

Project Description/Narrative

This project began with a community church searching for ways to serve its aging community. Long-time parishioners faced the prospect of no longer being able to stay in their homes as their abilities changed with age. With limited accessible housing options nearby, this would mean leaving their church and community. Church leadership partnered with a local non-profit housing company to plan a new apartment community that would allow aging residents to stay in the neighborhood they love, with supportive services and accessibility features that address their changing needs.

The team identified a site adjacent to the church that combined vacant parcels, condemned structures, and a community garden. The assembled property sits along a secondary street, connecting a busy commercial street on one end to a quiet residential street on the other, with neighbors including the church, a primary school, commercial properties, and single-family homes. The team worked with the community group to relocate the garden to an adjacent property and to adapt a similar program dedicated for the use of the building residents.

The dimensions of the site dictated an L-shaped building with a three-story wing facing the front street and a two-story wing facing the side street. This stepped-down massing bridges the disparity between higher density commercial uses and lower density residential uses and is further broken down into vertical elements echoing the rhythm of the nearby single-family buildings. Fiber cement siding is arranged to echo traditional residential forms without creating false history, with accent brick highlighting the primary entrance. The resulting 45,000 sf building has typical support and amenity spaces, including a third-floor community room, greenhouse, and rooftop patio with garden. These spaces, together with community supportive services and 45 apartments with enhanced accessibility features, help create a rich community where residents can gracefully age in place.

AIA's Framework for Design Excellence

Design for Equitable Communities

This project bridges a gap in the community, with a combination of vacant parcels and condemned buildings being replaced by an active two- and three-story building. The building creates an edge to the street, with apartment windows and patios adding activity and safety arising from community awareness. The massing breakdown of the building transitions between a busy commercial street at the three-story end and a quiet residential street at the two-story end, with vertical elements echoing the rhythm of the residential streets and setbacks responding independently to different conditions at each end.

The project's enhanced accessibility features and range of activity spaces allow residents to age in place and provide opportunities for ongoing connection to the community. The neighboring church that initially envisioned the project will maintain long-term involvement, and the roof-top garden and greenhouse allow for joint programs with building residents, students at the local school, and a regional food charity.

Design for Economy

The building, as well as individual apartments, are designed for efficiency, minimizing circulation and maximizing usable space. Repetitive space design within apartments allows for economies of scale with casework, appliances, fixtures, and equipment, improving first cost and long-term maintenance. Common spaces are designed to enhance the lives of residents and provide flexibility in their use. Exterior materials were selected for durability to stand up to the annual cycle of seasons, and to fit the community context without creating a contrived historicity or forcing a contemporary outlier that clashes with the existing fabric.

Design for Wellness

All the apartments are designed to exceed code minimum accessibility standards, with full maneuvering clearances throughout and all grab bars installed within restrooms. The apartments have a mix of roll-in showers and accessible combination tub/showers to meet the range of desires of residents; apartments with tub/showers can be adapted to have roll-in showers in the future should the needs of the resident change. The support services office further helps with aging-in-place by connecting residents to community services that are tailored to their needs but can sometimes be challenging to access.

The community gathering spaces are designed for a variety of interests and social needs. A small lounge overlooking the front entrance allows residents to quietly watch the comings and goings in the community, while a fitness room provides more active engagement. A third-floor community room allows a larger group to meet for organized or casual entertainment, and the adjacent roof top deck has room for residents to enjoy the outdoors as weather permits. The deck includes planters for use of the residents, and the connected greenhouse lets the residents pursue their gardening year-round. The gardening spaces are already being utilized for a unique program bringing residents together with nearby primary school children to support a local food relief organization.

Community Impact

The project restores a ragged gap in the urban fabric of the community. Vacant lots and condemned buildings have been replaced with a vibrant new housing community that positively addresses the street edge. The massing of the project is carefully modulated to transition from a dense, busy commercial street on one end to a quiet single-family residential street on the other. The neighborhood group worked with the project team to relocate the community garden from the middle of the project site to an adjacent property; this collaboration allowed the project to come to fruition without eliminating this important community resource.

