

SENIOR HOUSING NEWS

# ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN AWARDS



## Simpson Gardens II

82 N Lansdowne Ave, Lansdowne, PA 19050

Affordable Housing



SIMPSON  
at Simpson Center

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Simpson Gardens 2 was built in response to community requests to provide affordable housing for senior residents of Lansdowne, PA. The town has many large Victorian homes that older residents could no longer maintain nor afford, but they didn't want to leave their hometown. Meanwhile Simpson - a Methodist senior living provider, and The Garden Church - the local Methodist Church, had that same mission and vision to serve older adults. The Bishop brought the Town, the Church, and Simpson together to address the housing need on church land next to The Garden Church. The group gained political and county financial support and obtained the necessary Zoning variances. Through a competitive low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) award, they realized Simpson Gardens 1 in 2004; a 41-unit apartment building with office space for the Church and on-site parking.

Twelve years later Simpson was looking for land to provide more affordable housing. At that time, the Garden Church could no longer support their failing 1950's stone church building and adjacent education building. They wanted to take care of their parishioners more than their building. Once again, the Bishop brought the two entities together to create Simpson Gardens 2. The church building was razed to make way for the new apartment building. The community came together to help The Garden Church raise funds to build a worship space within the apartment building as the LIHTC funds could not be used for this use. Although the project was well supported by the Community and politically, it took 5 LIHTC applications over the next 5 years to obtain the 9% credits.

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The Historic Society agreed to duplicate the same design aesthetic as Simpson Gardens 1 which incorporated architectural elements from the neighboring Victorian homes, such as trim style, colors, large windows, balconies, porches, and building materials. The two buildings form a cohesive element along the main road and look more like duplex homes than an apartment building. All parties recognized the importance of the aesthetic to the community, so it was preserved through the pricing and construction process.

Ground floor common spaces welcome the residents and are shared with the Church. The greater community now uses the spaces for various meetings and events. Residents are thrilled with the amenities in their apartments and building.

The Garden Church preserved many elements from the original church which were then selectively used in the new worship space such as the alter stone, the wood cross, light fixtures, stained glass, mahogany paneling, and building cornerstones.

The project was constructed and then occupied through the Pandemic. The 41 apartments were rented in record time with a lengthy waitlist. The Church added a large video screen to have online services. In attendance - virtually - were existing worshippers with residents slowly joining in. Once the Church could hold services in person, the room was filled, their online presence continued, and their membership grew.

This project has rejuvenated the residents, the Church, and the community at large.

## Simpson Gardens 2

Simpson Gardens 2 is in the foreground with Simpson Gardens 1 in the background on the right. Residential building elements, paint colors, and materials from the neighborhood Victorian homes (see image below) are incorporated into the design.





## Simpson Gardens 2

Simpson Gardens 2 is on the right with Simpson Gardens 1 on the left. The residents enter through the covered porch adjacent to the parking lot and the Church is entered on the opposite side. The undulating roof lines, multiple colors and materials help maintain a residential scale. The LIHTC Field Inspector shares this comment: “I have appraised 100’s of LIHTC properties and this property is one of the finest I have ever had the privilege of inspecting. Money was generally well spent... It is highly unusual to have in-unit washers and dryers. Great feature, I’m sure the tenants love it. The common areas were large and well appointed.”



## The Garden Church Entrance

The entrance is located in the same spot on the site as the entrance to the previous 1950's building. The parishioners felt this was important so as not to lose the significance of the church within the apartment building.

## The Seat Wall

The wall was designed to showcase each cornerstone from the various iterations of the church starting with the original building from 1894. The newest is "2020" when the building was scheduled to be completed, but due to the Pandemic, it was completed in 2021.



## The Lobby

The Lobby is a gathering space rather than just a means to access the elevators. The entry on the left opens to a covered porch which are prevalent in the neighboring houses. The mail room is conveniently located in this space promoting socialization. The Dining and Activity Rooms are beyond with access to the Church on the right. The airy finishes provide a crisp look and are accompanied by furniture with clean lines. The organic texture of the carpet and wainscot wall covering bring biophilia into the space.





## The Activity Room

The Activity Room can be locked off from the adjacent Community Room when there are outside events in that space. The room has flexible furniture that is easy to move as needed for meetings, TV watching, or for playing games. The room is available 24/7 for the residents. The large windows bring in loads of light while feeling residential from the exterior. The ceiling soffits, the chair rail, and the painted wall below provide a lot of visual interest for a low cost.



## The Library

The Library is designed to accommodate individual workstations with two computers and several internet connections in the room. Tables are for group learning and discussions, while the soft seating is for relaxing to read a good book. The community plans to add bookshelves and books over time with resident input. The simple perimeter soffit and pendent lighting add subtle interest to the room while staying within the tight budgets typical for affordable housing projects.





