

A NEW BUDDHA VILLAGE

Trang Lam



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2011 Senior Project-Trang Lam

A Senior Project Presented to the faculty of the Landscape Architecture Program, University of California, Davis in fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Bachelors of Science in Landscape Architecture.

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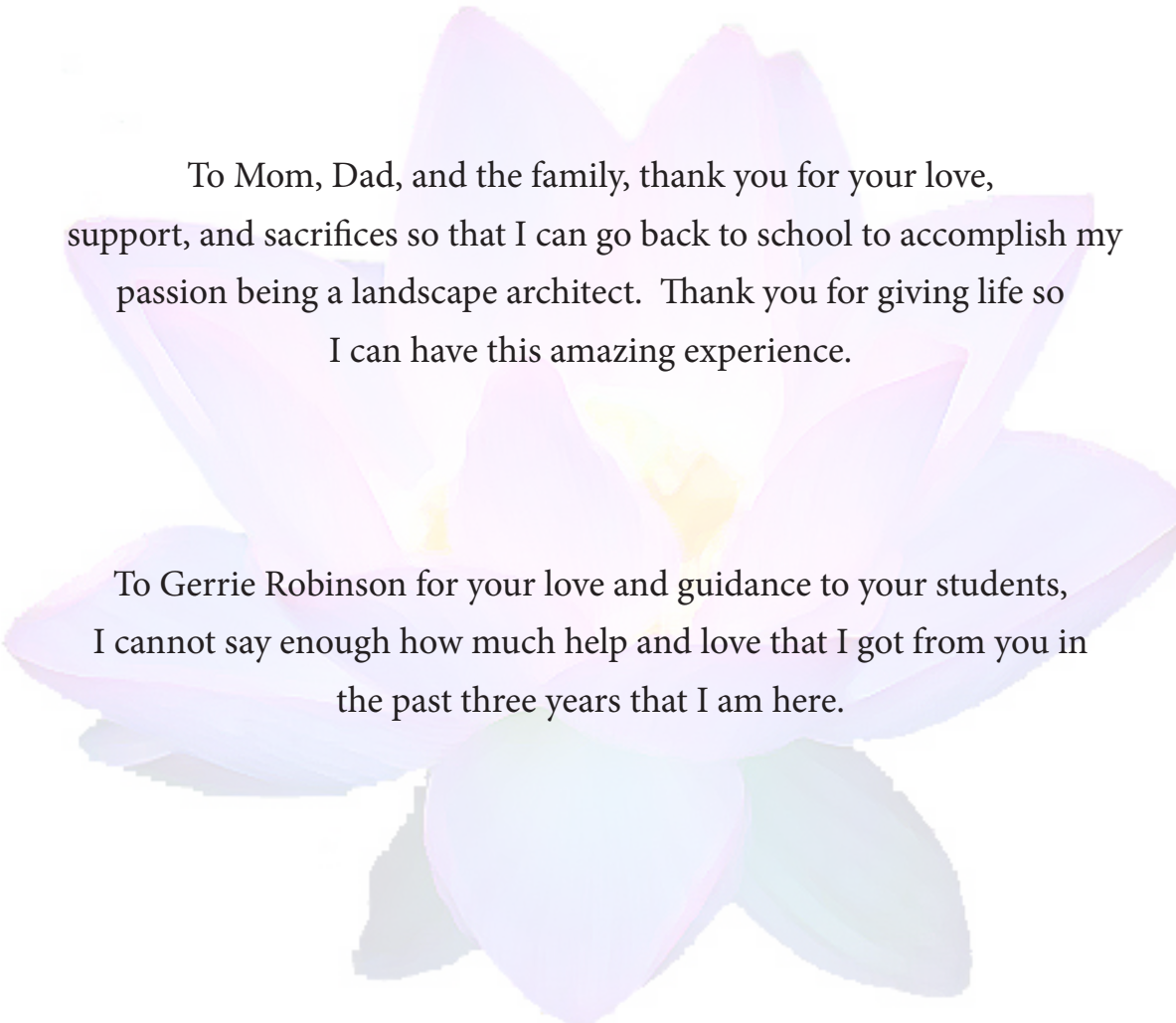
Elizabeth Boult, Committee Member

ABSTRACT

My research focuses on create a Buddhist Village to accommodate seniors with the religious and provides them with a unique retreat that is their own. Additionally I will analyze the site's current conditions create a master plan including design ideas that are integrated within the native landscape. The design will focus on the elements that not only make the village successful but also pertain exclusively to the Buddhist Religion and its principles.