This collaboration further enhanced the connectivity the project offers by inspiring the owners to include a roof-top garden and greenhouse for the residents. In addition to offering enriching activities for residents, the garden and greenhouse has inspired a joint program between building residents, students at the neighboring primary school, and a local food relief charity organization to further help the community while building relationships.

This project is the realization of a dream of the adjacent community church to provide safe, affordable, accessible housing for neighborhood parishioners. As these long-time residents age and their physical capabilities change, they have faced the reality of having to leave their community and their church behind. This housing community provides a critical affordable housing option that includes enhanced accessibility features to allow these residents to gracefully age-in-place, staying in the neighborhood they love.

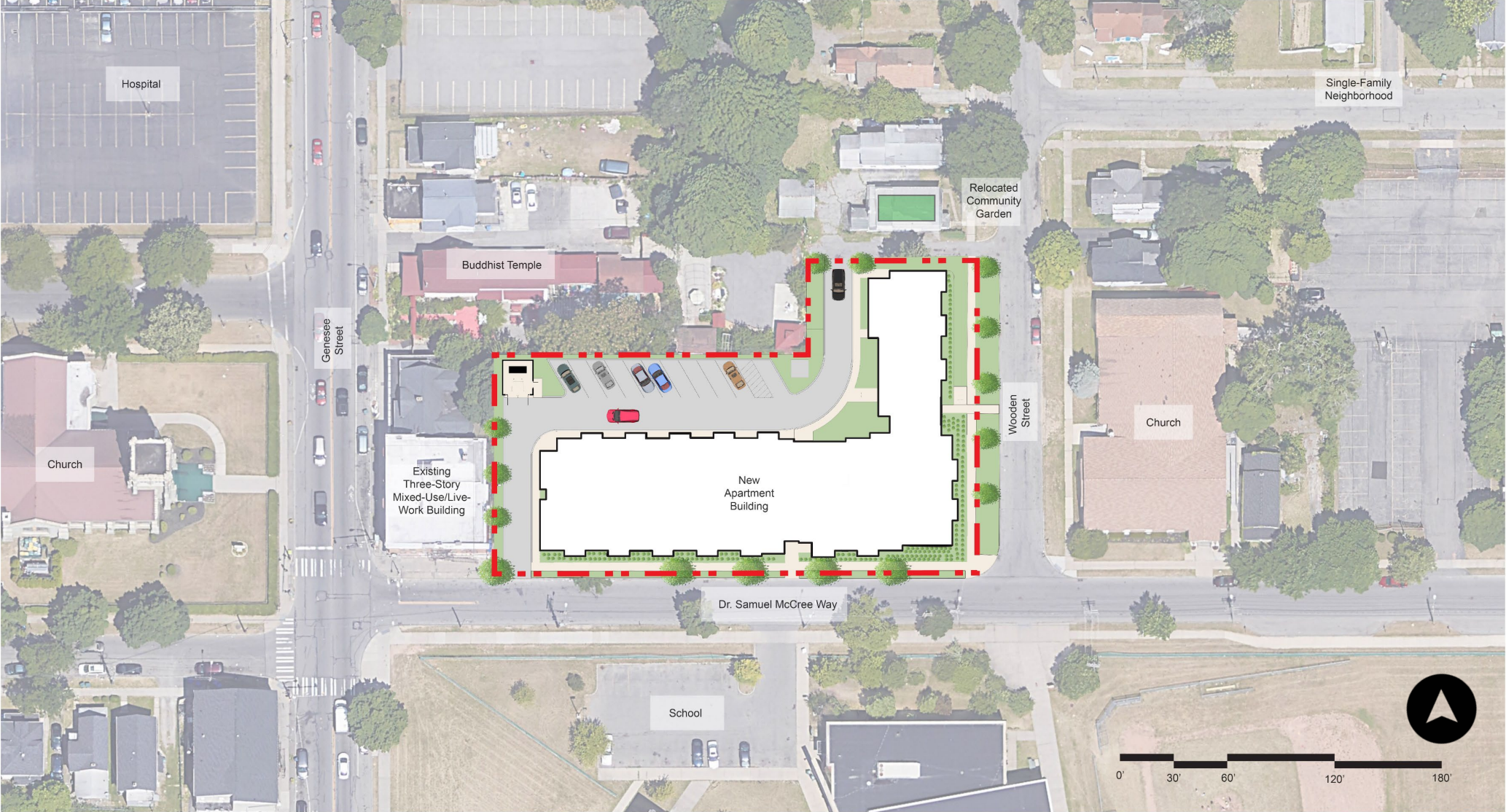
Vicinity Map



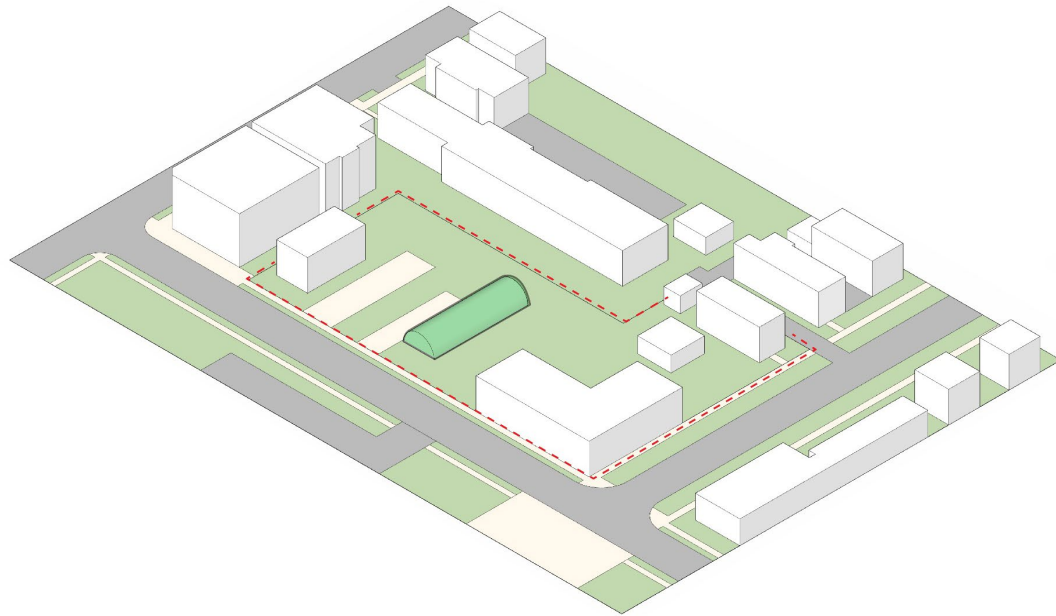
Existing Site Plan