## The Community - Dining Room

The Community Room is a flexible space with an exterior entrance, access to the Living Room to the left, and access to the Worship space to the right (not shown in the photo). The room can be locked off from the resident lobby when the space is used for an activity by an outside group. The doors to the church open at the end of worship service for a community gathering to which many residents join. The room has a residential style kitchen to allow modest catering without the expense of a commercial hood

# Welcome





## The Garden Church Entrance

The mahogany wood paneling was preserved from the previous church building. It is used at the entrance along with furniture, light fixtures, and artifacts from the previous church. Parishioners immediately recognize these elements from the entry of the former building making them feel more at home. The worship space can be seen to the right.





## The Garden Church Worship Space

The location of the altar is the same as the previous two churches that sat on this site. The stain glass, stone wall, and altar stone under the cloth are from the previous church. The previous wood altar cross was too large for this new space, so it was reduced in size to fit the room. The soffit lighting in the ceiling reflects off of the gloss paint to signify the flame of the traditional Methodist “flame and cross” symbol. Interior finishes were kept warm and airy signifying community and a new start.







## Typical Kitchen

The island was an important feature to have in the kitchen allowing accessibility through and around the kitchen and acting as a table if needed. The ceiling drop for HVAC was limited to this area which helps define the space and keep the ceilings high in the remainder of the apartment.



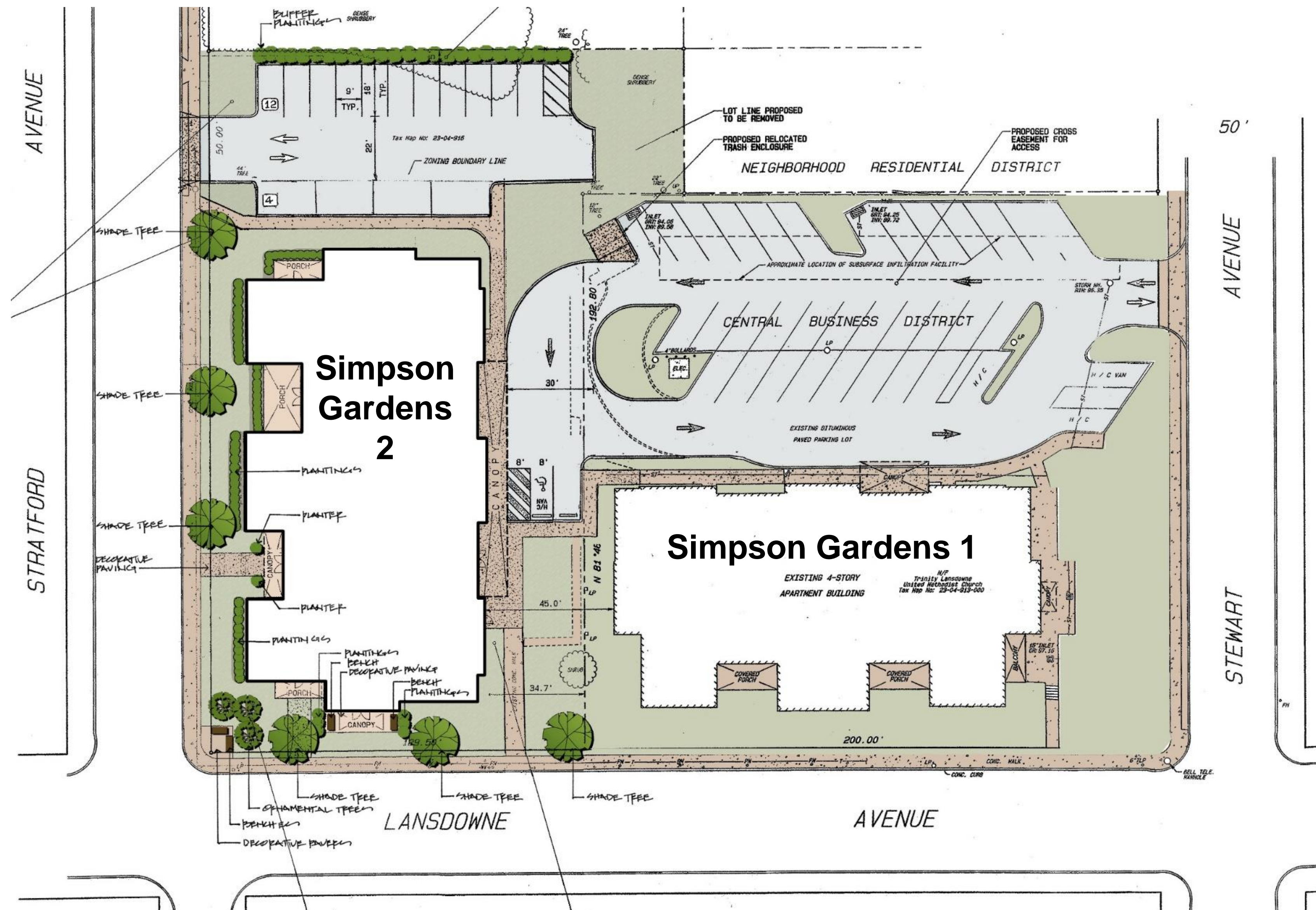
## Typical Bedroom

Bedrooms are designed to hold a queen size bed and typical bedroom furniture sizes. A dropped soffit provides a space for ductwork while keeping the majority of the ceiling high. Wide blinds are included in the apartment.



