

SUNLIT OASIS

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2024 Bachelors of Fine Arts of Interior Design Senior Thesis



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RESEARCH





THESIS STATEMENT

My senior thesis is about creating a community for those senior citizens who live an active lifestyle. The baby boomer generation (born 1946 – 1964) is the current senior citizen population making up about 20% of the U.S. population. This generation is different from previous generations for multiple reasons. Baby boomers are choosing to work past retirement age, encouraging “unretirement”. They also have different priorities than those before them. They focus on being active and leading a healthy lifestyle to increase and enjoy their longevity of life. Though there is a significant number of people who fall into this category there are also those who are unable to live that lifestyle or don’t participate in it voluntarily. With the baby boomers setting a new precedent for senior citizens, it is highlighting issues of how senior centers are not benefiting their customer, as they had in the past. The focus of senior citizen’s has always been on those who need medical help but there is also a group of seniors that need attention; physically and socially. Without the resources promoting a healthy and active lifestyle for seniors, there are feelings of depression, isolation, and loneliness, which, on their own, lead to numerous health problems. Creating a space where seniors can gather and meet others who are in the same stage of life and live similar lifestyles will be very beneficial.

I chose to do this as my thesis topic because I have seen the effects of this on a personal level with my grandma. My grandma lived in an over 55 community but never felt like she truly found her community. Being a baby boomer, she strives to live a very active and healthy lifestyle. In her over 55 community located in the Inland Empire, there were not many resources she felt fit her overall goals.

DATA ANALYSIS

As people age, the feelings of **isolation and loneliness** can begin to arise. Aging adults can lose their partners or friends to illness, their own children have families and relocate, or simply they find themselves living alone in a new location. When someone experiences these continuous feelings, it can cause detrimental health effects. Currently **“3 in 10 seniors live alone”** making being physically alone a prominent issue. Though approximately **“43% of seniors regularly experience loneliness”**, there is also a large amount who experience social isolation which is different. Social isolation is defined by the National Council on Aging as “a state in which the individual lacks a sense of belonging socially, lacks engagement with others, has a minimal number of social contacts, and [is] deficient in fulfilling and quality relationships”. They also define loneliness as a “state of solitude or being alone”. BMC Public Health state that **“50% of individuals aged over 60 are at risk of social isolation”**.

Senior citizens with a **limited social life can create health concerns such as depression, anxiety, cardiac failure, Alzheimer's/dementia and can even lead to premature death.** A research report from Brigham-Young University compared loneliness and its health effects to those of cigarettes and alcohol, “**negatively loneliness impacts people's physical health—as much a predictor of early death as smoking up to 15 cigarettes daily or drinking more than six alcoholic beverages per day.** Researchers have found that **loneliness is even worse for a senior's health than being obese or physically inactive**”. These health problems can be easily avoided if there was a way to foster a community within the senior citizen population to reduce the feelings of loneliness and isolation. In this community there would also be benefits of being active to reduce physical deterioration and creating inactive and sedentary routines.



THE CLIENT

My clients for this space are over 55 communities and town senior centers. I investigated a few over 55 residential communities such as “The Colony” located in Murrieta, CA and “Leisure World Seal Beach”, located in Seal Beach, CA, while also looking into senior centers for towns like the “Murrieta Senior Center”. These places focus on the over 55 community and provide a few amenities for the active lifestyle.





THE USER

My targeted users are “active adults”. Active adults are “adults who are capable of managing daily household and personal care tasks on their own without any support from aide or trained healthcare professional”. These active adults tend to be 65 or older. These individuals are interested in living a social, active, and healthy lifestyle that allows them to sharpen their minds and increase their lifespan. The space will provide multiple opportunities for seniors to find connections and a sense of community. There are many seniors who struggle with finding a purpose in their later years when they don’t have a full-time job, a spouse, or small kids to take care of anymore.

USER QUESTIONNAIRE

Donna Fiorini (Grandmother)

Q: Are you a baby boomer?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you consider yourself an active adult?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you currently live in an over 55 community? Have you in the past?

A: Recently just moved out within the last year.

Q: Do you visit your town's senior center?

A: No, because there is nothing there that interests me.

Q: Do you live alone?

A: Yes. (She spends some time with family across country for a few months out of the year.)

Q: Does your family live close?

A: Part of my family does, part of my family does not.

Q: Do you find yourself feeling socially isolated?

A: Sometimes.

Q: What makes you feel that way?

A: Within the last few years, I moved to a different part of the country away from all of my friends. I also am single which makes it harder to socialize.

Q: What are some spaces that you find brings the most people together?

A: Sport Courts. Pickle ball, Tennis and Bocce. Bocce always has people drinking and eating together.

Q: What is a space that you feel out of place in but want to be a part of i.e. gym or pool?

A: A bar. It feels like it is always just couples.

Q: What is needed for you to maintain your goals of being an active adult?

A: Having a community that makes you feel welcome. Meeting like-minded people and having neighborhood like activities to participate in.

Q: What age range would you be most comfortable with?

A: 50-70

Q: What are the positives and negatives living in an over 55+ community?

A: Positives:

-THE LIBRARY!

-There was a wide variety of activities offered.

-Organized events monthly, ex. Live bands by the pool.

A: Negatives:

-Some of the activities I wanted to participate in I did not feel welcome to. It felt like the groups were being controlled by a group of people who were there before me and did not accept newcomers.

-Since COVID the community has had a hard time arranging activities and trips due to cost.

-Lots of cliques with clubs and they were very stern with their rules.

-Being surrounded by seniors made you more aware that you are a senior.

-Lots of rules throughout the whole community. Ex. Guest visiting.

Q: Which amenities did you tend to gravitate towards in the community?

A: Pool, library, music and dance, pickleball, bocce, BBQ area, and salon.

Q: What are things that are offered that you do NOT like to do?

A: Movies, Karaoke. Nowhere had a place to eat. Canyon Lake (a gated community in Riverside County) had a restaurant/bar that I wish we had.

Q: What is your favorite way to be active? (Physically, socially etc.)

A: Physically- walking Socially- dancing

Q: Do you enjoy being outdoors?

A: YES!

Q: Any other things you would like to share?

A: "It might just be me, but I found living in an age restricted area depressing. It's like you are sitting there waiting to die. I miss hearing children; it was too quiet. I'll sit and watch TV all day when I can't do anything else."

USER QUESTIONNAIRE

Linda Ortega

Q: Are you a baby boomer?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you consider yourself an active adult?

A: Somewhat.

Q: Do you currently live in an over 55 community? Have you in the past?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you visit your town's senior center?

A: No.

Q: Do you live alone?

A: Yes.

Q: Does your family live close?

A: No.

Q: Do you find yourself feeling socially isolated?

A: Yes.

Q: What makes you feel that way?

A: My family and friends are so far away.

Q: What are some spaces that you find brings the most people together?

A: Concerts & Fairs.

Q: What is a space that you feel out of place in but want to be a part of i.e. gym or pool?

A: Gym.

Q: What is needed for you to maintain your goals of being an active adult?

A: Someone to motivate me.

Q: What age range would you be most comfortable with?

A: 50-70

Q: What are the positives and negatives living in an over 55+ community?

A: Majority are over 70.

Q: Which amenities did you tend to gravitate towards in the community?

A: Not sure.

Q: What are things that are offered that you do NOT like to do?

A: Indoor activities.

Q: What is your favorite way to be active? (Physically, socially etc.)

