Quaker Windows and Doors

Doors

Entrances:

Walsh Glass and Metal

Metal doors:

L.I.F. Industries Inc.

Hardware

Locksets:

Townsteel

Assa Abloy

Schlage

Closers:

Townsteel

Dorma

Exit devices:

Townsteel

C.R. Laurence Co., Inc.

Pulls:

Townsteel (door lever handles)

C.R. Laurence Co., Inc. (front door)

Direct Builders (cabinet handles)

Security devices:

Aiphone (intercom system)

Interior finishes

Acoustical ceilings:

Armstrong

Cabinetwork and custom woodwork:

Cabinets Deluxe

Universal Designs, Inc. (amphitheater seating millwork)

J-Con Woodworking (reception desk, mail area millwork)

Paints and stains:

Benjamin Moore

Plastic laminate:

Wilsonart (kitchen counters)

Solid surfacing:

Reception Desk and mailbox surround: Corian

Special surfacing:

Custom cast concrete benches at "amphitheater": Eletecrete

Decorative Concrete Coatings Pty Ltd

Floor and wall tile:

Dal Tile

Resilient flooring:

Marmoleum

Carpet: Tandus

Furnishings

Office furniture:

Knoll, Hon, Versteel, through EvensonBest

Fixed seating:

Ramphitheater cushion fabric: Knoll

Ramphitheater upholstery: StichNYC

Chairs: Harter,through EvensonBest

Tables: Hon, Versteel, through EvensonBest

Other furniture:

Residential Units:

Bed, Dresser: Blu-Dot

Side Chairs : Emeco – 111 Navy Side Chair: Coca-Cola
Collaboration)

Arm chair: Ikea

Lamp: Ikea

Lighting

Interior ambient lighting:

Lobby/Ramphitheater Lighting "Vine": Legion Lighting

Entry signage: Legion Lighting

Apartment Lighting: Oxygen Lighting

Downlights:

Lobby and Community Room 2' and 4' round: Focal Point
Skydome

Exterior:

Entry canopy: Kurt Versen

Street façade cove light: Acolyte LED

Conveyance

Elevators/Escalators:

Kone

Plumbing

Elkay (drinking fountain)

American Standard (faucets, shower fixtures & toilets; public
space bathroom lavatory)

Crane Plumbing (apartment bathroom lavatories & tubs)

Gerber (apartment bath drains)

Brasscraft (sink traps)

Dayton (public space kitchen sink)

Fiat Products (laundry room service sink)

Gerber (cast iron service sink)

T&S Brass & Bronze Works (cast iron service sink faucet)

Jones Stephens Corp. (cast iron service sink trap)

June 2014