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FRAMEWORK



Rendering by María Moersen

RESTAURANT AND BAR SPACE AFTER THE PAUSE

“So tired / Tired of waiting / Tired of waiting for you / So tired / Tired of waiting / Tired of waiting for you / I was a lonely soul / I had nobody till I met you / But you keep a-me waiting / All of the time / What can I do?” (from Tired of Waiting, The Kinks)

The COVID-19 global pandemic has not yet ended. A resurgence is possible after this initial tragedy recedes. Perceptions of personal health and safety have changed. How will restaurants and bars reopen? Federal, State and local agencies offer guidance, as have others in private firms and professional organizations. Here are thoughts and illustrations on the key issues pertaining to design, operations and profitability.



RESTAURANT AND BAR SPACE AFTER THE PAUSE

About the coronavirus crisis, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio stated, “I have to be honest about the fact that we do not expect this to go quickly, and I wish we did, but we don’t.”

He could have been addressing the specific complexities of returning to the 26,642 restaurants listed by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Of this number 10,625 are in Manhattan, 6,646 are in Brooklyn, 5,999 in Queens, 2,396 in the Bronx and 976 on Staten Island. As defined by New York State Liquor Authority license possession, there are approximately 10,000 bars in New York City.



GUIDANCE AND REGULATIONS

The National Restaurant Association has written design strategies for restaurants reopening: <https://restaurant.org/articles/news/design-strategies-for-restaurants-reopening>. (6/12/20)

NYS Distancing and Occupancy Restrictions limit occupancy to “no more than 50% of the maximum occupancy for a particular area as set by the certificate of occupancy, exclusive of employees.”

For exterior space NYS rules say “outdoor capacity is limited to the number of tables that can be safely and appropriately arranged such that each table is a minimum of six feet away from another.”



KEY ISSUES IN RESTAURANT AND BAR DESIGN

The introductory pages which follow include 12 areas of consideration including extended hours, expanded space, exterior and interior seating, materials, bathrooms, and circulation.

Subsequent images reflect a case-study analysis done with the Black Rabbit Bar, located at 91 Greenpoint Avenue, in Greenpoint, Brooklyn.

“We are continuously evaluating activities that can be safely reopened, and today we are adding outdoor seating at restaurants to phase two.”
Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, 6/3/20



RESTAURANT AND BAR SPACE AFTER THE PAUSE

The pages that follow look at a dozen issues.
Generically, at other bars and restaurants:

1. Extended Hours
2. Expanded Space
3. Street Seats
4. Permeable Walls
5. Canopies
6. Signage

In Greenpoint, at the Black Rabbit Bar:

7. TedTalk Sidewalk
8. Rear Garden
9. Side Tables
10. Side Rail
11. Booths
12. Street Closing



1. EXTENDED HOURS

Consider extending the hours of operation so as to expand the number of potential bar or restaurant customers while maintaining the 6' social distance in the existing space.

Key issues in thinking about changing legal hours of operation for include:

- Keep kitchen open later for one more seating
- NYC doesn't sleep so needs 24/7 bars
- Opening earlier generates lunch business
- Opening earlier hosts new work habits



2. EXPANDED SPACE

Consider expansion of the current space by short-term rentals of adjacent storefront if available or second-floor residential unit. Clearly the extra cost has to be justified by revenues.

Key issues in thinking about additional space are:

- Cost of renting the space and fitting it out
- Municipal regulations about occupancy
- Controlling placement to maintain separation
- Assuring that sidewalk path is not obstructed



3. STREET SEATS

Consider expanding out onto the street, either by a temporary taking of parking places through a “street seats” program or by a more permanent de-mapping or designation similar to play streets.

Key issues in adding tables on the street include:

- Municipal regulations pertaining to street seats
- Protection of restaurant customers from cars
- Controlling placement to maintain separation
- Assuring service pathway is not obstructed



4. PERMEABLE WALLS

Consider integrating sidewalk tables into the life of the restaurant by expanding the size of front façade window openings. Merging inside and out helps make eating on the sidewalk more attractive.

Key issues in regard to adding sidewalk tables are:

- Municipal regulations about sidewalk seating
- Making the sidewalk tables attractive
- Controlling placement to maintain separation
- Assuring that sidewalk path is not obstructed



5. CANOPIES

Consider adding canopies and perimeter definition to the sidewalk terrace dining area to better protect and delineate the placement and separation of the outdoor seating.

Key issues in protecting outdoor tables include:

- Municipal regulations about sidewalk awnings
- Assuring safety of wait staff movement
- Controlling placement to maintain separation
- Assuring that sidewalk path is not obstructed



6. SIGNAGE

Consider using temporary signage to both attract restaurant goers into the space, and to help delineate areas of outdoor seating. Sign messages can change to convey news, regulations or humor.

Key issues in regard to adding entry signage are:

- Municipal regulations pertaining to passage
- Protection of customers seated outside
- Sign placement as divider for area separation
- Welcoming sign tone and message



7. TED TALK SIDEWALK

Consider maximizing the use of the front sidewalk to both establish the identity of the interior space and to add tables and bleacher (Ted Talk) seating for people to eat and drink.

Key issues for best use of the sidewalk include:

- Adding seating as an extension of the facade
- Making arrival attractive to walkers and bicyclists
- Controlling placement to maintain separation
- Assuring that pathway is not an infringement



Rendering by María Moersen

8. REAR GARDEN

Consider maximizing the seating outdoors in the protected rear garden while maintaining the 6' social distance. Adaptively re-use existing seating in four separated green snugs, defined by plantings.

Key issues about tables in a rear garden include:

- Enforcing regulations about posted occupancy
- Adjusting position and length of tables
- Controlling placement to maintain separation
- Assuring that pathway is not an infringement



9. SIDE TABLES

In some narrow bars and restaurants, like the Black Rabbit, side wall booths have partitions and swinging doors that start to separating parties and assure privacy. These can be augmented.

Key issues in regard to booths or 'snugs' are:

- Enforcing regulations about posted occupancy
- Adjusting table position and adding dividers
- Controlling placement to maintain separation
- Assuring that pathway is not an infringement



10. BOOTHS

The “snugs” are very attractive, consistent with the character of the bar. Retaining them is essential. Consider how the dividing partitions can be made higher and impermeable with appropriate finishes.

Key issues in thinking about the booths are:

- How to be able to use all of them concurrently
- How to reinforce the sense of separation
- How to elevate the separating partitions
- How to make the dividers solid but transparent



11. SIDE RAIL

A major problem in many narrow restaurants and bars will be the path of movement, essentially a double-loaded corridor. A leaning rail may need to temporarily replace parts of the millwork ledge.