A: Socially, 5k's, outdoor activities.

Q: Do you enjoy being outdoors?

A: Yes.

USER QUESTIONNAIRE

Jeri Copeland, The Murrieta Senior Center

Q: What are some spaces that you find brings the most people together?

A: We offer a billiard room with two pool table, computer lab, fitness room, and several classrooms that we hold classes in. Yoga, Chair Yoga, chair exercise, painting, crafting, dance classes, and more. We also serve lunch everyday and we get about 85 people on average per day.

Q: On average, how many people do you get on the daily to participate in your activities/events?

A: We get an average of 150 people a day depending on what activities we have. Pretty much all of our classes are at max capacity.

Q: What type of seniors are the most involved in events?

A: Our facility is geared for seniors 50 years and older so we get seniors with all different capabilities. We try and have something for everyone.

Q: What activities do you find to be the most popular among active adults? What are the least popular?

A: Most popular: All of our exercises do great, the fitness room, crafting, and they love to play games. Least favorite would be anything after 4 p.m.. We periodically offer doctor talks and we don't always get a great turn out.

Q: Are there regulars that you have noticed over time?

A: We opened the Senior Center 19 years ago and we have several seniors that have been regulars since then. I would say that the majority of seniors that come to the center are regulars.

Q: What is the age range of the community that you serve?

A: 50 years and older



CASE STUDY 1

THE COLONY

The Colony is an over 55 residential community located in the Inland Empire in Murrieta, California. They offer over 1,500 single family, residential style homes for anyone 55 and older. The Colony has an activities director and travel coordinator who arrange the events for the residents. They offer a few types of interest groups for areas such as cards, crafts, or fitness. On the property, residents have access to a golf course, restaurant, tennis and pickleball courts, swimming pool, hair salon and a fitness center. These amenities are only for the Colony residents, except for the golf course, which is open to the public. Residents are allowed to host guests in some areas of the community.



CASE STUDY 2

THE MURRIETA SENIOR CENTER

The Murrieta Senior Center is a government building that is open to the public for senior citizens through a free membership. The center is only open on weekdays from 8am-4pm. They do not operate on the weekends. The Murrieta Senior Center offers classes and activities on a schedule and with associated fees. The fees range from \$6 to \$30. A few activities they offer are chair exercise, embroidery, dance and pickle ball. There is a lounge, a few multipurpose rooms, a computer lab, billiards room, and fitness room. There are not that many permanent options for the seniors to enjoy. It also would be beneficial if the senior center was open on the weekends. They also offer a few services to the senior citizen community: legal aide, a dial-a-ride service, and senior meals for those who are registered through their program.



LOCATION & SITE





LOCATION

For my thesis project, I have chosen Tucson, Arizona, as the location. My decision was influenced by the desire for a vibrant setting with a low cost of living, warm climate, and comfort for seniors. In my search for a suitable location, I focused on college towns, known for their affordability, diverse communities, abundant entertainment options, job opportunities, and accessibility to healthcare and higher education. Active seniors want to be surrounded by a more youthful energy and so finding a town that encompassed that was important. An article about “active adults” explains that “baby boomers are very resistant to what they see as conventional “senior living.” They don’t want anyone running their lives... they don’t want to live amongst what they view as “a bunch of old people”. For active seniors having a location that was in a warmer climate with the opportunity to be active all year round was important. It also allowed for those who maybe have a second property or visit the warmer areas to escape the winters in other parts of the country.

In my research, I explored the overlap between retirement destinations and the best college towns, leading me to Tucson. Tucson is home to the University of Arizona, which provides an additional layer of appeal for its diverse community and educational opportunities. Tucson is a budget friendly town and full of different entertainment opportunities. It is a city that has a mix of rural, suburban and city life all in one. Historically known as a popular place for retirees, Tucson is evolving into an up-and-coming city. It also has one of the largest populations of baby boomers. The city’s warm climate encourages outdoor activities year-round, with numerous golf courses and hiking trails available.

BUILDING LOCATION

Address: 3530 E Campo Abierto Way

Location: Tucson, AZ 85718

Total Sqft: 12,730

Floors: 1

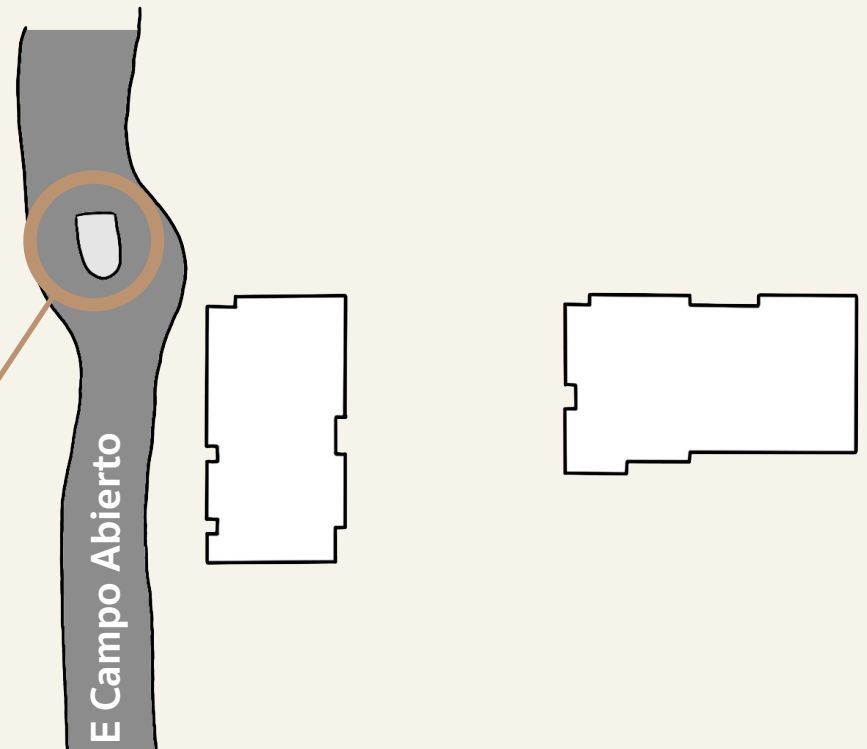
Two Buildings:

Building 1- 7,701 sqft

Building 2- 5,029 sqft

Property Type: Office Building

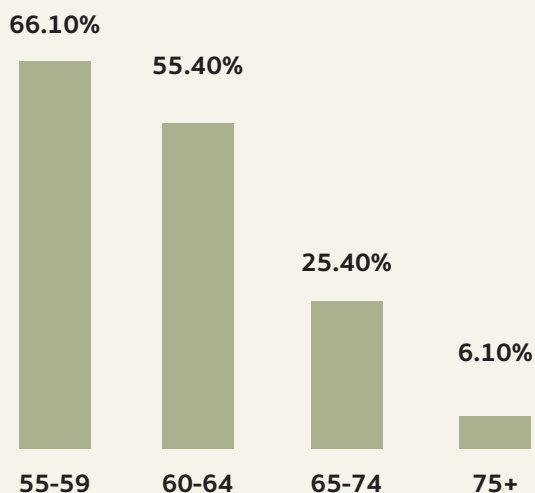
Parking: 47 covered, 27 open, and 2 handicap spaces