DEDICATIONS



To Mom, Dad, and the family, thank you for your love, support, and sacrifices so that I can go back to school to accomplish my passion being a landscape architect. Thank you for giving life so I can have this amazing experience.

To Gerrie Robinson for your love and guidance to your students, I cannot say enough how much help and love that I got from you in the past three years that I am here.

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PREFACE

Nursing homes can be an issue that individuals face when they reach an elderly age. The majority of individuals often find nursing homes to be cold and lonely, with a sense of abandonment and distance from families. The comfort level and limited activities also become an issue for those who have been used to living in a traditional household. However, the safety and health benefits received are the principle reasons that have led to the idea of having self-sufficient senior communities that uniquely gather together elderly individuals. In addition, when individuals of the same religious belief and similar cultural backgrounds are brought together in this setting, they are able to help and support one another.

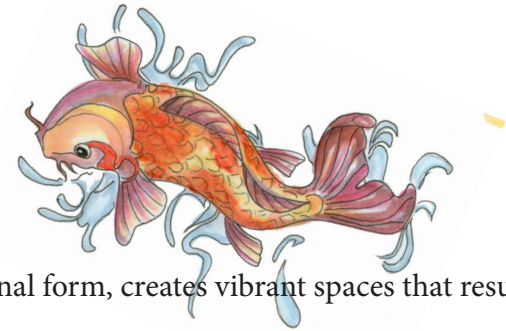
INTRODUCTION

Many cultures share similar aspects when it comes to taking care of their elderly parents, an idea that is at the forefront of the Buddhist culture. In Buddhism, it is crucial that one must take care of their parents, returning to them the benefits they received as children through the hard work and sacrifices each parent has given into their elderly age. Independent-living senior communities within this culture have been created as an alternative resolution to nursing homes, allowing for religious influence to play a role. The purpose of this project will be to design a site that is a functional and beautiful landscape for the Buddhist Temple and Senior Buddhist Community in Conroe, Texas. This location serves as a community for monks and independent living senior Buddhists to continue the practice of Buddhism despite their age and limitations. In this setting, elderly seniors live within a private housing unit with the same amenities and freedoms for which they became used to in their youth, except they are within a community.

This development was envisioned as a place that was better than a nursing home and served the needs of its residents while emphasizing the continued study of Buddhism.

METHODOLOGY

Book and Literature Research



Site planning:

According to Kevin Lynch, knowing the structures and activities in three-dimensional form, creates vibrant spaces that result in an effective site plan. The human uses and pre-existing involvement and their relationships to the site are the things that the plan begins with. This essential quality must be understood, not only because the site will impose certain limitations, but also because it will contain many possibilities for new amenities.

Retirement Villages:

An increasing numbers of retirement villages now a day are popularly across the country. These typical communities are large self-contained communities specifically for retirement age group that have extensive shelters, shops, leisure facilities for accommodation.

Landscape Design for Elderly and Disabled People:

Now it is commonly recognized that majority prefer to live in their homes than being put or move a form of specialized accommodation for their retirement years. The population of most elderly now continues to live in their own homes because they want to have their independent living and usually in flat and smaller setting after retiring. Therefore, type of homes and landscape designs have to be associated with what required to the typically scheme essentially with the safety in moving around at their place and security is a big issue.

Opening Spaces Design as Landscape Architecture

Access means creating areas:

The linking aspect of paths moving longitudinally is always associated with lateral zoning: every path laid through a space divides it. For this reason paths are always elements that articulate and define the space as well. The people on the path help to create the space themselves.