Key issues in thinking about narrow spaces are:

- Enforcing regulations about posted occupancy
- Replacing ledge with sectional leaning rail
- Controlling sections to maintain social distance
- Assuring the path of movement aids separation



12. STREET CLOSING

Greenpoint Avenue is a busy street, and parking is always in high demand. We nonetheless suggest reaching out to the Brooklyn office of NYC DOT to claim one or more of the parking spaces shown.

Key issues in regard to seating use of a busy street:

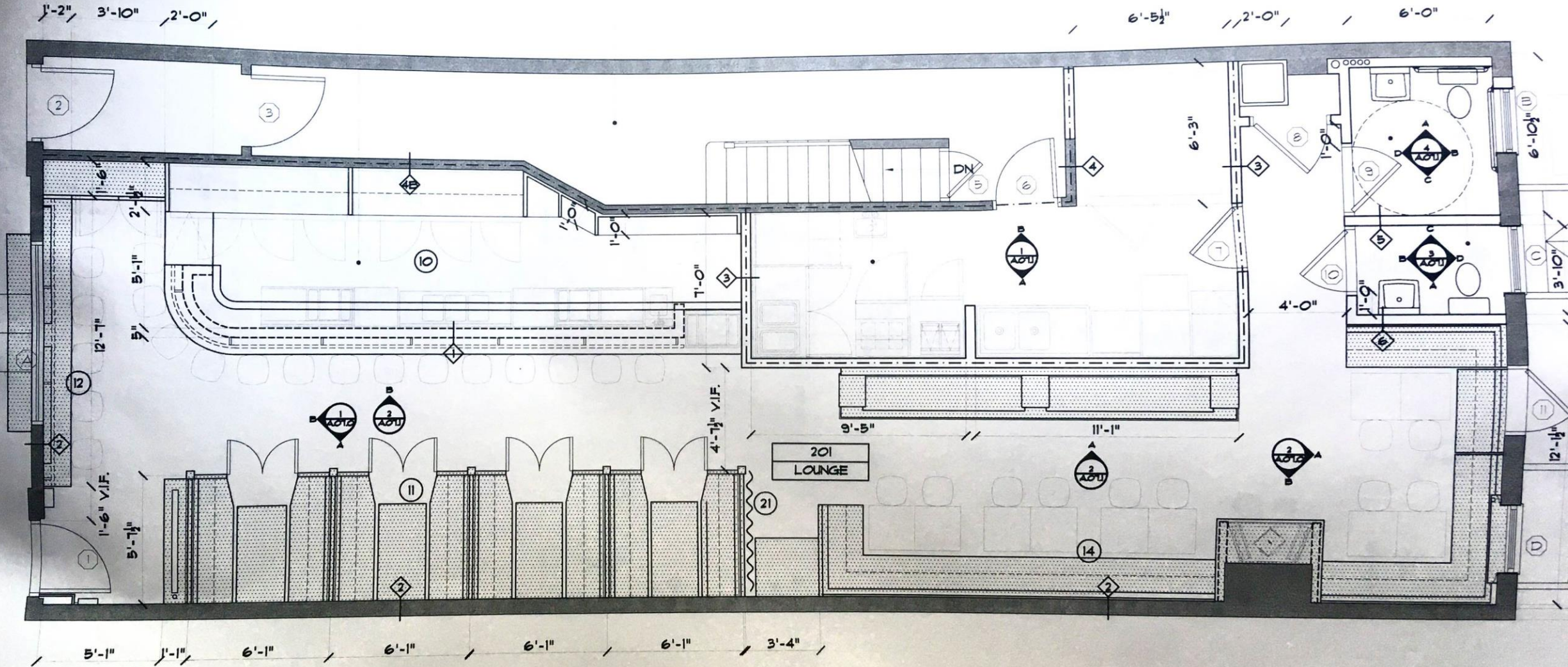
- How has vehicular traffic diminished lately?
- How to get CB1 support for use of the road?
- How to get revocable consent fees waived?
- How to assure and heat year-round use?