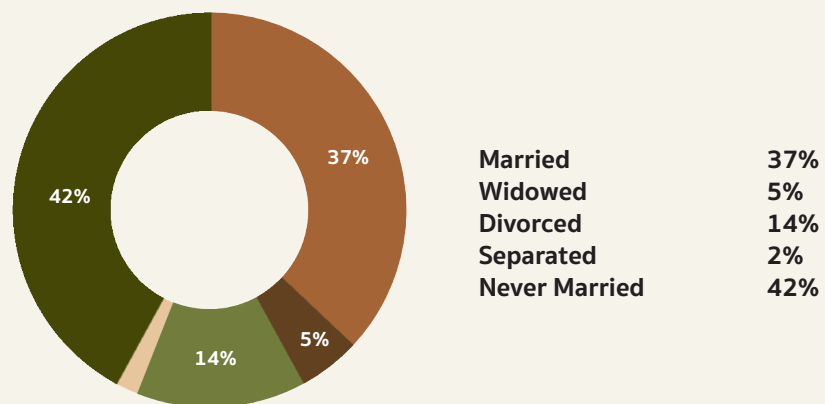
DEMOGRAPHICS FOR TUCSON, AZ

Overall Population: 546,598

<u>Age</u>	<u>Total</u>
65+	15.2% of population
Seniors	79,500
Median Age	34



Age in the Work Force



Marital Status

NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITIES

Hiking Trails

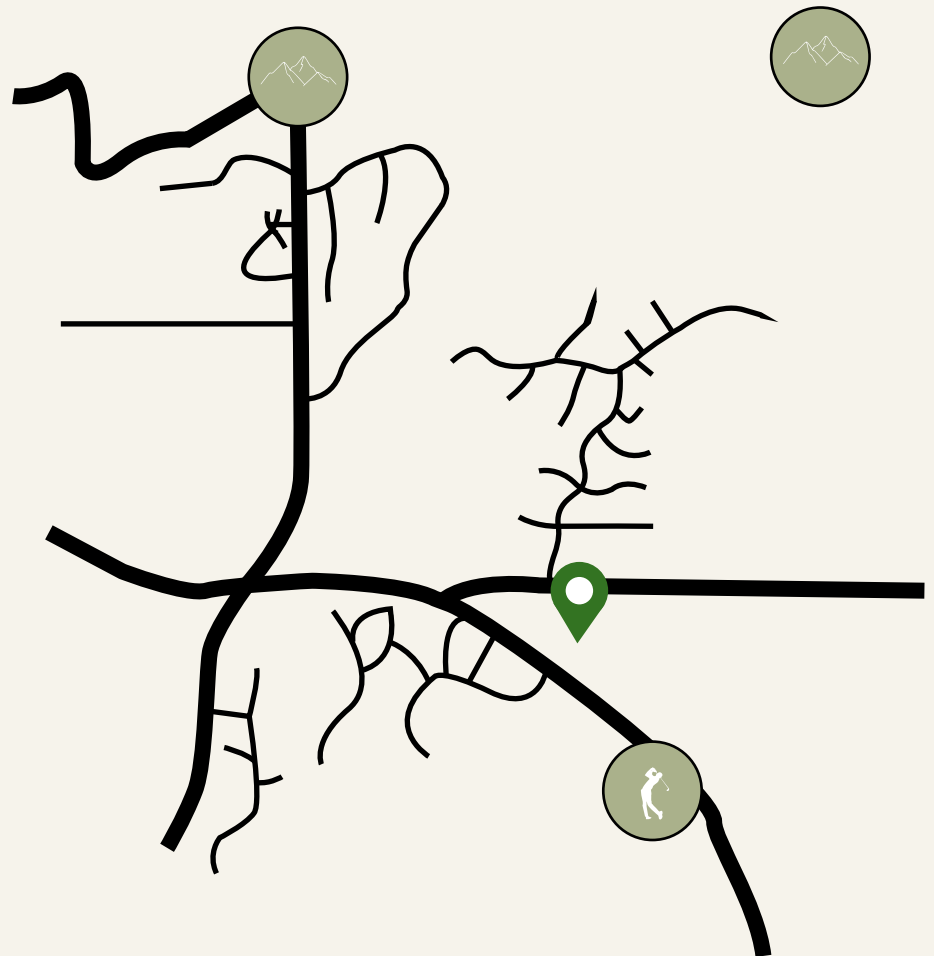
	<u>Distance</u>
Pusch Peak Summit	10.6 mi
Linda Vista Trail	7.5 mi
Campbell Vista Point	1.9 mi
Finger Rock Trailhead	2.2 mi
Pima Canyon Trailhead	4.8 mi

Golf Courses

	<u>Distance</u>
La Palma Country Club	0.7 mi
Skyline Country Club	3.5 mi

Shopping Centers

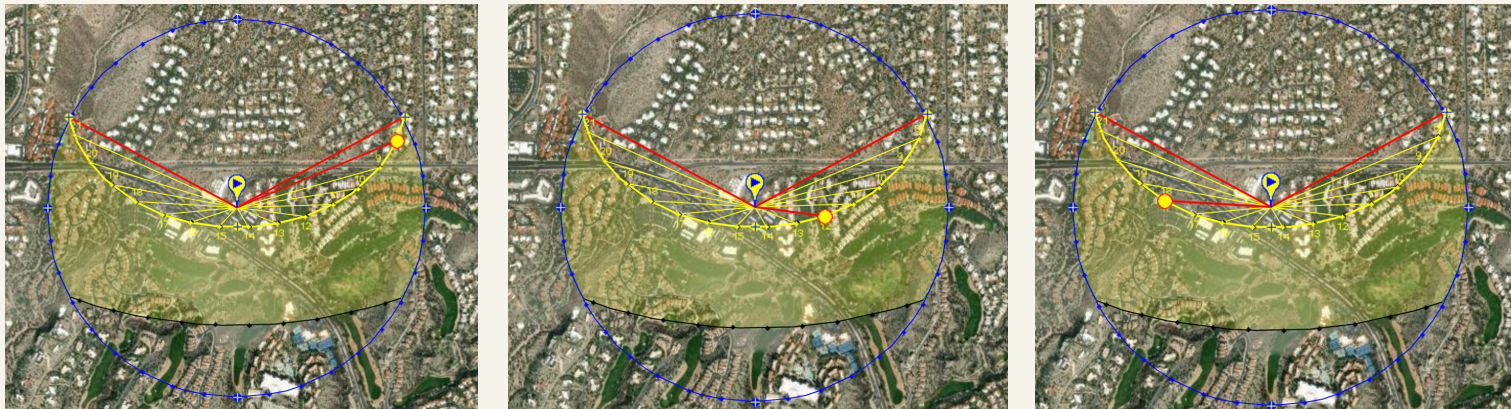
	<u>Distance</u>
Paloma Village Center	0.9 mi
La Encantada Shopping Mall	1.1 mi



