

# Common Ground

*Where community is cultivated*

On a small lot in the West Village, a collection of individuals has cultivated a thriving, sustainable community.

Common Ground is a co-living and community space built upon the simple idea that in order to grow and expand, one must first establish roots. This duality applies to the site and building, its residents, and the energy and life contained within.

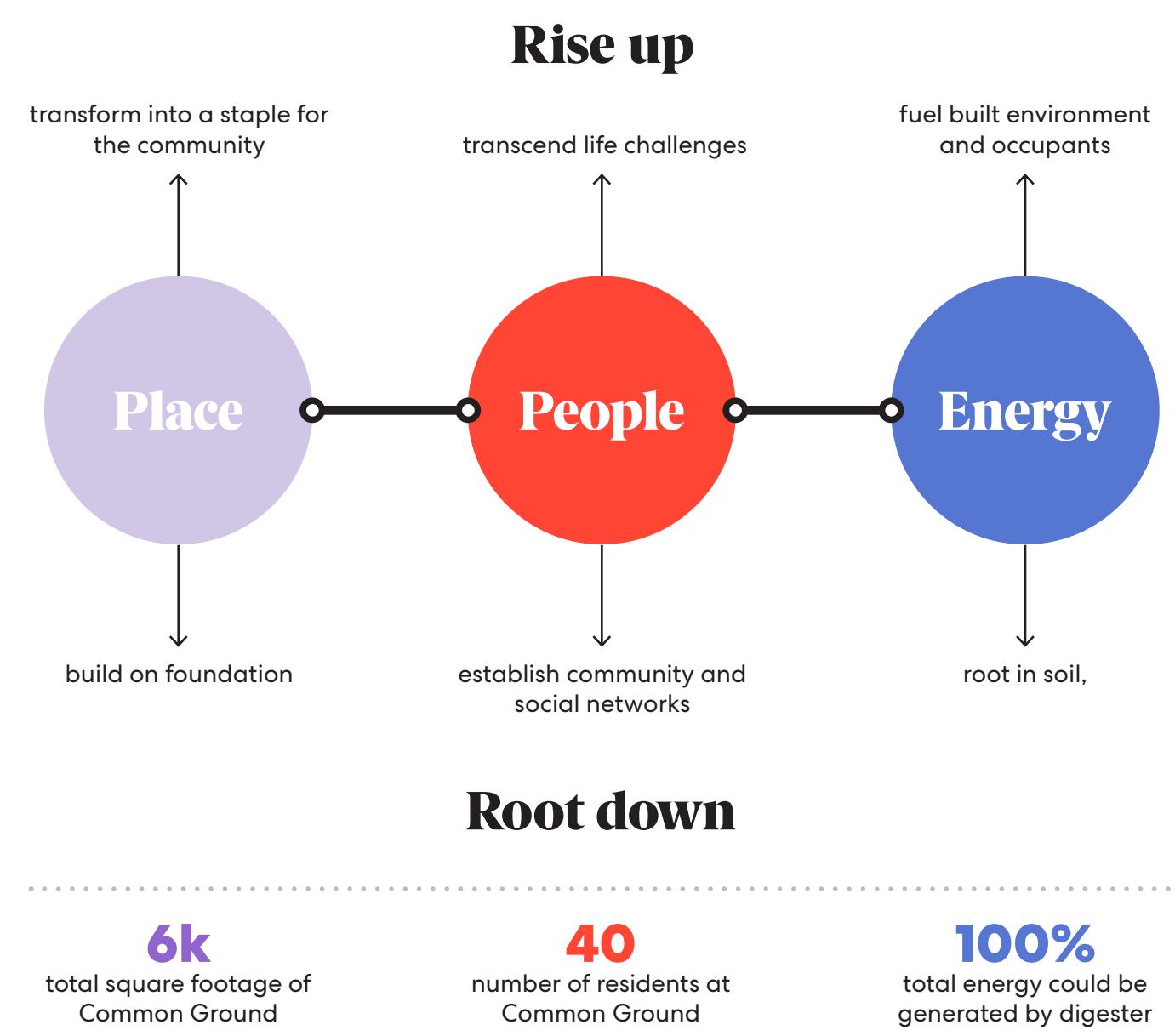
The building adaptively reused an existing structure, adding three levels which provide space for sleeping pods and shared amenities. A small café off W. 12th Street is open to the community and experiments with the produce grown in the aquaponics system by the residents.