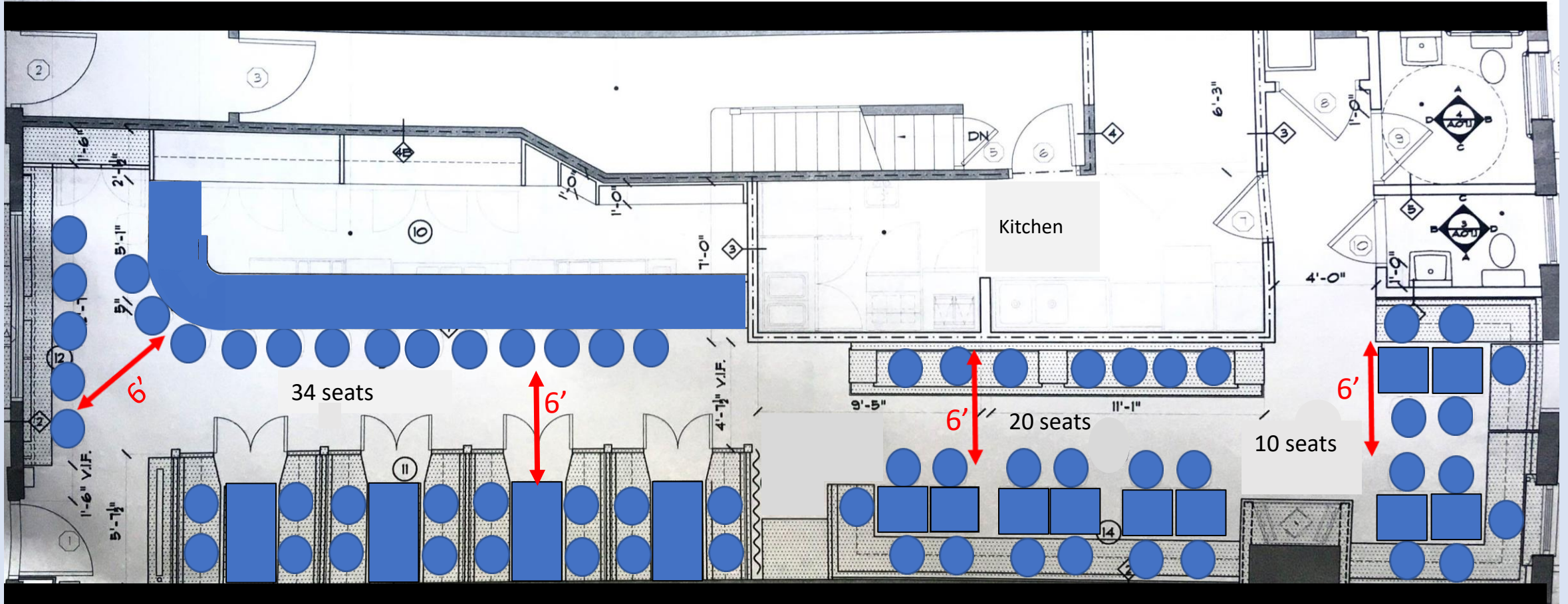
CASE STUDY



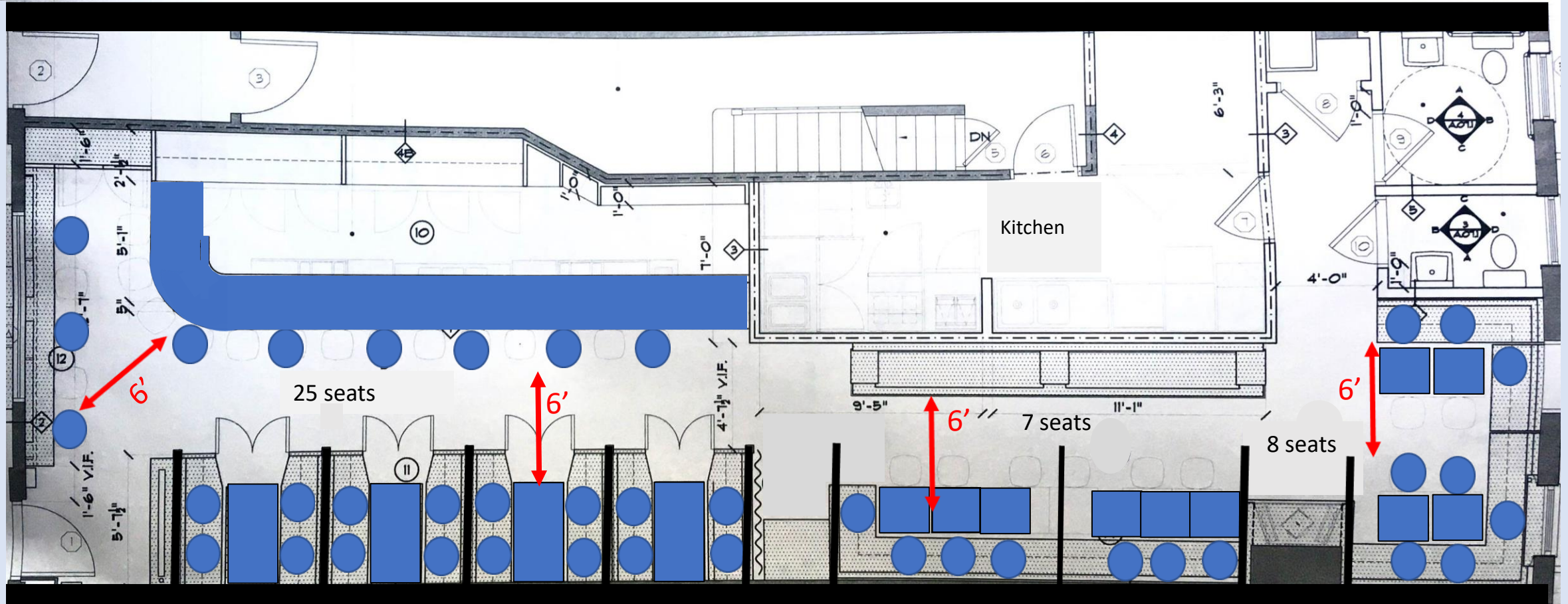
13. PLAN



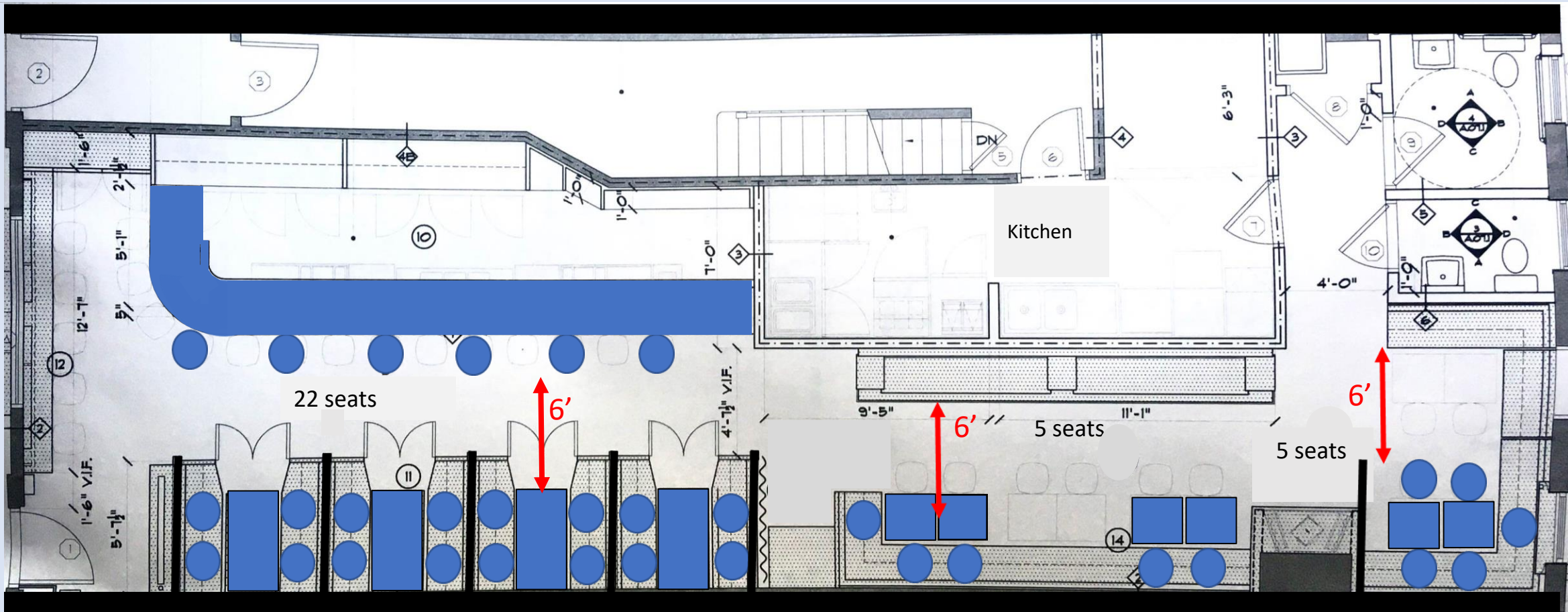
14. EXISTING SEATING PLAN (64 SEATS)