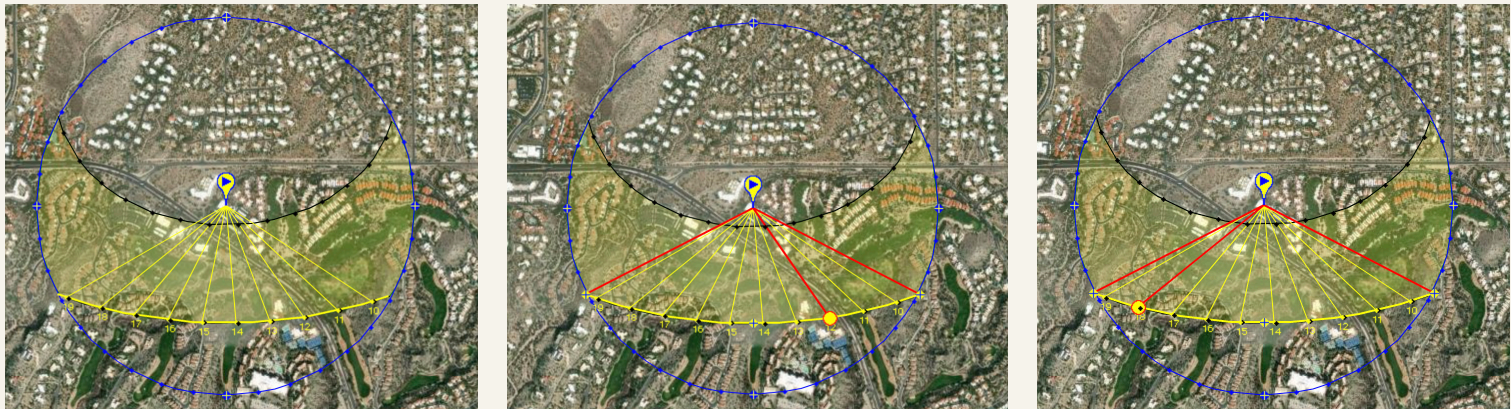
Approximately 9.7 miles away from downtown Tucson.

SOLAR STUDY

Summer Solstice



Winter Solstice



8:00am

12:00pm

6:00pm

CONCEPT





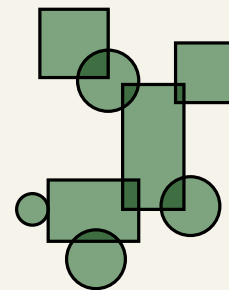
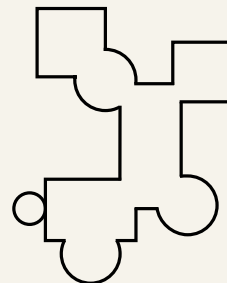
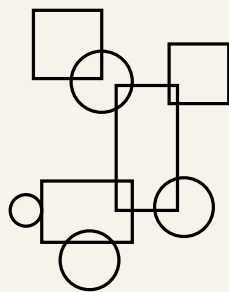
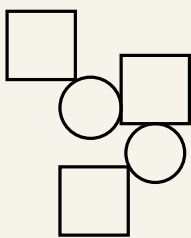
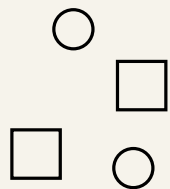
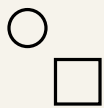
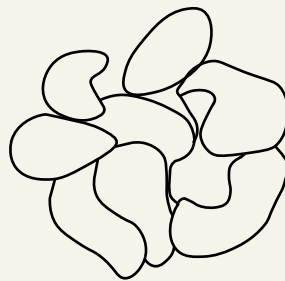
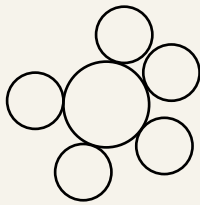
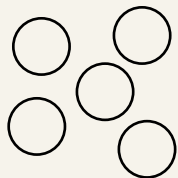
DESIGN APPROACH

The resources were more targeted to those who were interested in relaxed and sedentary activities. Without the emphasis on those matching with her same goal, she felt out of place and experienced social isolation. My grandma is a widow and lives alone, so it is very important for her to be active not only for her physical health but also her mental well-being. Being around older people, it can be easy to get depressed but when there are those who are not sharing the same goals of an active lifestyle. I have seen my grandma go through numerous amounts of effort to try and find people who share the same interest as her but none of it was centrally located. My grandma wants to have the social and active benefits of being in the workforce, without the intense labor and commitment in her retirement. My goal would be to dedicate a space with numerous amenities that encourage active social lifestyles in senior citizens.

My design solution is to create a destination that promotes active wellness among senior citizens. There would be a mixture of spaces that promote physical health, as well as mental and social wellbeing. With the mixture of all of the amenities offered, there would be a place for everyone. My goals for this project are to create a space for the active adults, have a program that promotes physical and social wellbeing and reduce isolation and loneliness that occurs with aging. I want to create a space that fosters the young energy these seniors feel at heart. My space would fulfill an emotional want and a physical need in these seniors' lives.

CONCEPT & DIAGRAMS

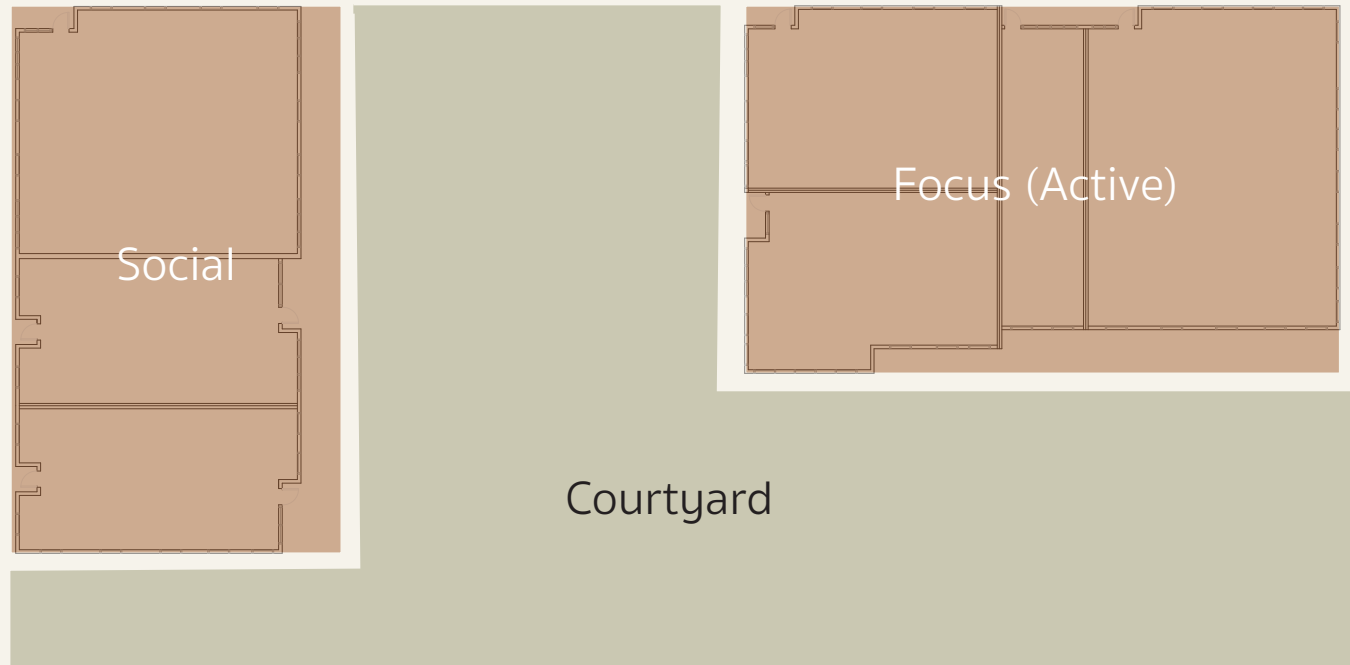
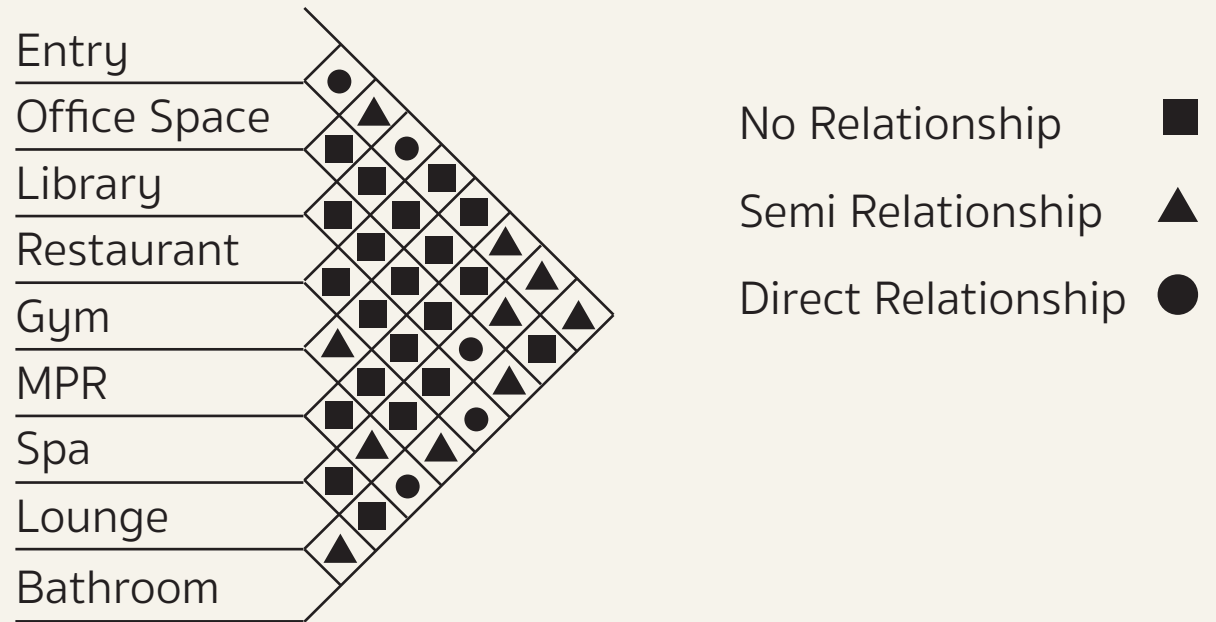
The concept of my space is to focus on the user's experience through the space and how the goal is to be able to build connections through activities they enjoy that promote social, mental and physical well being. Starting off a senior will enter the space alone but immediately be greeted with others in the same situation. With the common interest of an activity these seniors will begin to meet new people and create new connections. Over time they will create new fulfilling bonds and connections that they can leave with.