Common Ground aims to establish meaningful connections between the residents and the surrounding community. This is done through

creating scalable social networks and balancing space to be together and space to retreat to be alone.

An integrated aquaponic and anaerobic digester system provides the building with the potential to supply 100% of its energy with the added benefit of supplying fresh ingredients daily to residents and the cafe. Food waste from the surrounding neighborhood is diverted from landfills, collected on site, and fed into the digester.

As a complete system, these components of place, people, and energy work together to accomplish Common Ground's mission:



## A sustainable structure

The design of the building finds creative ways to adapt the existing first floor and roof. The existing skylight provides daylight for the new shared kitchen and social space. A market space is located on the ground floor, next to the public-facing Common Ground Cafe. These spaces also act as a crisis hub for the neighborhood. First floor materials are floodable in the event of storm surge and sea level rise. The exterior has been sealed to prevent water damage from potential flooding.

Three levels were added to accommodate more private functions, including sleeping quarters and work space. Low flow fixtures and energy efficient appliances were specified for the shared bathroom and laundry facilities.

Place



"Living at Common Ground, I'm actually able to impact more than I thought was possible in a wheelchair. I feel like I'm part of something bigger."

—David

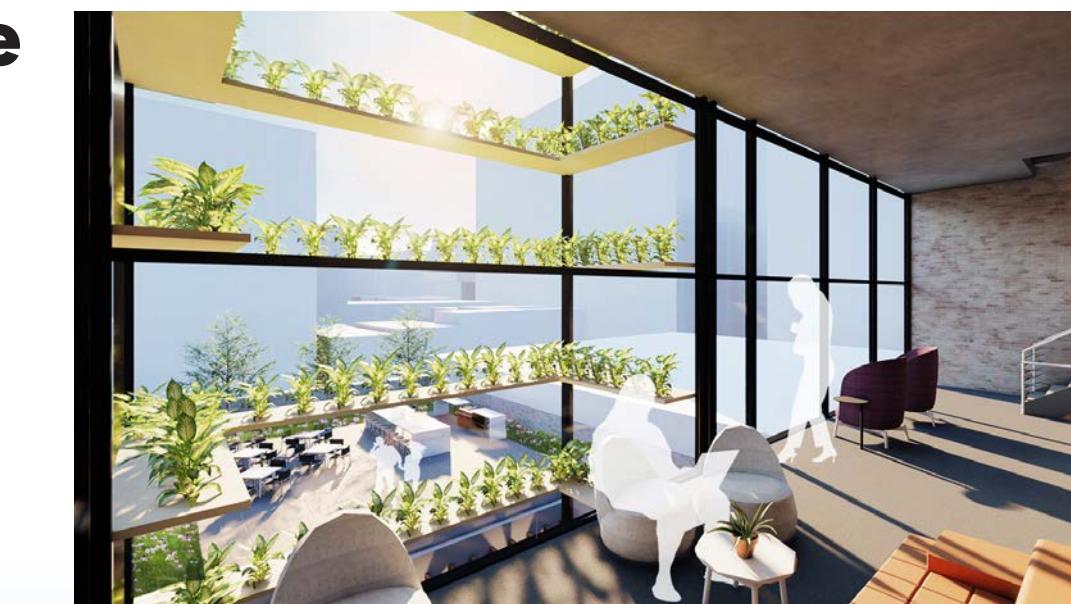


## Rest and recharge

In addition to the energy that is produced on site by the anaerobic digester, Common Ground is also a place where residents can recharge. Through the use of healthy materials, access to daylight and views, and meaningful separation of shared and private space, residents can easily find the right space that will help them renew and restore.