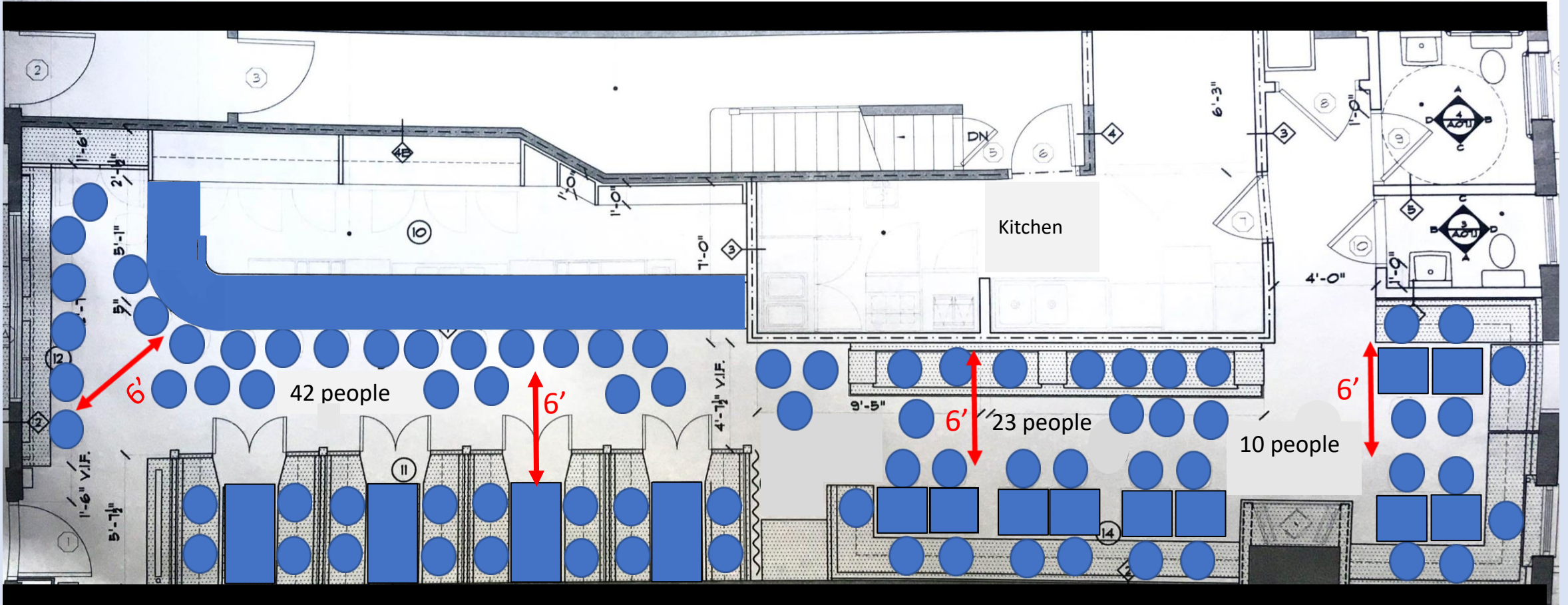
15. EXISTING SEATING PLAN: 64 SEATS – 24 SEATS = 40 SEATS (62.5%)



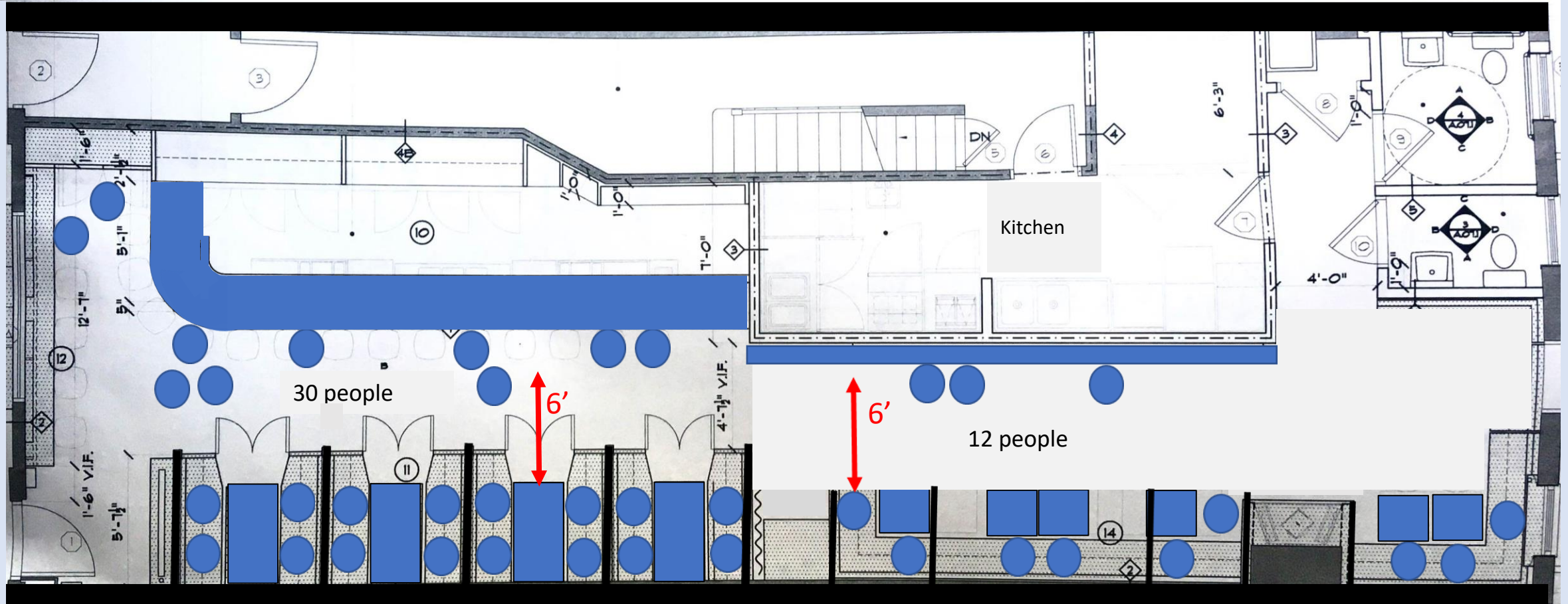
16. REVISED SEATING PLAN: 64 SEATS – 32 SEATS = 32 SEATS (50%)