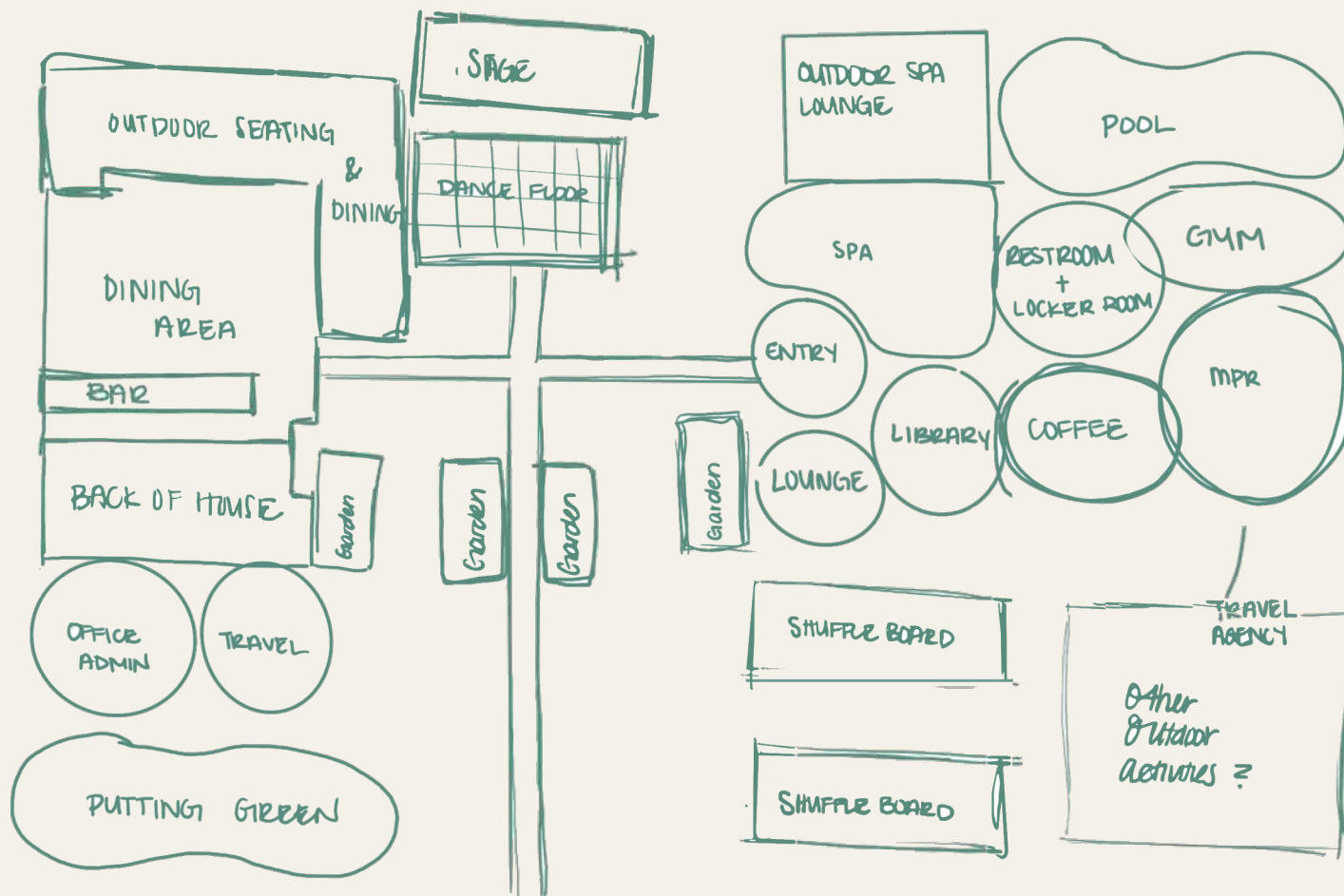


PROGRAMMING

Room Type	Quantity	Area S.F.	Description	Location
Coffee Shop	1	740	Coffee counter & lounge seating.	Indoor
Exercise Room	1	1,000	A gym or group fitness area.	Indoor
Library	1	1,000	Book storage with reading areas throughout.	Indoor
Multi-Purpose Room	1	450	Room for activities such as crafting, games, club meetings.	Indoor
Entertainment Area	1	4,500	Stage for live music and performances	Outdoor
Garden Space	1	300	A place for the community to create a garden together.	Outdoor
Restaurant/Bar	1	3,700	A full functioning counter service restaurant and bar.	Indoor
Resource Center	1	650	A place for hanging out alone or in a group.	Indoor
Spa	1	1,400	Functioning salon with hair and nail technicians along with massage rooms.	Indoor
Pickleball Courts	2	800 (Per court)	Pickleball Court	Outdoor
Admin	1	600	Office space for management.	Indoor