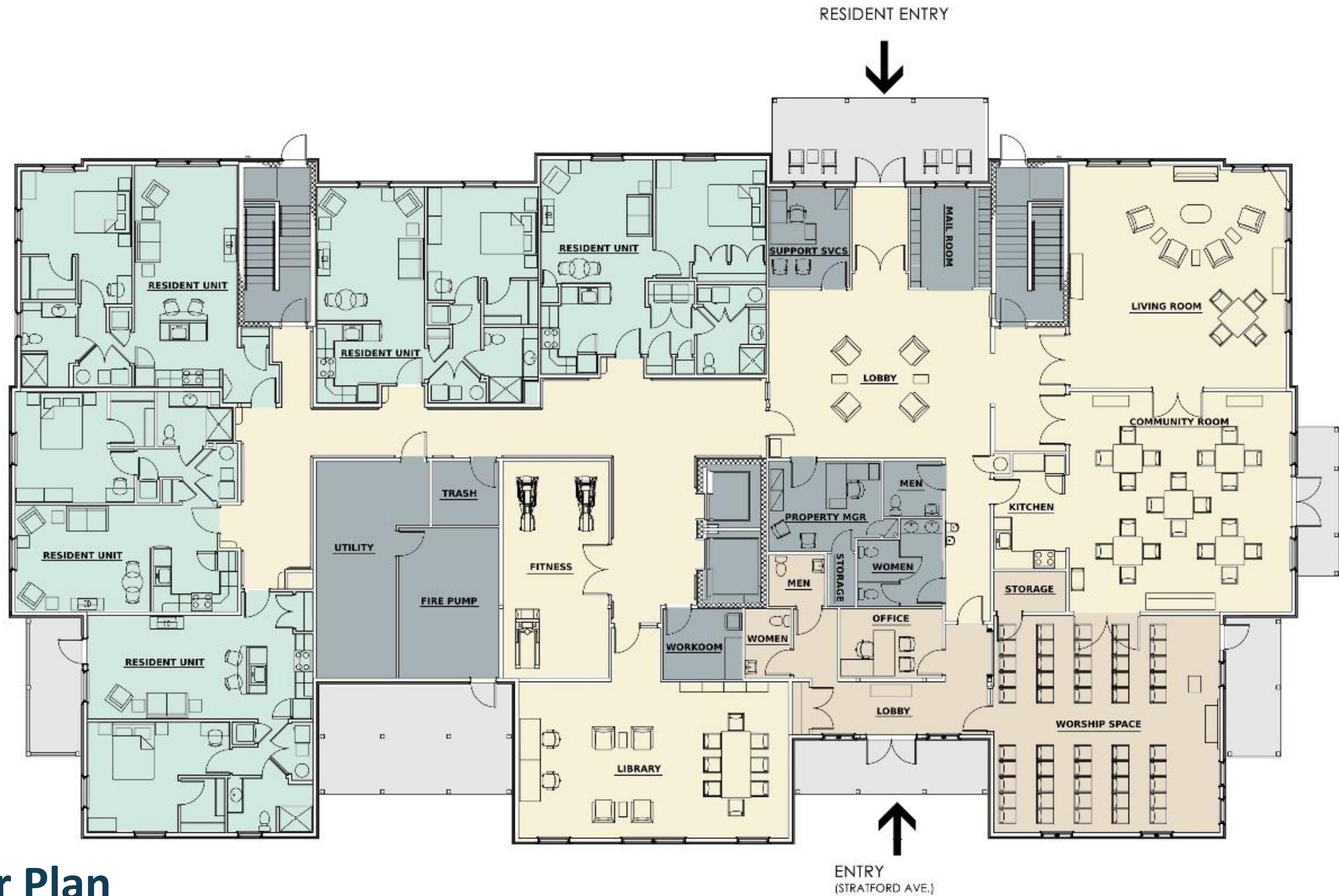
## Typical Bathroom

Simpson decided to have all bathrooms designed to be as accessible as possible. This allowed flexibility in leasing apartments to meet residents needs. All bathrooms have accessible clearances and grab bars, with removable cabinetry should knee space be required by a resident. A nurse call connected to the Office Manager and an off-site monitoring system, is located next to the toilet.



## Site Plan

Both Simpson Gardens 1 and 2 are shown with the on-site parking. The siting of the new buildings were aligned with the footprints of the former buildings to maintain the same streetscape massing.



## First Floor Plan

Abundant common space and the church are included on the ground floor.



## Second Floor Plan

Apartments are sized according to LIHTC requirements with layouts for the various options allowing proper furniture placement. Two elevators service the building so one is always available during routine maintenance.

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**City/State:** Lansdowne, PA

**Date of Completion:** 01/01/2021

**Project Size (SQ. FT):** 44,000 SF Residential, 1,300 SF Church

**Owner:** Simpson

**Operator:** Simpson

**Architect:** Lenhardt Rodgers Architecture + Interiors

**Interior Design Firm:** Lenhardt Rodgers Architecture + Interiors

**Builder/Contractor:** Arthur Funk & Sons, Inc.

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