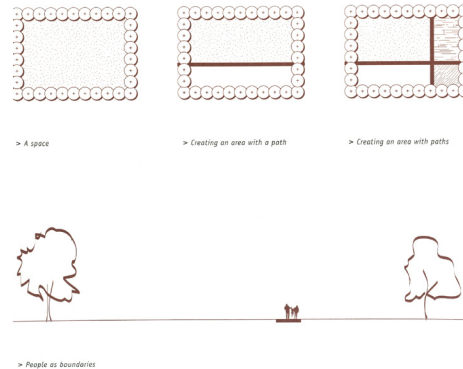


Figure. 1

Creating scenes:

Paths create an effect not so much in their own right like surface etc...but through the visual units, the scenes that open up as people move along. They direct the eye, draw attention to “sights”. Path present the space around them, they tell us “how to read” the qualities of their surroundings.

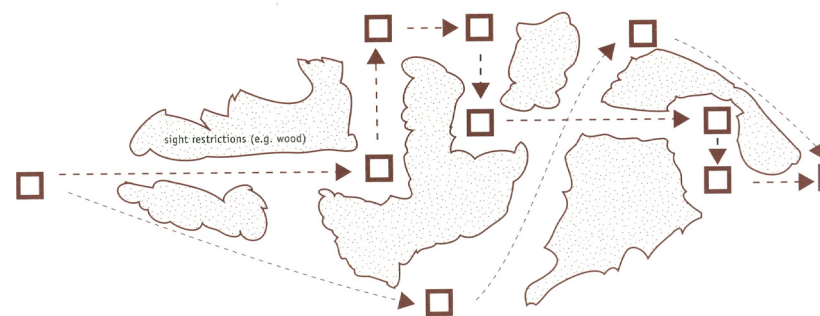


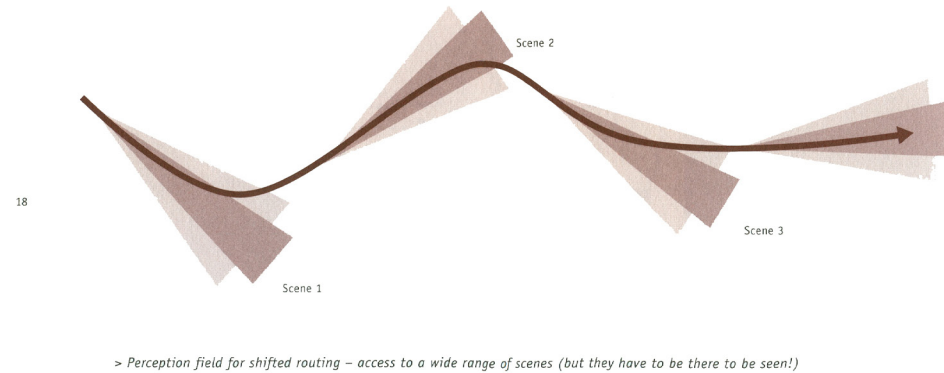
Figure. 2

> Indirectly goal-oriented (intermediate destinations become important, final destination has no priority)

Path routing and visual links:

Curved path creates a goal oriented of reading the open space that provides visual access to changing scenes or images.

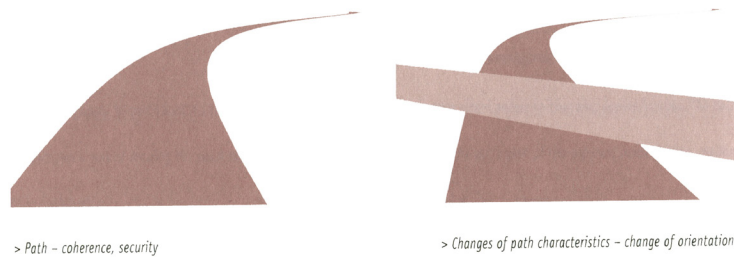
Figure. 3



Path signs and markers:

Path coherence and security are when it characterized of same “path surface-material” and path width is the rule by the fact of the path layout. Consistency of those rules, this is how it conveys coherence and reassurance to users that they are going on the right way which their mind can be at a relaxed mode versus a changing in certain characteristics of the path. Changing of surface materials and width which indicates a change of significance such as orientation or junction to the users.