SPATIAL PLANNING





INSPIRATION

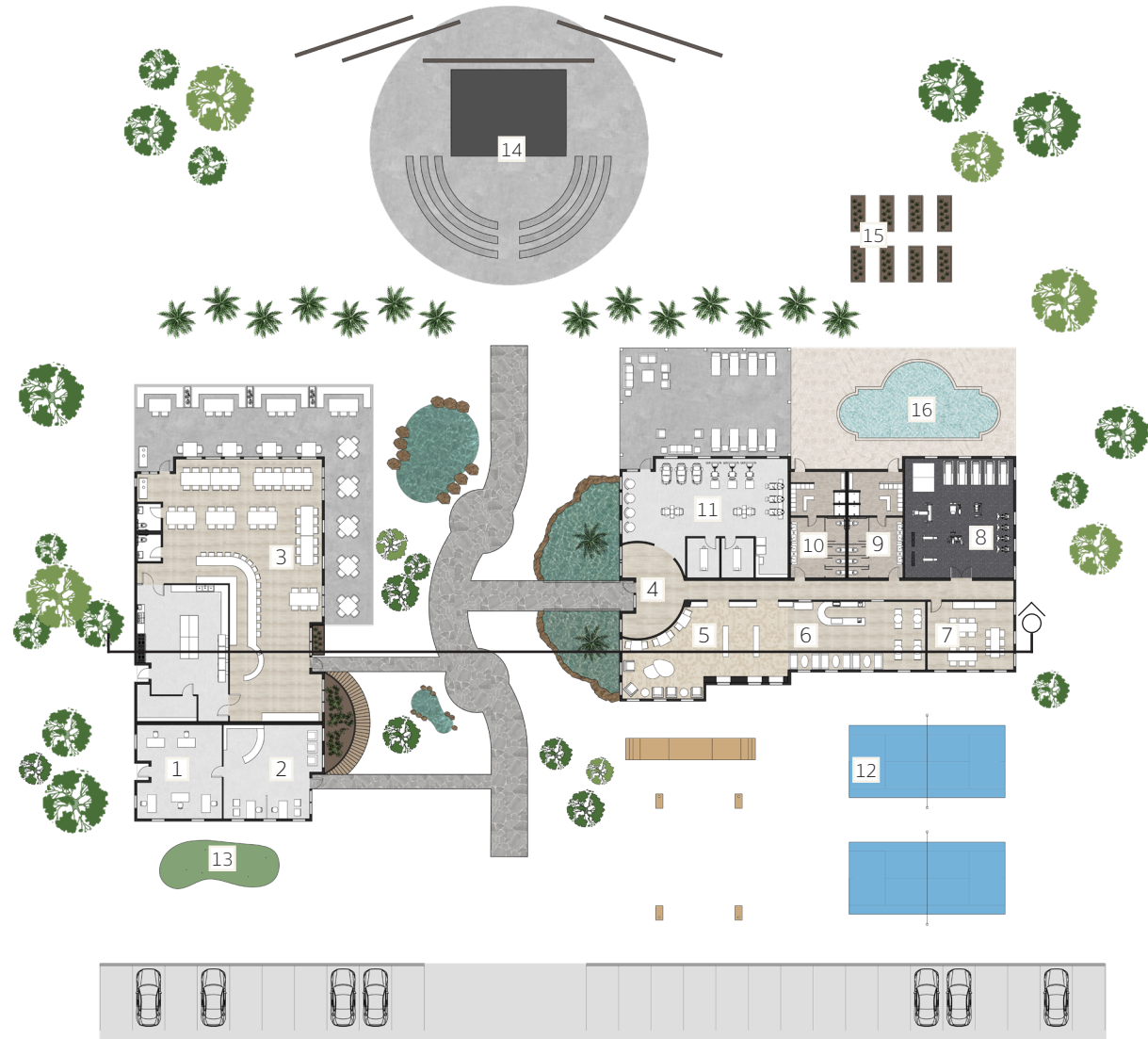




DESIGN SOLUTION

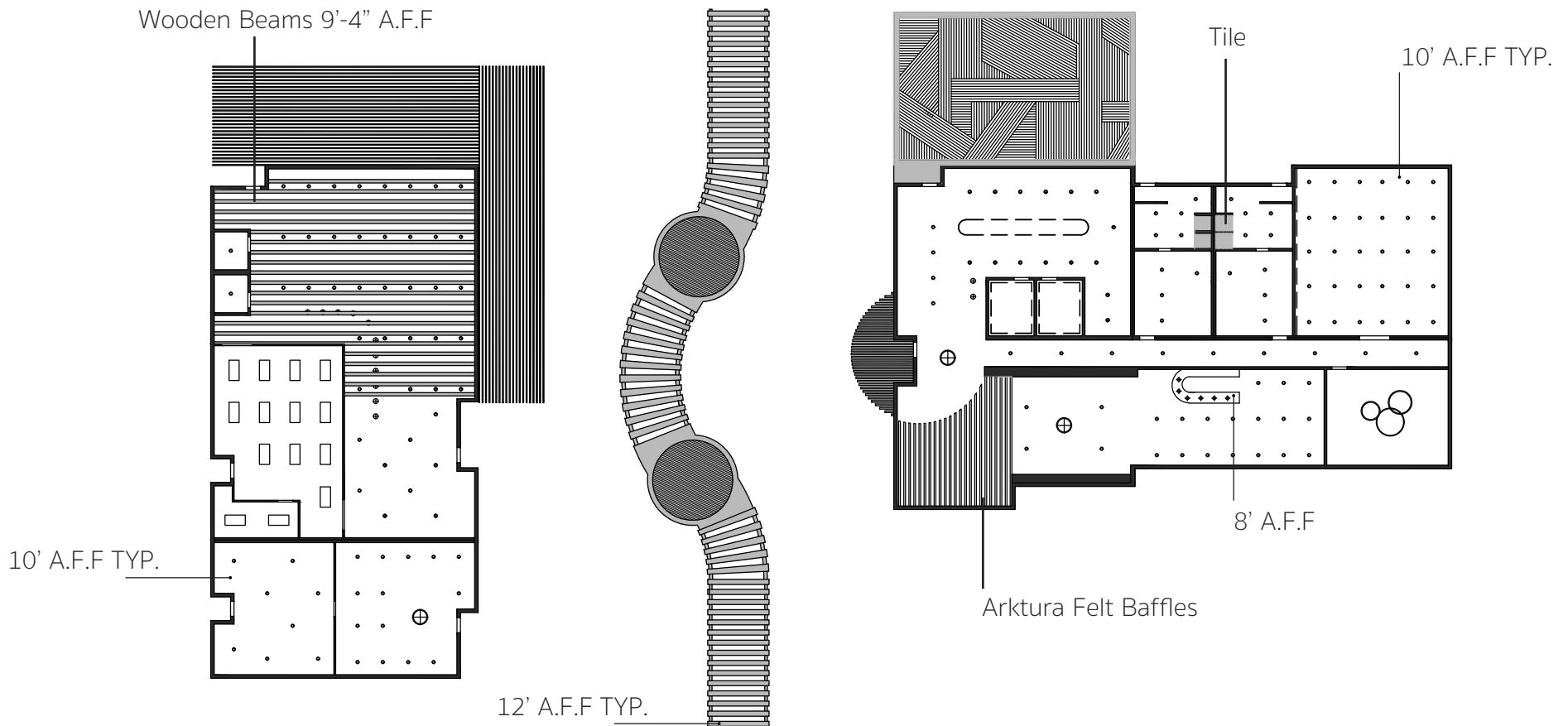


FLOOR PLAN



- | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Administration | 5. Library | 9. Men's Locker Room | 13. Putting Green |
| 2. Resource Center | 6. Coffee Shop | 10. Women's Locker Room | 14. Stage |
| 3. Restaurant | 7. Multi-Purpose Room | 11. Spa | 15. Garden |
| 4. Entry | 8. Gym | 12. Outdoor Game Area | 16. Pool |