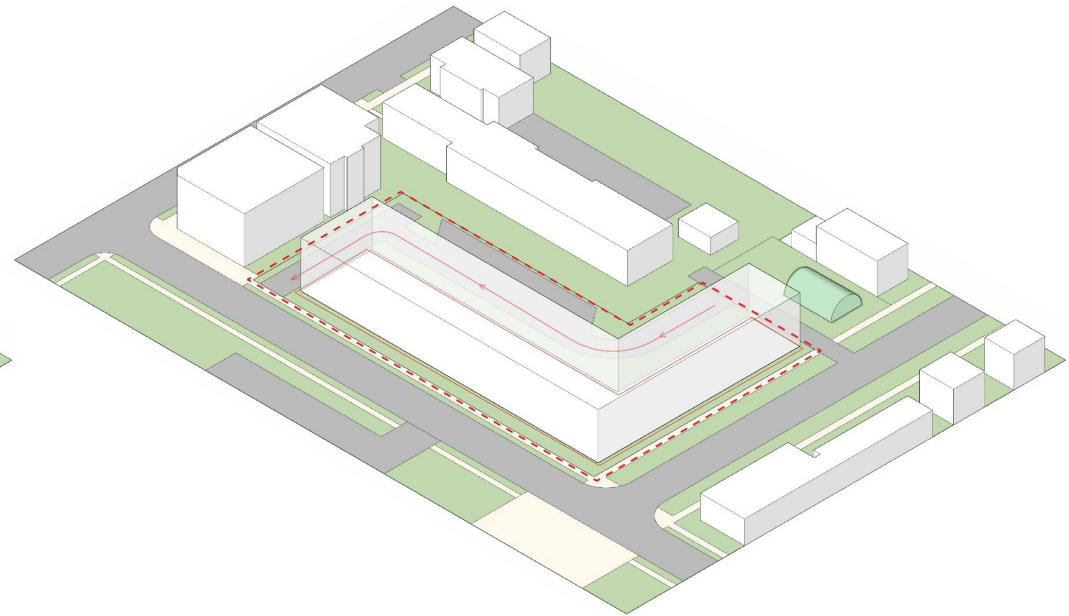
Completed Site Plan



Massing Diagrams

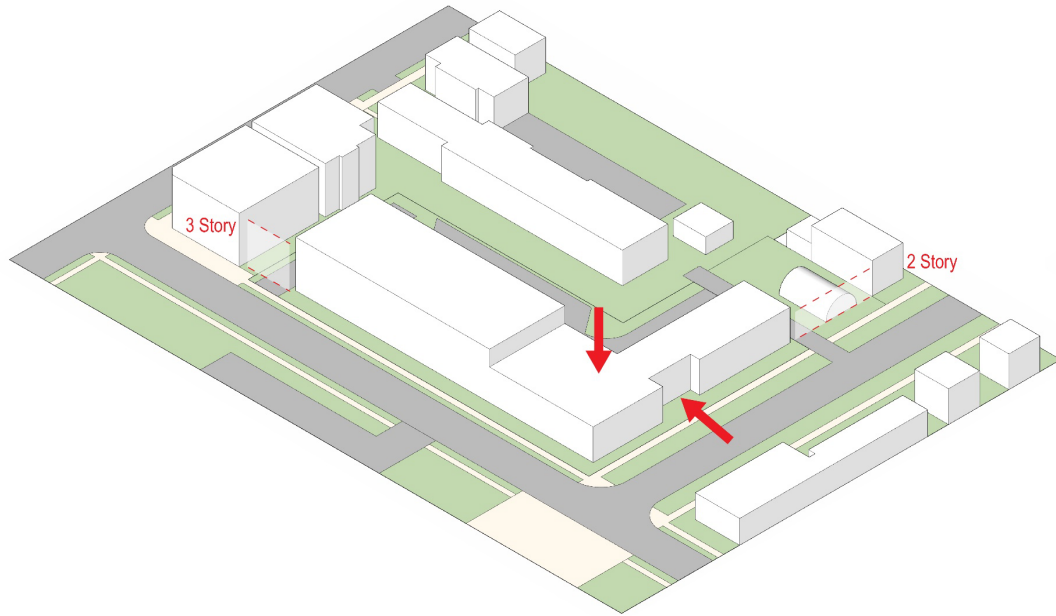


Existing Conditions

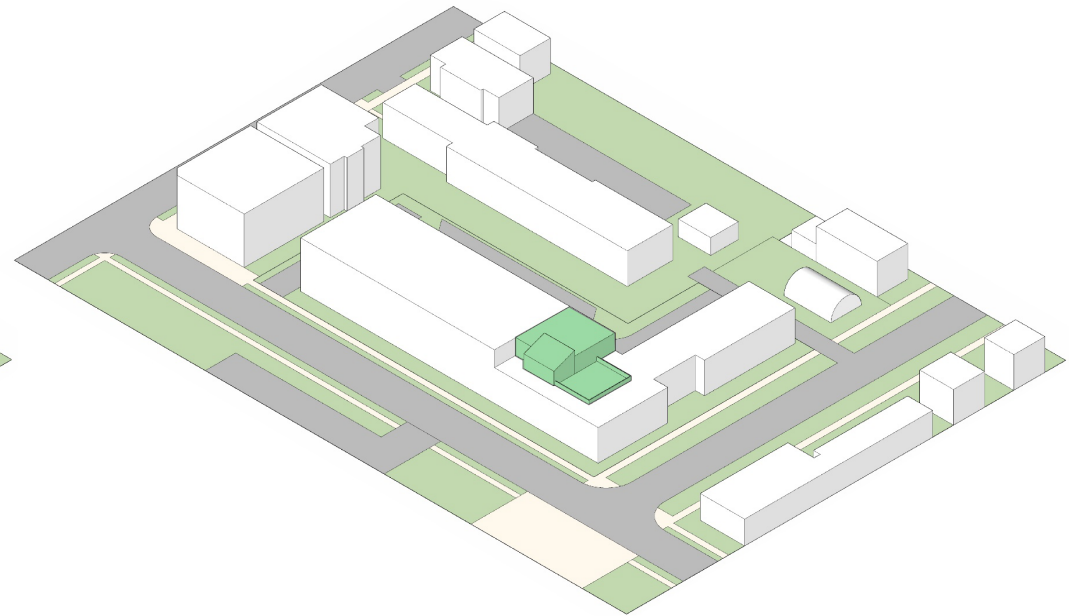


Building Siting

Massing Diagrams

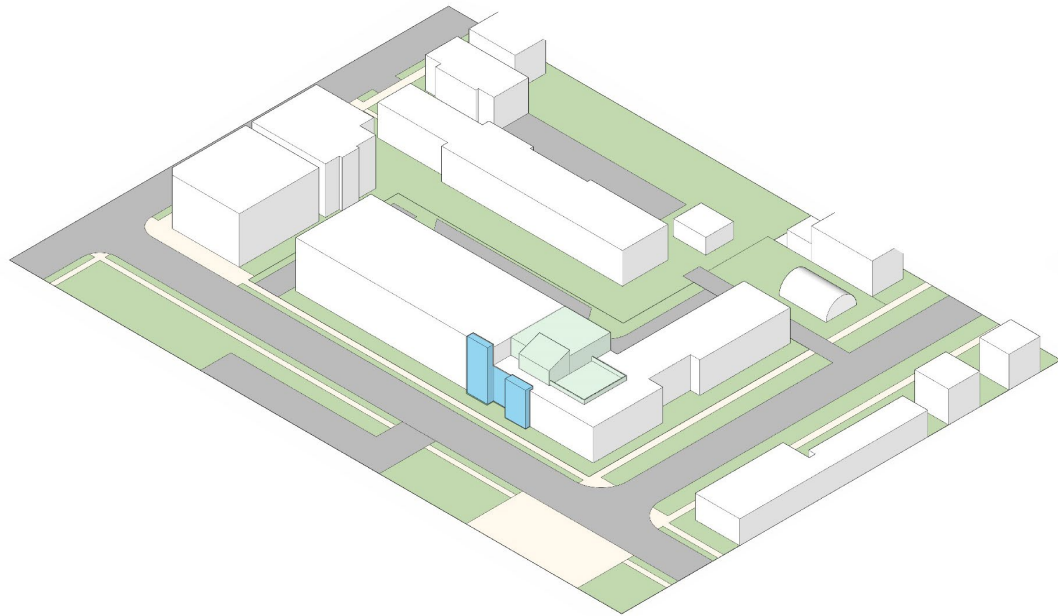


Scaling to Neighborhood

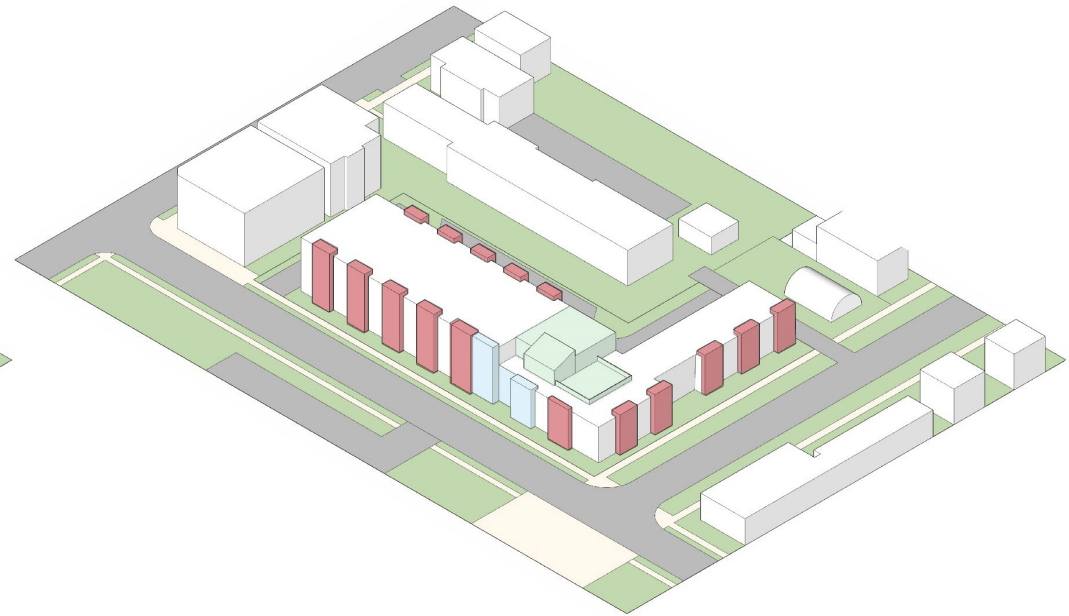


Community Gathering & Greenhouse

