By some estimates, the United States has more than 300 million square feet of vacant strip malls, much of which is located in those already demolished. Strip Mall Farm House is a speculative project that reimagines the under-utilized strip malls along Western Avenue.

Designers engaged directly with the people of West Ridge and other community groups to focus on addressing the 50th Ward’s greatest needs: affordable housing and community-focused agribusiness.

The 50th Ward has an ethnically and religiously diverse population, including first-generation immigrants from India, Africa, and the Middle East. This diversity contributes to the highest number of food-related businesses per capita in the city. With the aid of advanced vertical farming technology, the Ward is positioned to optimize urban spaces for growing many different agricultural products.

This proposal repurposes these under-utilized strip malls into community-led urban farms and markets. Density is further increased along these major streets with the installation of modular, “micro-unit” high rises that provide affordable housing.

DESIGN STRIP MALL
FARM HOUSE

SOLOMON
CORDWELL BUENZ
WARD 50
Carmel Place was one of the first modular micro-unit apartment projects built in New York City. Located in Manhattan, the 55-unit building was completed in 2016. Its numerous amenities include a gym, den, tenant storage, bike storage, laundry and a community room with a pantry that leads onto a roof terrace with city views.

Nearly half of the units are dedicated affordable housing, eight of which are reserved for homeless U.S. veterans. Conceived as four, 11-foot wide “mini towers” of different shades of grey brick, the exterior design recalls the city skyline and the window proportions echo 19th century brownstones. The modular construction system uses 65 individual self-supporting steel prefabricated containers, all of which were made in Brooklyn’s Navy Yard, shipped across the Manhattan Bridge and stacked on top of the foundation and first floor which was built on-site. At the time of its construction, Carmel Place was the tallest project to use this innovative system of prefabricated modular construction.