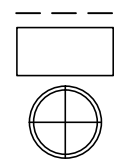
REFLECTED CEILING PLAN



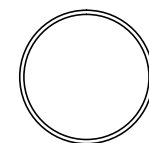
4" Pendant Light
4" Recessed Can Light
10" Pendant Light



Cove Lighting
2x4 LED Light
Large Pendant



Large Circular Pendant

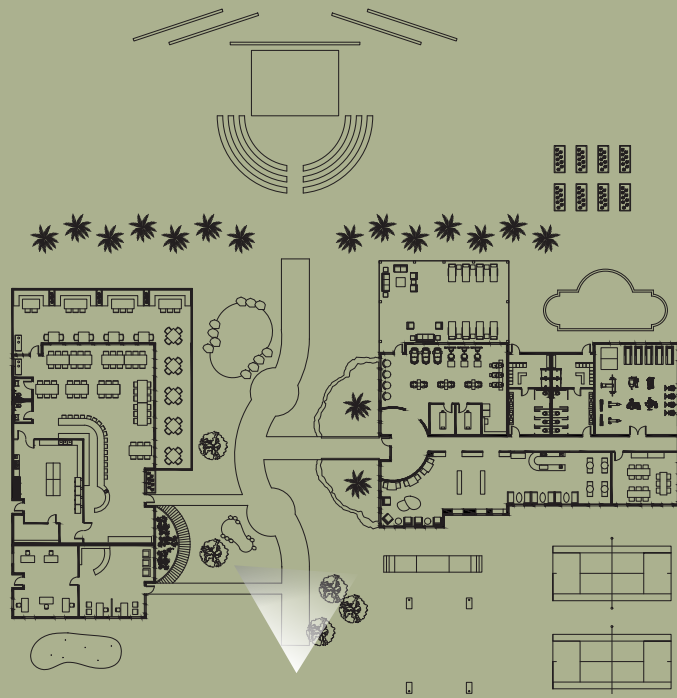


NORTH EAST SECTION CUT





EXTERIOR ENTRYWAY

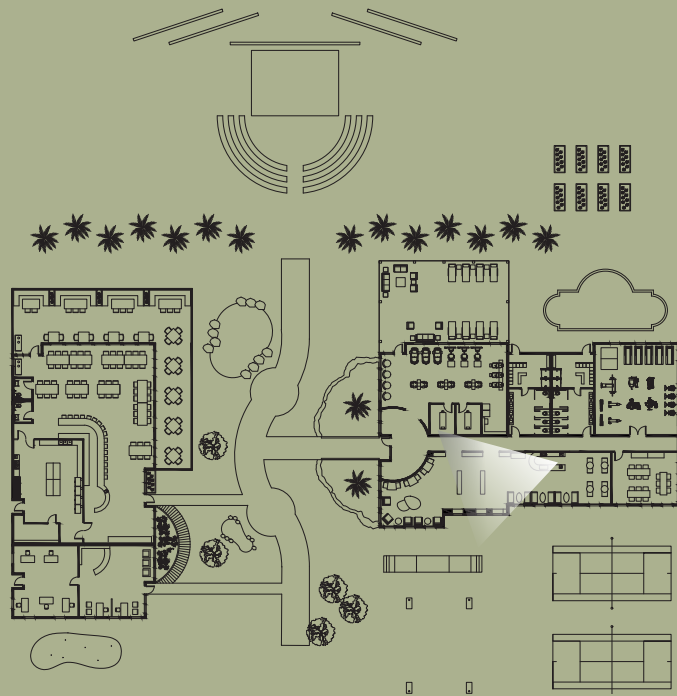


The entryway is a curved stone path that follows the structure of the shade piece above. This entryway starts from the parking lot and leads all the way to the other outdoor amenities. The path also branches off towards the resource center and both entryways to each building.





LIBRARY

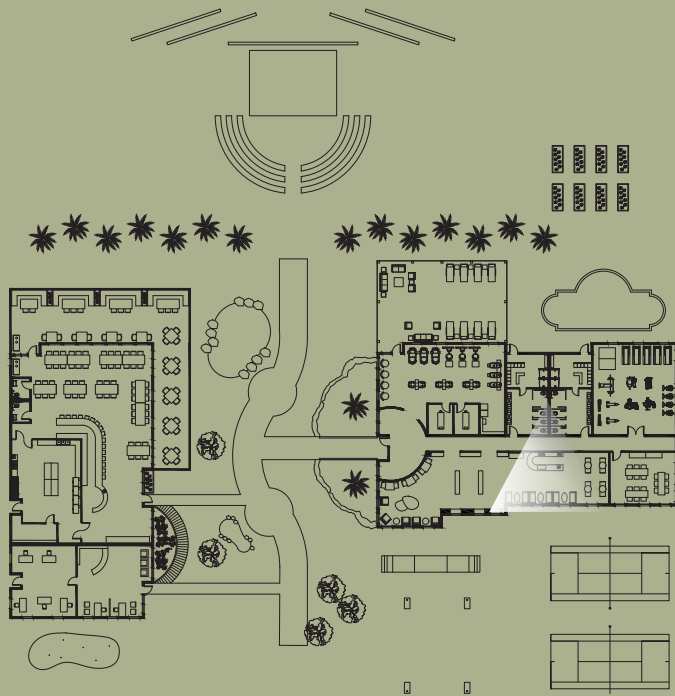


The library space is equipped with multiple seating areas with individual window seats for personal reading or the lounge near the entry for more one on one interactions.





COFFEE SHOP

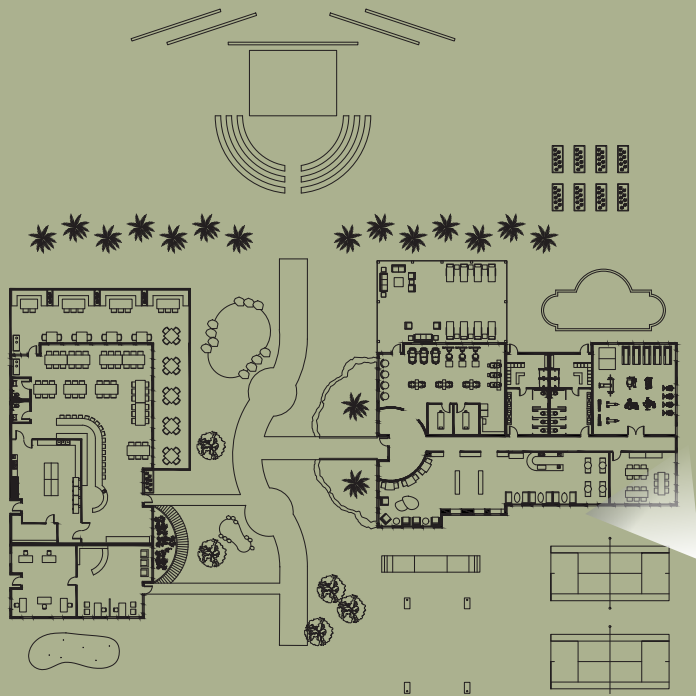


The coffee shop is located inside the library space allowing for a cozy social space.





MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM

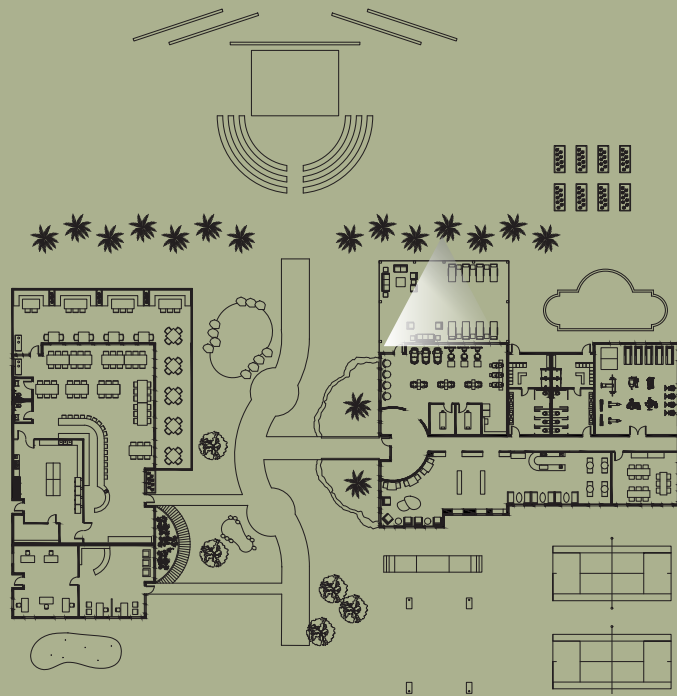


The multi-purpose room allows for an abundance of group activities with its functionality. There are multiple large tables for classes, card games, crafts or social meetings.





OUTDOOR POOL & PATIO



The covered patio space outside of the spa opens to the lap and recreational pool. The space allows for an extension of the spa with the lounge space. The locker rooms lead out to the pool for easy access. There is also a view of the community garden space where seniors can tend to and share their plants.





RESTAURANT

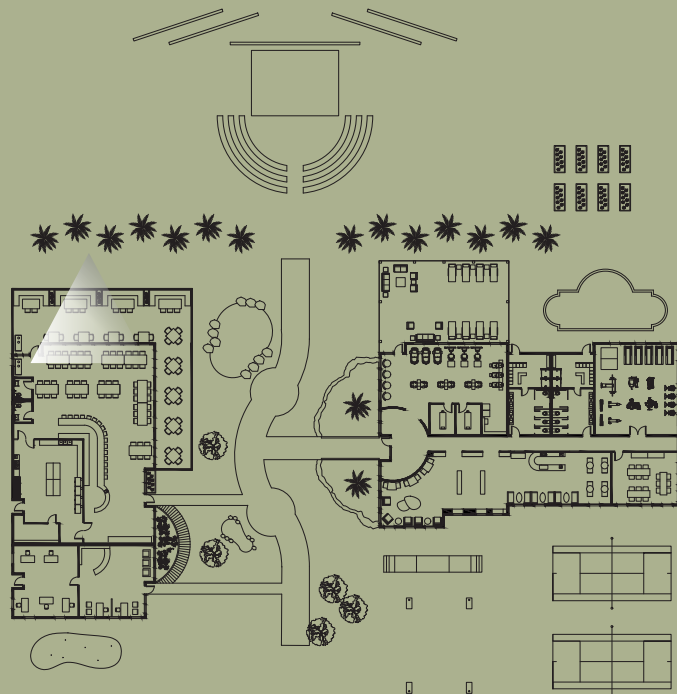


This counter service restaurant focuses on the idea of building connections. The space is filled with large tables to increase communal connections. The restaurant is a great place for grandkids to come and enjoy a meal with their grandparents. Or sit somewhere new and make a connection.





EXTERIOR DINING AREA

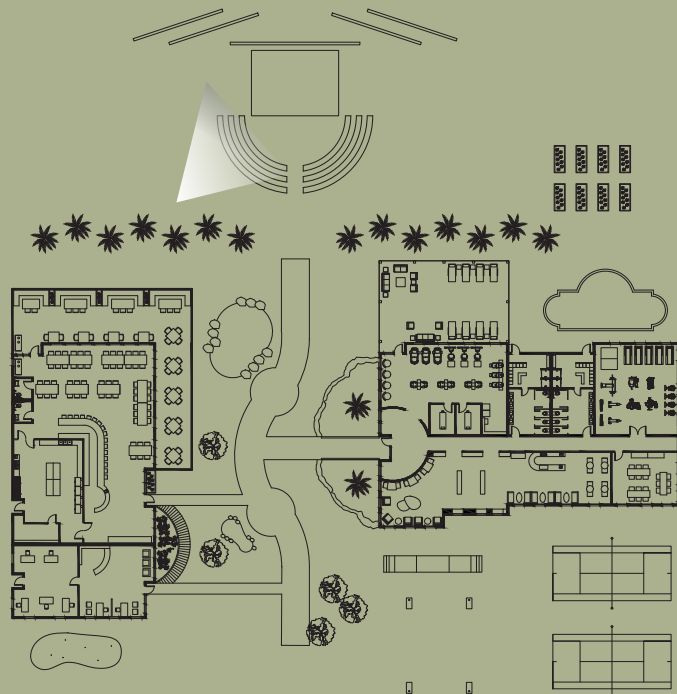


The exterior dining surrounds the restaurant's exterior. There are built in benches along the back wall with pull up seating, as well. From this area there is a great view of the surrounding scenery and the entertainment area.





OUTDOOR ENTERTAINMENT AREA



The outdoor entertainment area, located at the back of the property, included a large stage covered in canopy shades and vines lit with ambient lighting. There are arched amphitheater benches surrounding the dance floor allowing for flexibility in the use of the space ex. performances by the seniors, live music etc.





FINAL THOUGHTS



MENTORS



Recent graduate mentor:
Jennifer (Lopez) Lanser from
Jennifer Lopez Designs



Professional mentor:
Monique Swihart from HPI
architects.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Sunlit Oasis began with the realization that more people than just my grandma need a space like this in their lives. Throughout this journey, speaking with individuals, it became clear that there are many “active adults” who lack the luxury of a hangout space with people their own age without it carrying a negative connotation.

This project is dedicated to my grandmother. A few years ago, she moved from the Midwest to California and has since been dedicated to her active lifestyle, which she enjoys immensely. As a widow, I’ve observed her face numerous challenges navigating life alone and trying to find her community, a place where she can enjoy herself and be surrounded by people who share her values. She is the inspiration behind this project.

I want to thank my mentors that have guided me through this process. I appreciate all the conversations we have had. And of course, thank you to my professors at CSULB for your patience and guidance over the past four years.

Lastly, I want to thank my family. Without them, I couldn’t have accomplished any of this. Their unconditional love and support have brought me to where I am today, and I am forever grateful.

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