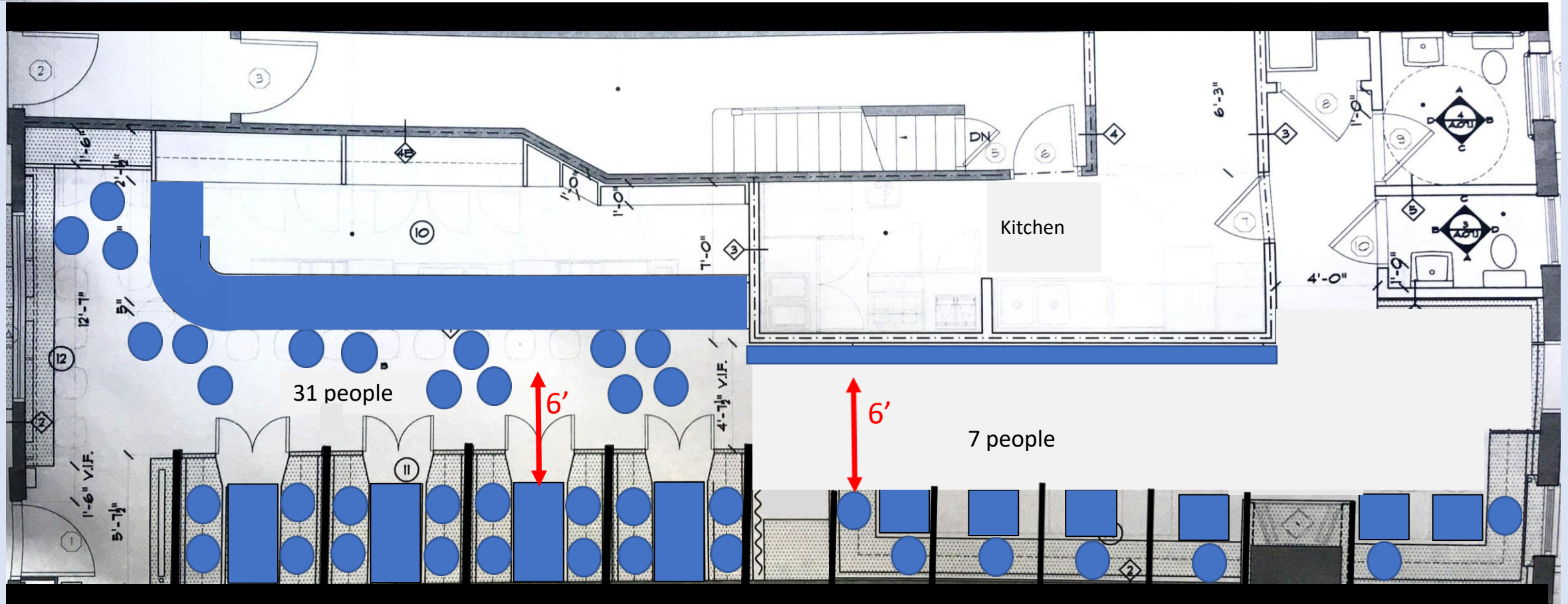
17. EXISTING SEATING PLAN WITH STANDEES (POSTED OCCUPANCY: 75 PEOPLE)



18. REVISED OCCUPANCY PLAN WITH 25 SEATS AND 13 STANDEES (38 PEOPLE)



19. REVISED OCCUPANCY PLAN WITH 23 SEATS AND 15 STANDEES (38 PEOPLE)



Outside

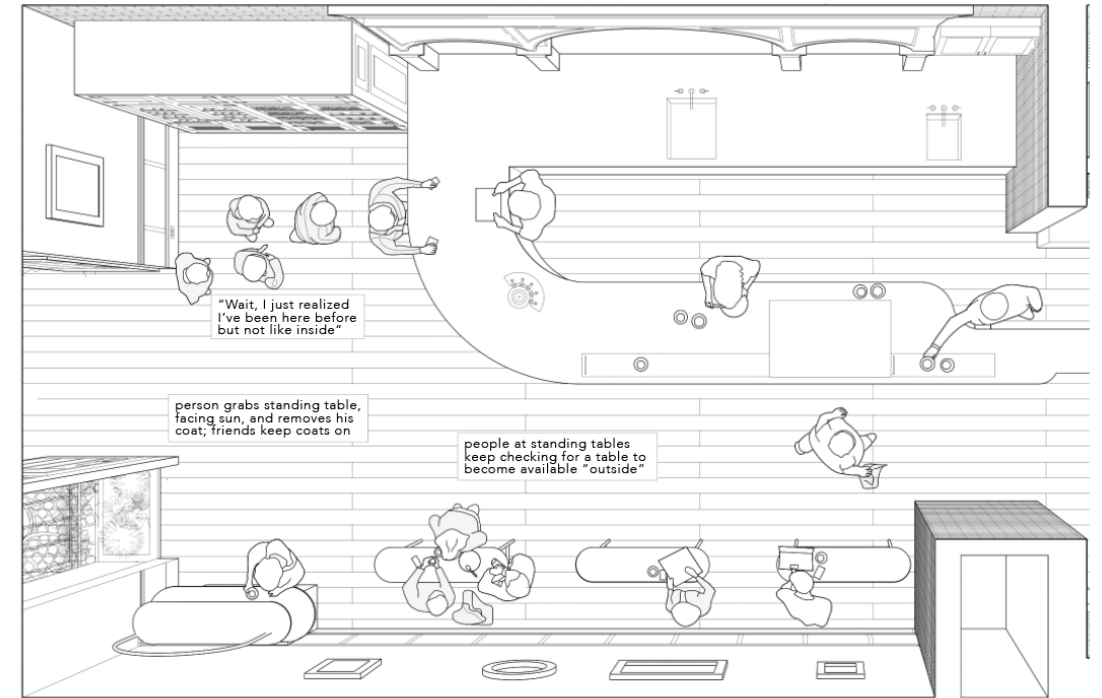
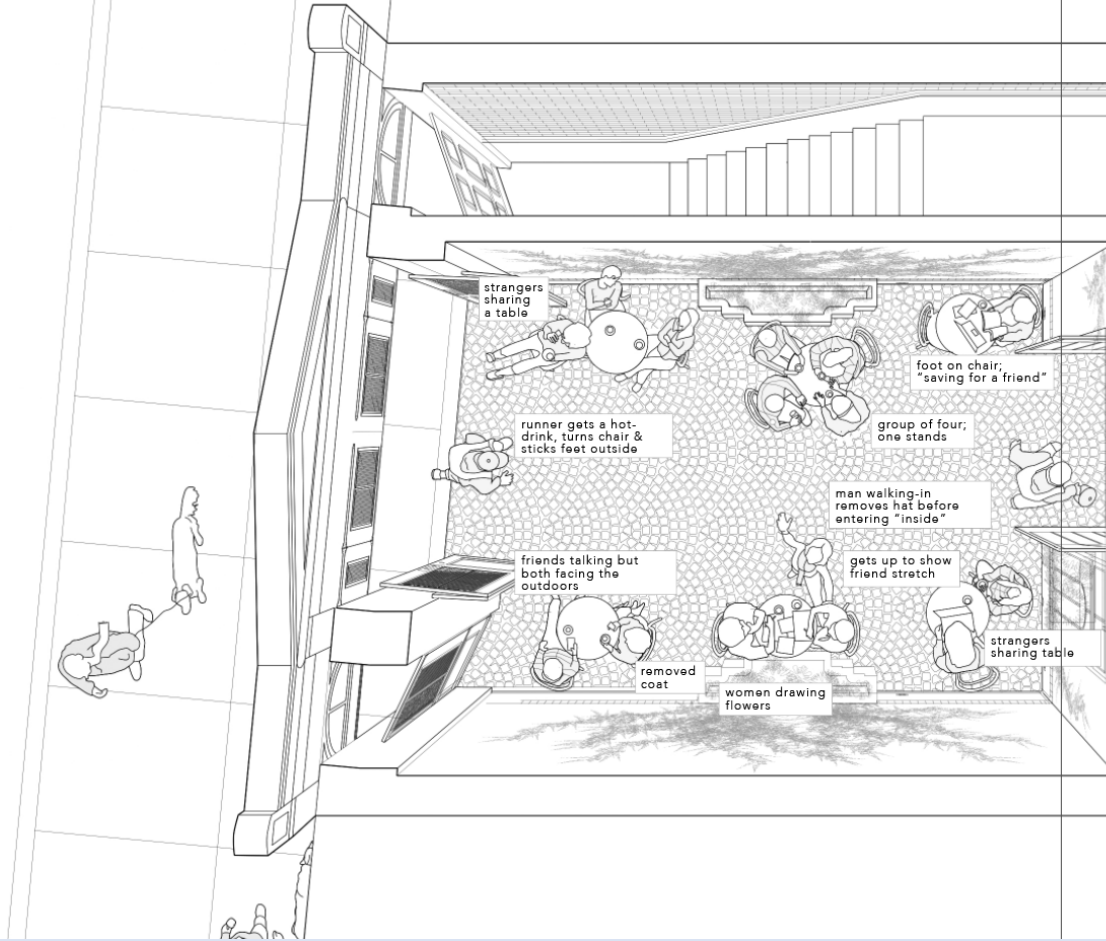
- 52° Fahrenheit
- 88 dB (it is windy and someone is unloading a truck)
- 3510-3800 Lux