Some of the healthy materials include:

- PVC-free Bentley carpet
- PVC-free Bentley rugs
- Low-VOC paints
- FSC-certified hardwood
- Six different upholstery fabrics with no added flame retardants or stain-resistant finishes



## A village in the Village

The residents at Common Ground come from a variety of backgrounds, but a theme among many is that their move to Common Ground came at a transition point in their lives. The co-living environment continues to support them through the highs and lows of every day life. Here are just a few of the people who are living at Common Ground today:

People



**Nima**

Age: 38  
Occupation: Research Microbiologist  
Background: Nima was one of the community's first residents. He moved to Common Ground when he emigrated from India. He had few possessions and wanted to meet people. Given his background, he was instrumental to the development of the aquaponic and digester system. He oversees Aniyah and mentors her while being an advocate for systems thinking.

**Favorite part about Common Ground:** Nima enjoys leading rooftop yoga classes for his neighbors.



**Sandy and Emma**

Age: 52, Emma 16  
Occupations: Sandy: entrepreneur, Emma: high school sophomore  
Background: Sandy moved to Common Ground after Emma's father passed away several years ago. Originally looking for additional assistance and parenting for Emma, Sandy found a community that has supported the two of them through a difficult stage in their lives.

**Favorite part about Common Ground:** Sandy enjoys the cafe and co-working space for meetings and individual work as she starts a new business. When not at school, Emma enjoys using the library and other quiet spaces for homework and reading.



**David**

Age: 26  
Occupation: Store Manager at Common Ground Cafe  
Background: David is a veteran who recently returned from active duty after suffering a spinal injury. Now in a wheelchair, David wanted to live in a compact building in a compact neighborhood. Common Ground offered him the opportunity to live and work in close proximity to have a community of friends to support him as he explores his new type of mobility.

**Favorite part about Common Ground:** David likes playing board games with neighbors in the community room and taking Bleeker on walks.



**Aniyah**

Age: 18  
Occupation: operates and maintains the aquaponics system and anaerobic digester  
Background: Aniyah recently graduated from high school and is taking a gap year to explore her interest in sustainable food systems. She moved to New York to work in the industry and make connections. The location in the West Village gives her the opportunity to connect with chefs at nearby restaurants so she can see how the food she grows can be used.

**Favorite part about Common Ground:** Aniyah starts and ends each day cooking and eating in the communal kitchen with her neighbors.