Figure. 4



Case Studied:

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas in Ukiah, California, is well known for its special Buddhist Temple and school. Master Hsuan Hua was the founder of the Temple. He came to America to propagate the Buddhadharma in the Western world wanting to rescue living beings from suffering and bring them happiness. He faced challenges and countless hardships in order to establish the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas with the goal of teaching and passing on the knowledge of seeding your Bodhi within, with the belief that everyone is a Buddha within and can find a way to bring it out. Bodhi means enlightenment. Master Hua also said: "When I came to America, I made a great vow: I wanted to be a sculptor who would mould living Buddhas, living Bodhisattvas, and living Patriarchs... If I can't transform all the living beings of the world into living Buddhas, living Bodhisattvas, and living Patriarchs, I'll never become a Buddha myself" (cttbusa.org). This Temple has been very successful in carrying on with the Buddhist religious values, especially running a school, elementary to university level, within the temple property. It is an amazing achievement to preach the fundamental basic practices of Buddhism to bring happiness and sow and seed the Bodhi within.



Figure. 5



Figure. 6

Planting Choice

Because the area contains loamy sand soil, it does not hold water well, draining quickly and holding few nutrients. Thus, the vegetables that will suite such soil conditions are tomatoes, lettuce, and peppers, and other common vegetables that can be found in a typical garden because of their preference for well-drained soil. Moreover, Yucca, Amaryllis, Rhododendron, and Baby's Breath will be utilized because of their ability to thrive in loam sandy soil. In addition, the fruits such as apples, peaches, almonds, and citrus will be considered because of their adaptation to such soil conditions, especially oranges.



Element Symbolology:

Bodhi trees have great significance in the history of Buddhism because it symbolizes, and, is also called, wisdom-tree. It is geographically and sacredly representing the place of Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment when he sat and meditated underneath the bodhi tree. Bodhi trees are in the fig family and the leaves have the shape of the heart. It also has long life-living from 100-300 years to reach its maturing age.

Koi fish symbolize power and strength not only in Japan, but throughout Asia. Koi also known as Carp, can be found at almost every temple. This concept came from the Buddhist teachings, which educate that Koi fish swim upstream, against the current, and can survive in bad water conditions, therefore, they are symbolic for power and the advancement of Buddhism.



Figure. 7

Lotus flowers are the flowers, which represent Buddhism and were created as icons for this religion through a similar story as that of the Koi. The typical lotus in Asia grows in a pond full of mud. It arises above the water surface and blossoms into a pure and beautiful flower without eluding any characteristics or traits of dirtiness from the mud below. This symbolizes that the enlightenment is reached and unnecessary impurities have been cleansed.



Figure. 8

Religion: Buddhism

In addition to similar ethnicities, the seniors living within this development also share the same belief in the Buddhist religion. While there are many different types of Buddhism, this particular group believes in the Buddha, which many western believers refer to as Shakyamuni, who founded the enlightenment, the eightfold path, and preached about the five poisons that everyone holds. They are the five harmful qualities that are normal to most beings, namely ignorance, hatred, pride, craving and envy of human nature. The eightfold path is the path preached by Buddha as the way to escape from anguish and suffering. The eight qualities are; right understanding or view (based on understanding the Four Noble Truths), right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. Four Noble Truths are one of the basic concepts in all schools of Buddhism, which are the truth that suffering arises from impermanence, the truth that ignorance is the attachment to impermanent objects, the truth that suffering can be overcome by developing an understanding of the ultimate reality, and the truth that the Eightfold Path is the way to achieve this understanding and liberation from suffering that often represented by the Dharma Wheel. As for Enlightenment, this has been translated as understanding the ultimate reality and escaping the endless cycles of existence and rebirth. It is the point where perfect wisdom and perfect compassion reach balance. Therefore, these all come together within a common religious belief and the idea of self-sufficient senior communities where they can have a similar living style while practicing the same religious belief.