Outside in

- Consistent 62-66° (all but one person keeps coat on)
- 74 dB (talking & music)
- 175-188 Lux (2600 Lux under plant lights, and all but two people turned chairs to face sun)

Inside, front

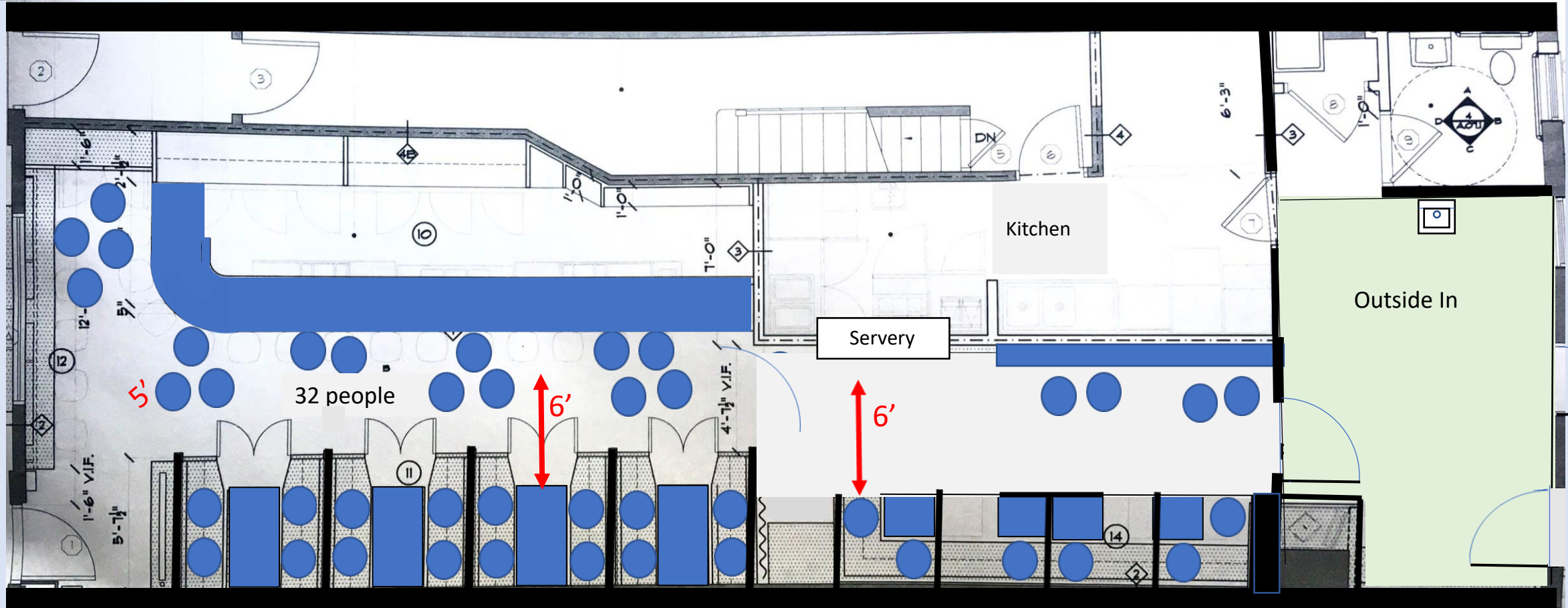
- Consistent 72.3°
- 75-80 dB (music + espresso machine/ 65 dB no music)
- 92.8-94.4 Lux