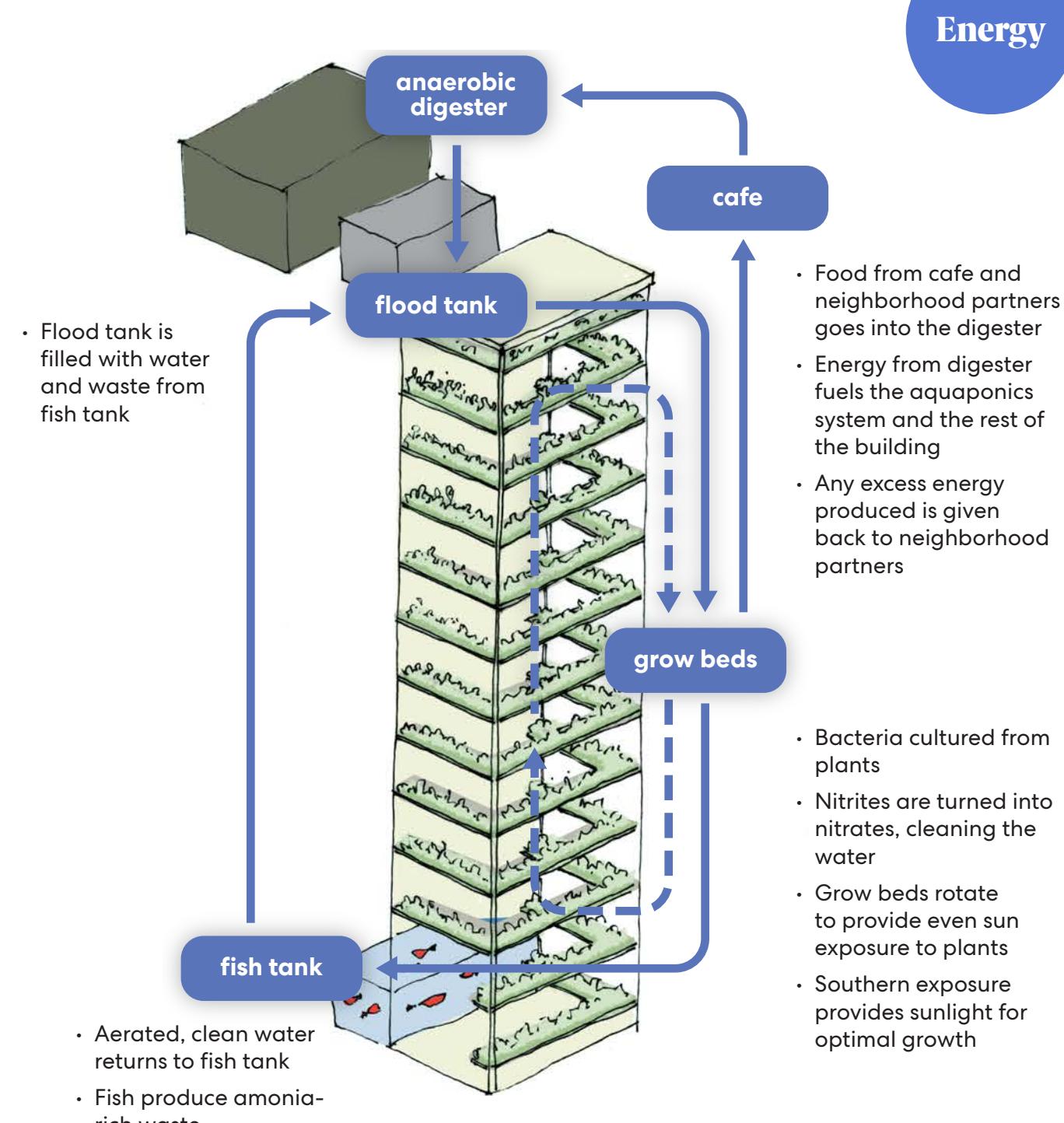


**Bleeker**

Age: 7  
Occupation: Good Boy  
Background: Bleeker was rescued from a breeder. The residents take turns caring for him and he provides comfort and emotional support.

