

# CASE STUDY: **LINCOLN GLEN MANOR**

SGPA Architecture & Planning



## ■ Authors

SGPA Architecture & Planning  
200 Pine Street, Studio 500  
San Francisco, CA 99104

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“ . . . a space where one can go and bump into friends, or just sit to people watch.”

Social isolation is a frequent result of aging, which is reinforced by, and contributes to, declines in mental acuity and emotional health. Encouraging interaction of seniors with their families and the broader community can decrease depression and loneliness. Research cited by the National Institutes of Health found that facilities that welcome and accommodate family members helped facilitate increased family visiting of senior residents. Those visits in turn increase psychosocial well-being of residents, leading to decreased hospitalization and mortality.<sup>a</sup> Can purposeful design decisions increase seniors' interaction with the larger community? A case study at the Lincoln Glen Manor Retirement community indicates it can.

The Central Facilities building at Lincoln Glen Manor has always served as the nerve center of the campus. It housed the dining room, chapel, lounge, and the administrative offices and was the place where the community gathered. It was, however, a fractured space, where each activity was segregated from the next, and the building itself faced the unique challenge of being located right at the center of campus away from the activity and visibility of the street edge. It proved difficult to find, hard to access, and isolated from the surrounding neighborhood. The staff reported that it was a challenge to get family members to spend time with their relatives in the social space of the central building and that time with neighbors from the community was virtually non-existent.

Goals for renovating the space included not just

<sup>a</sup> Family Involvement in Residential Long-Term Care: A Synthesis and Critical Review, Joseph E. Gaugler, NIHMSID: NIHMS40167



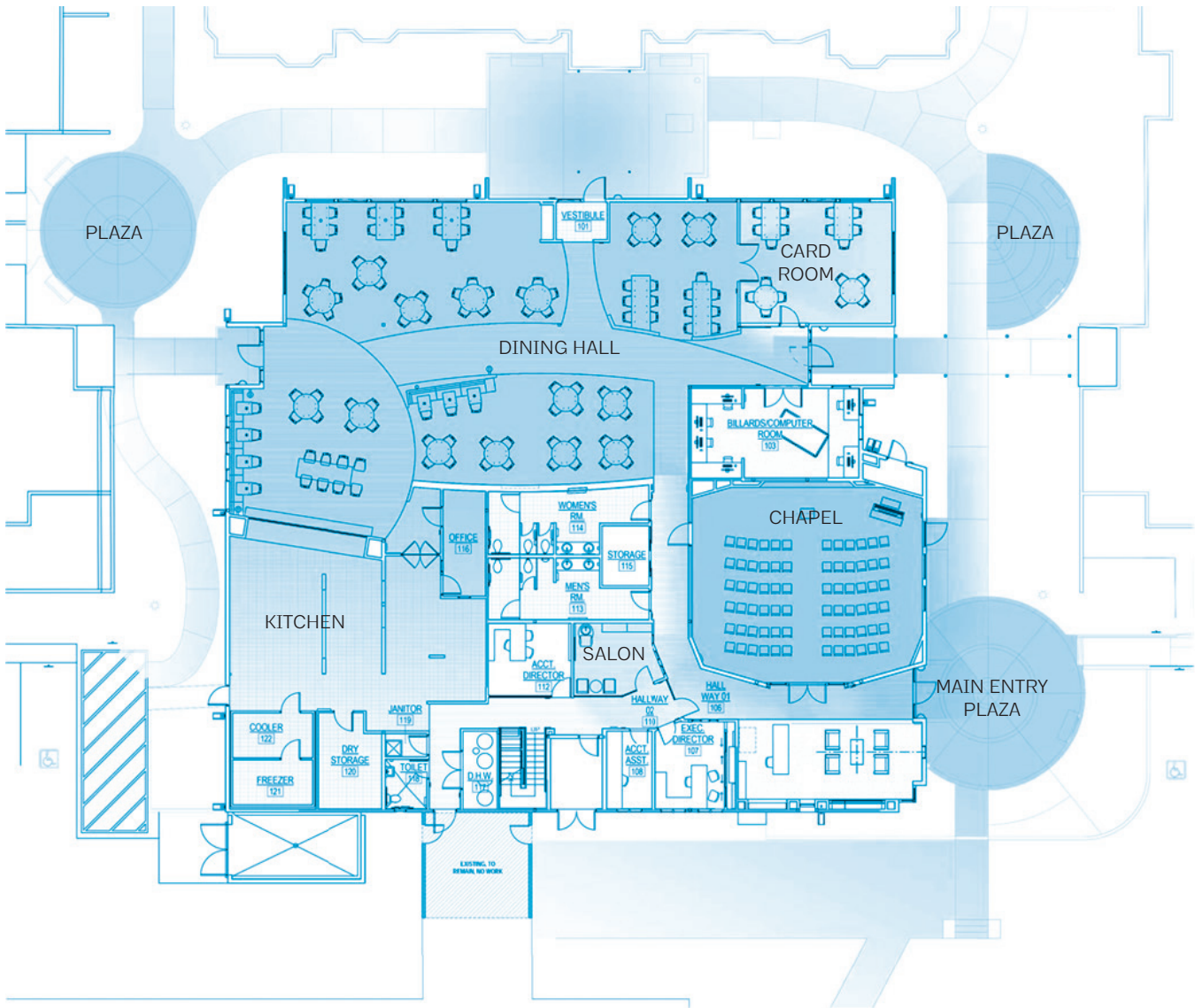
**The renovated Lincoln Glen Manor indicates that purposeful design can increase seniors' interaction.**

(Source: Randy Ollen)

standard upgrades to finishes and increased square footage, but also a conscious reorganization of the space with the goal of increasing social connection.