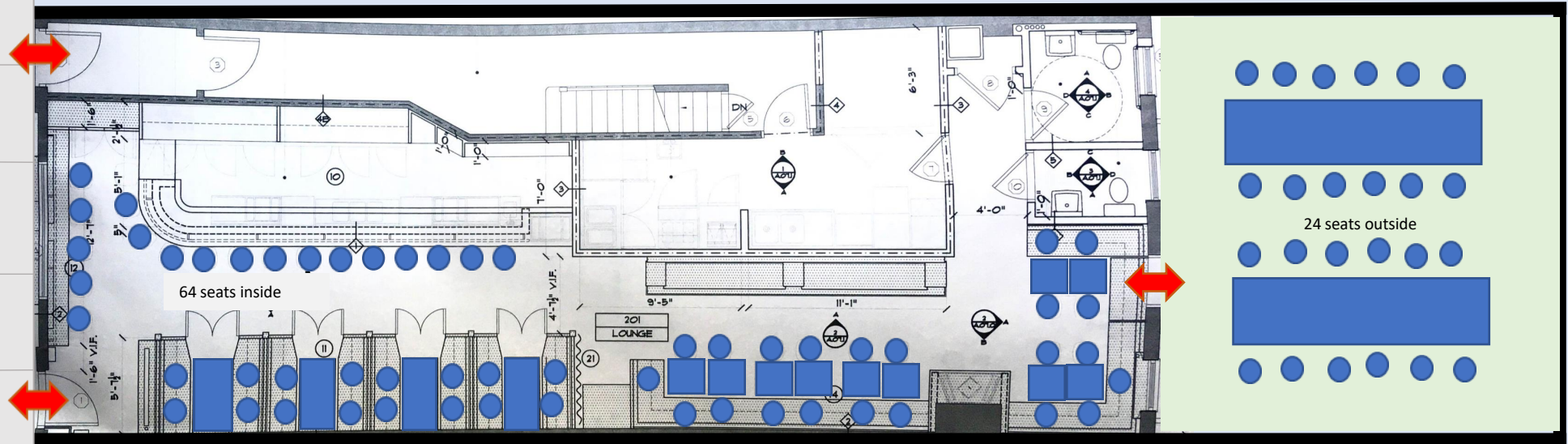
© María Moersen

The floor plan illustrates a restaurant layout with two main dining areas. The left area, labeled '27 people', features a long blue U-shaped bar and a row of high-top stools with circular tables. The right area, labeled '18 people', has a long blue bar and a row of high-top stools with circular tables. A kitchen is located between the two dining areas. The entrance is marked 'Inside Out' and 'Outside In'. Red double-headed arrows indicate a 6-foot distance between the bar and the high-top stools in both dining areas. The plan includes various numbered callouts (1-14) and dimensions (e.g., 1'-0", 4'-1 1/2", 6'-3").