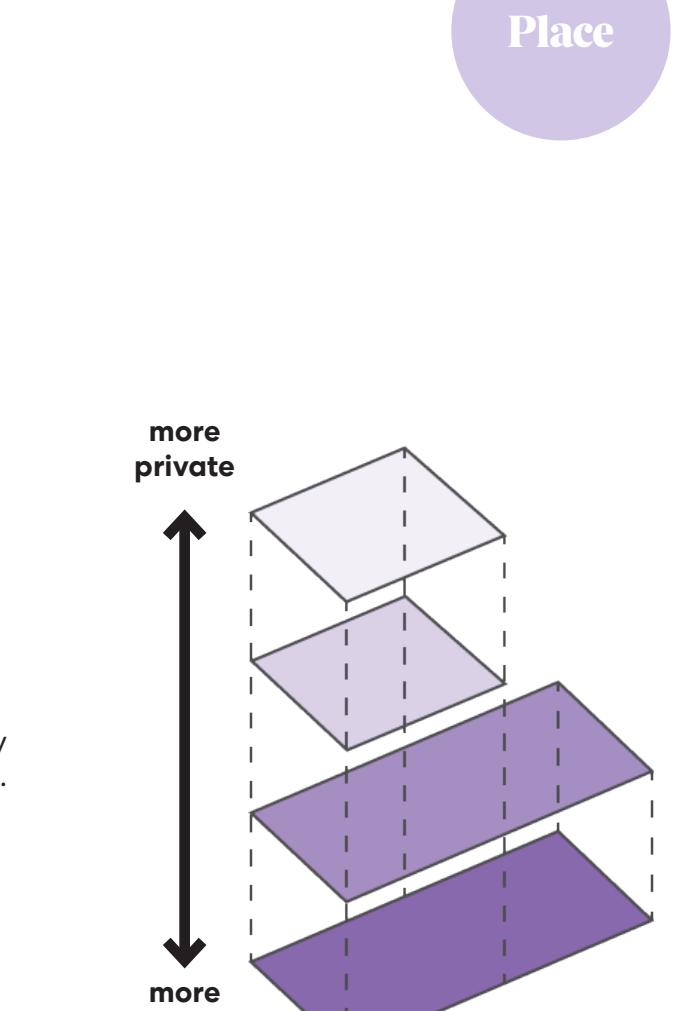
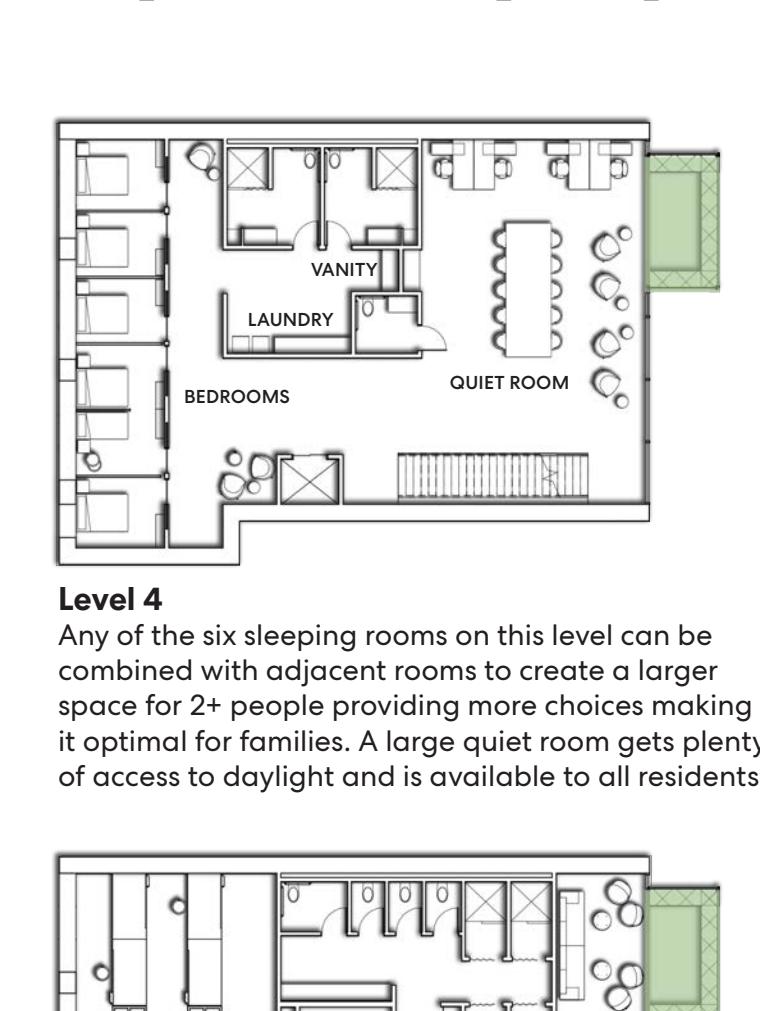
**Favorite part about Common Ground:** Bleeker walks around the neighborhood with the residents.

## Food to fuel



"These roots are literally creating new energy"  
—Aniyah

## A place for people



Place