Massing Diagrams



Building Entry



Residential Rhythm



Rendering

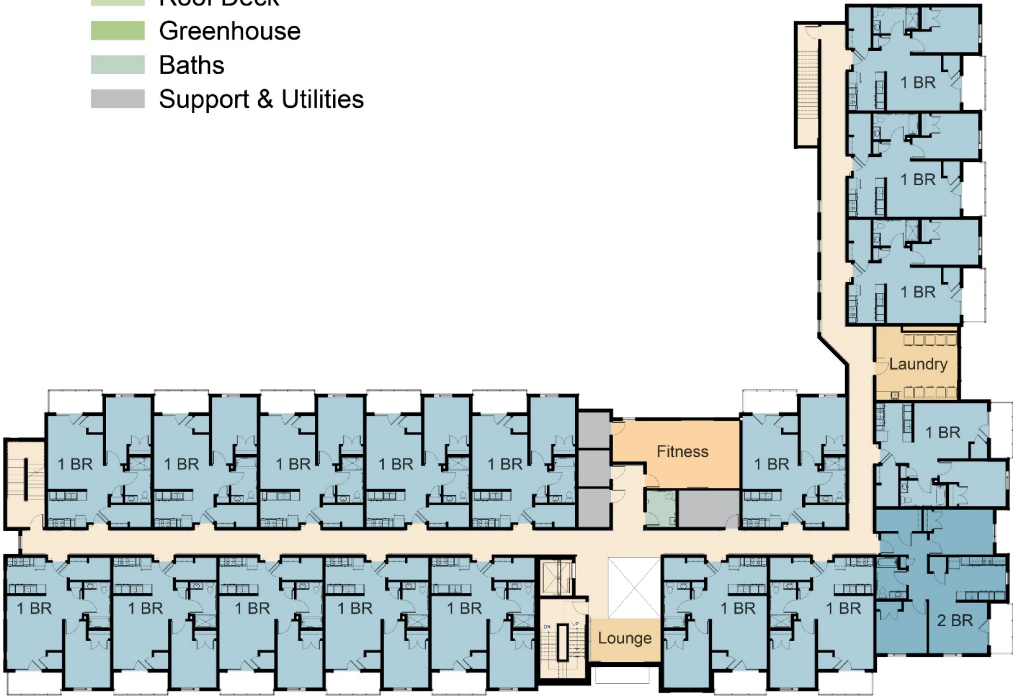
Floor Plan



First Floor Plan

Floor Plans

- Bedroom (Double)
- Bedroom (Single)
- Circulation, Stairs
- Common Area, Lobby, Lounge
- Gym, Fitness, Weightroom, Wellness
- Roof Deck
- Greenhouse
- Baths
- Support & Utilities



Second Floor Plan