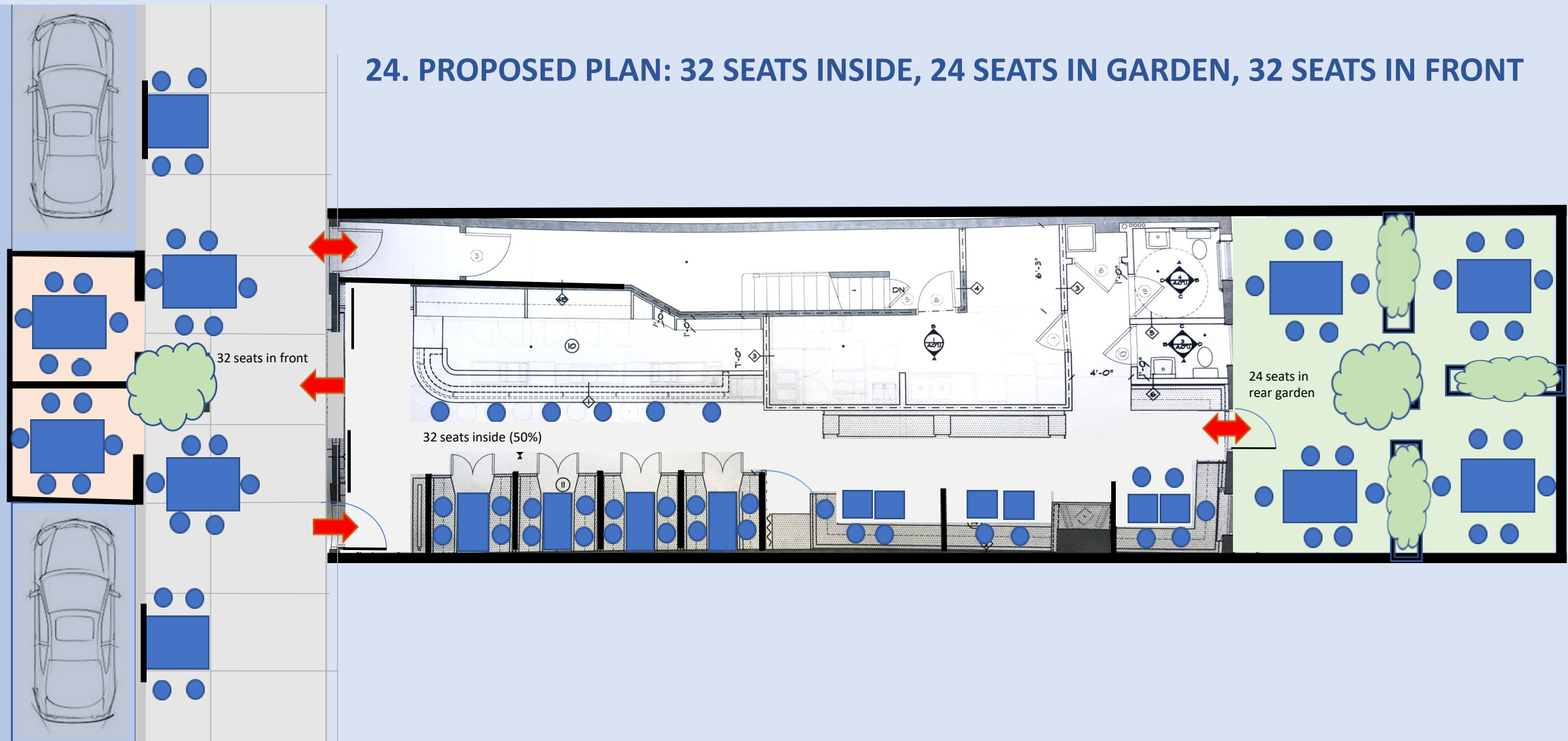
22. REVISED PLAN WITH INSIDE/OUTSIDE SPACE AT REAR



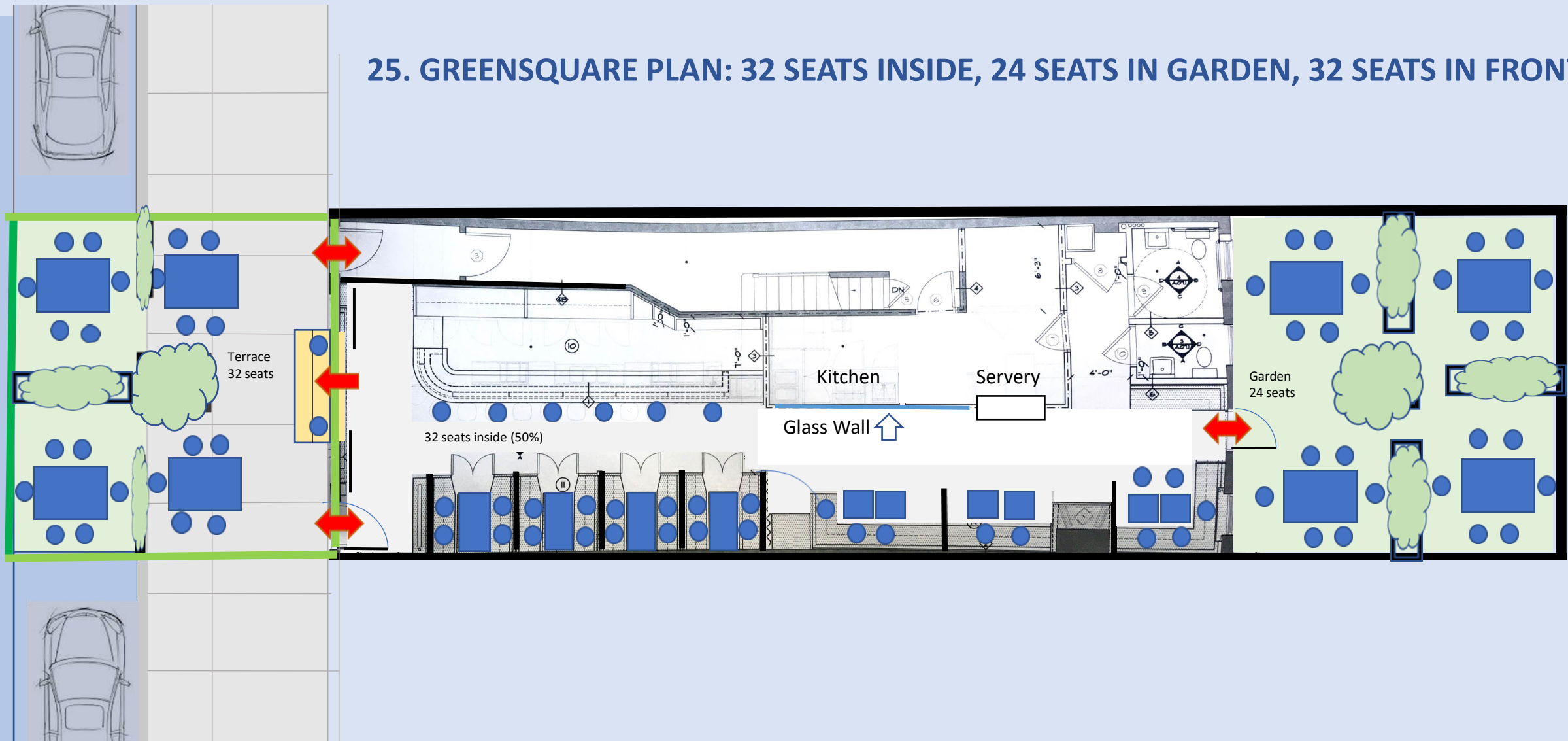
23. EXISTING PLAN: 64 SEATS INSIDE AND 24 SEATS (ON BENCHES) OUTSIDE



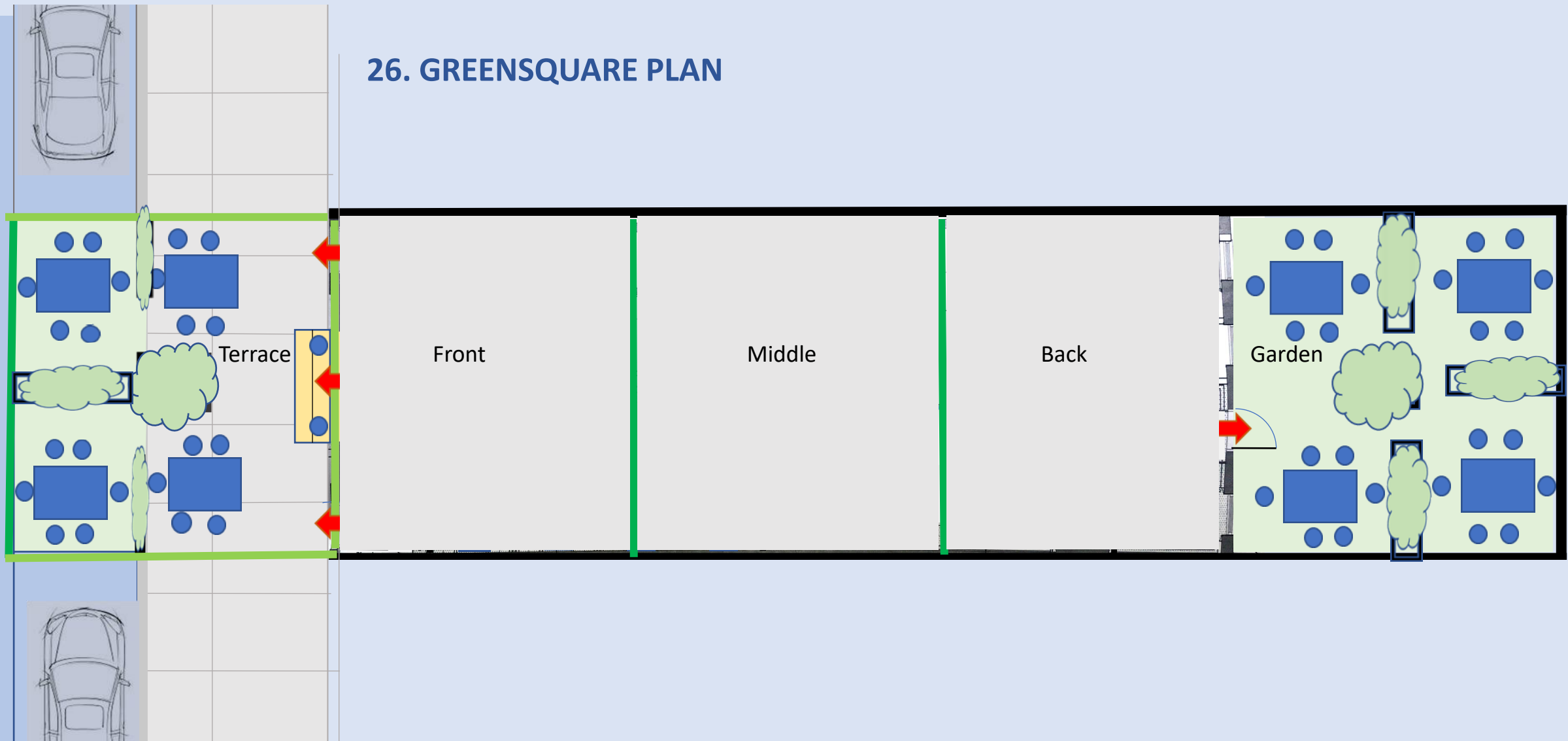
24. PROPOSED PLAN: 32 SEATS INSIDE, 24 SEATS IN GARDEN, 32 SEATS IN FRONT



25. GREENSQUARE PLAN: 32 SEATS INSIDE, 24 SEATS IN GARDEN, 32 SEATS IN FRONT



26. GREENSQUARE PLAN



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would especially like to thank the founders and owners of the Black Rabbit Bar, Kent and Anne Lanier, for their cooperation, insight and good spirits. Visit them at 91 Greenpoint Ave. in Greenpoint, Brooklyn.

Testimonial in the New York Times:

“I miss late-night drinking at the Black Rabbit in Greenpoint, with its ‘snugs,’ deep wooden booths with swinging doors that promise privacy.”

Megan Abbott, NYT, May 21, 2020

What is New York Without New York Bars