A large, open dining area where residents can choose their own seats was created. The dining area contains a variety of seating types and table sizes, allowing residents to sit with just one or many people.

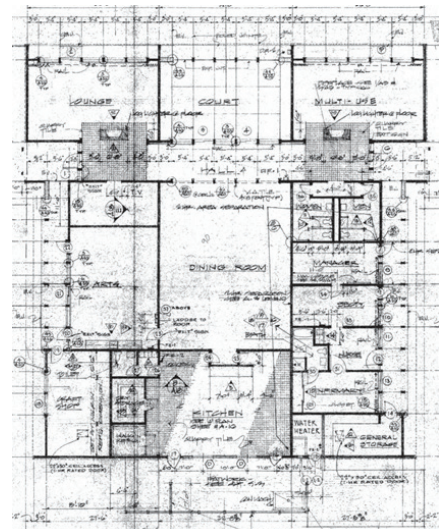
An open kitchen creates a restaurant-like feel, and provides a sense of transparency about what food is being prepared. The redesigned kitchen also includes a hot and cold bar where residents can get food to order outside of the standard meal times. This seemingly small adjustment to the way food is available has had a large impact on the social aspect of eating. Residents can use the dining hall as a cafe, dropping in with friends or family whenever it is convenient, instead of waiting for a formal meal time. This change has created a social space that is



### Floorplans

ABOVE: The new floorplan is a conscious reorganization of essential functions to increase social connect- edness.

RIGHT: The historic floorplan was a fractured space, where each activity was segregated from the next.





**An open kitchen provides a restaurant-like feel.** (Source: Randy Ollen)

in use throughout the day, a space where one can go and bump into friends, or just sit to people-watch.

Favorable weather nearly year round allowed for the creation of landscaped, outdoor gathering spaces. These have come to be used in various ways throughout the day. During meals, residents who choose to eat outdoors can have their food served at outside tables.

The new chapel was relocated to the opposite side of the building, adjacent to the entry, lobby, and entry plaza. This new location along a major circulation route allows people to glimpse what's going on, pique their curiosity about the content, and encourage them to join. The sense of performance associated with any gathering of people is heightened by its increased visibility, creating a more dynamic experience for everyone who attends or passes by. The outdoor space directly adjacent to the Chapel, although not intended to be an extension of the space, has become one over time. The events held in the Chapel are often so engaging that people want to continue to socialize after the space is occupied by the next group. Thus, the adjacent patio has become an impromptu gathering spot after events. This development lends a vibrancy and excitement to the social aspect of visiting the Central Facilities building. It's been so well received that people now request the outdoor space for everything from parties to wakes.

The social events that occur both in and around the building have had an interesting effect on the surrounding neighborhood. The community became curious when

they heard and saw people congregating down the path at the center of the campus. They ventured in to see what was going on and stayed for the fun. The campus now sees neighbors attending events, walking their dogs through the grounds, and even bringing their own families to eat at the dining hall, regardless of whether they have relatives living at the Manor.

The increased visibility of the center of campus has opened up the senior community to the adjacent preschool and church as well. Visual and physical access to these two facilities allows in the sights, sounds, and activities of inter-generational life.

One of the most exciting results of the redesign has been a decrease in holiday isolation. The Manor often asks a number of staff to stay to eat with residents at Thanksgiving and Christmas to keep those without family company during the holidays. This past year ninety people attended Thanksgiving, up from twenty-five the previous year. Rather than gather off-campus and pick their relatives up to attend holiday events, many families chose to stay on campus and bring their families in to celebrate in the Manor's new Central Facilities building. The staff that stayed to eat expecting lonely residents encountered a full dining hall, with many families celebrating together.

The impact on the community around the Manor also has a reciprocal effect. With inter-generational members using the amenities provided by the Manor, the residents are further encouraged to engage with the campus. The



**The sunfilled main entry is a place for residents to say hello to friends, staff, and family.** (Source: Randy Ollen)

effect has been so strong that the administration hopes to install a parcours for both residents and neighbors to use for exercise. The hope is that when residents see community members using the equipment, they will be encouraged to do so also, as they have been thus far with walks, social events, and games.

Now, at any given time, one can take a seat on a bench at the entry to the Central Facilities building and watch people come and go to attend events in the chapel or eat a meal, hear children playing in the playground at the end of the path, see neighbors stroll by, and say hello to friends, staff, or family. One can sit in the sun and be the center of it all in what is now truly the nexus of the campus.



### Social spaces

TOP: Improved outdoor spaces have become impromptu gathering spots.

MIDDLE: The salon is a center for social interactions.

BOTTOM: A variety of seating types and table sizes allows residents to sit with one or many people.

(Source: Randy Ollen)





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1735 New York Avenue, NW  
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