Third Floor Plan



Elevations



Building Elevation - South



Building Elevation - East

Community Garden







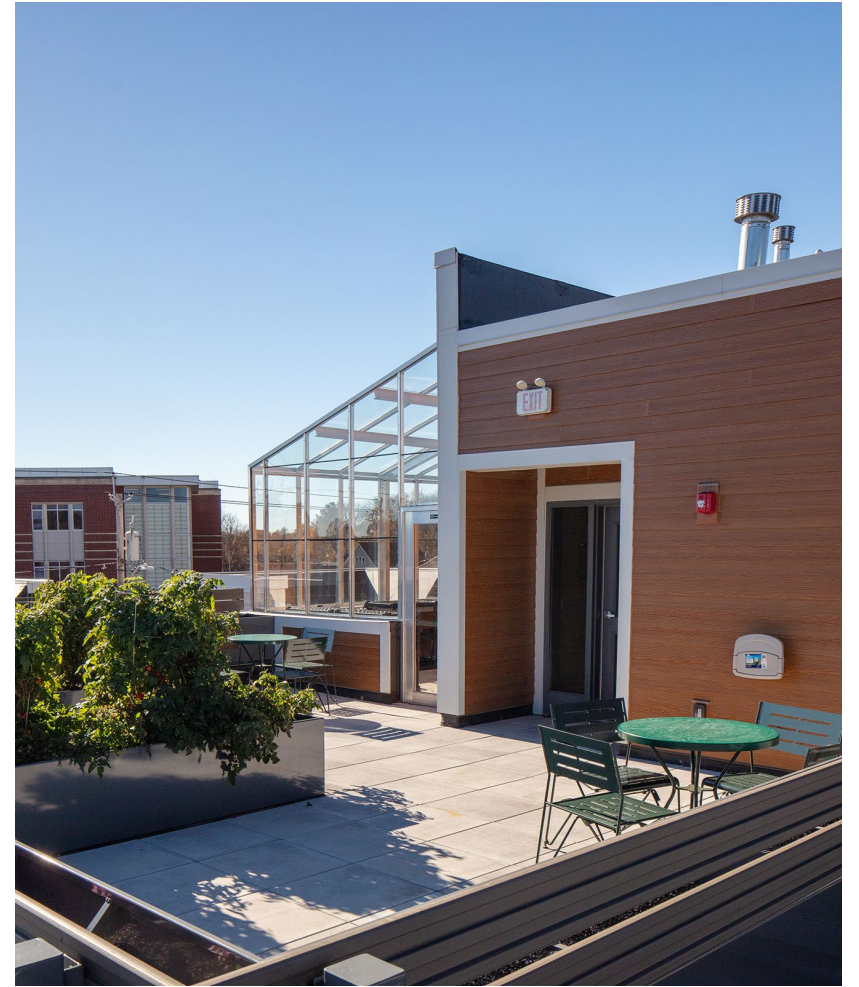




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The rooftop terrace includes outdoor seating and planters for residents' use. The connected greenhouse lets the residents pursue their gardening year-round.