Figure. 9

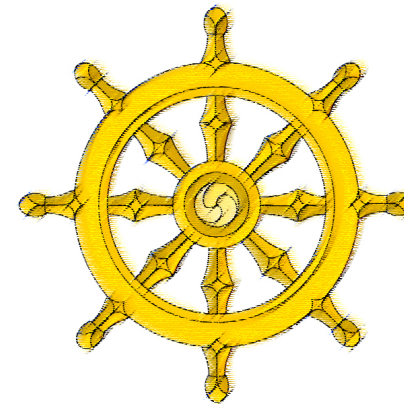


Figure. 10

Cultural Background

The groups of seniors that will be living in this village are Vietnamese Americans and Chinese Americans, which are categorized as Chinese Americans, but are not one hundred percent Chinese. Half are Vietnamese and Chinese, or descendent Chinese, who speak the Vietnamese language, because of their settlement in Vietnam after the migration from China during the Chinese Great Depression.

Consultation

Upon the arrival at the site, I interviewed the monks, nuns, and several of the members going to be living there. The general consensus was they wanted their community to be organic and blend into the existing forest, as well as semi-secluded for peaceful living. The main goal is to create an environment to practice Buddhism.

DESIGN ASPECT

The vision for this project is the ability to house approximately 100 senior members within the village, which will contain a vegetable garden and/or an edible garden where fruits and vegetables can be harvested. Furthermore, part of the plan is to have a trail or a pathway through the site and a spiritual garden, a gathering space, with a koi pond. In addition, a consideration for mobile homes is an option for residential units, while parking areas and accessible roads for emergency purposes will also be developed within the plan.

GOAL

The significance of this project with regards to the landscape architecture profession include, design with an emphasis on cultural and religious communities and the diversity that must be included and dealt within the design process. This project will focus on developing a design for a senior Buddhist community that is self sufficient while also serving the religious rituals and medical care necessary for these elderly individuals. Therefore the challenge this project will pose for landscape architecture, will be the use of design to meet cultural, religious, and practical needs for individuals who will be completely immersed within the site. The expectations are to provide a detailed site plan, illustrating all of the amenities and necessary elements utilized by this community. Additionally, illustrations of proposed features will allow this project to serve as a model for communities of this type throughout the world. As this project concludes, my goal will be to spark interest from the monks, which lie within this community, to consider additional amenities, which I will propose, and to think more about ways in which the design can be implemented in the future. It is my hope that this plan will promote sustainable, beautiful, and functional communities throughout this and all other Buddhist communities.

Analysis

The site is located in Conroe, Texas, one-hour Northeast of Houston, Texas, with the total acreage of 47.025 acres and the dominant plant species of pine forests. According to the Montgomery County website, this land was a timber forest and was previously used it as a hunting ground for recreational activity. There is not that much going on here. Currently at this site there are five existing temporary buildings and a wood deck in progress of construction as a gathering area centralizing at the center of the property where there is an open canopy. There are no paved roads within the property but gravels and dirt road. In addition, there is concrete pathway along the roundabout and there is no designated parking lot. Furthermore, the soil at site is very sandy well drain and very shallow elevation with slope of 5-10% maximum. The following reveals a synopsis of the site survey that was conducted.

Dominant Species:

Pine 85%

Sweetgum 14.5%

Unidentified shrub 0.5%

Soil Survey:

BID-Blanton fine sand, 5 to 12 percent slopes

Eu-Eustis loamy fine sand

Topography:

Slope of maximum of 5 to 10 percent

Site Inventory:

5 buildings

Gravel roads off the main road to the main building

CONCEPT MAPS

Initial concept with linking trails and stopping point in as triangular shapes to indicate.

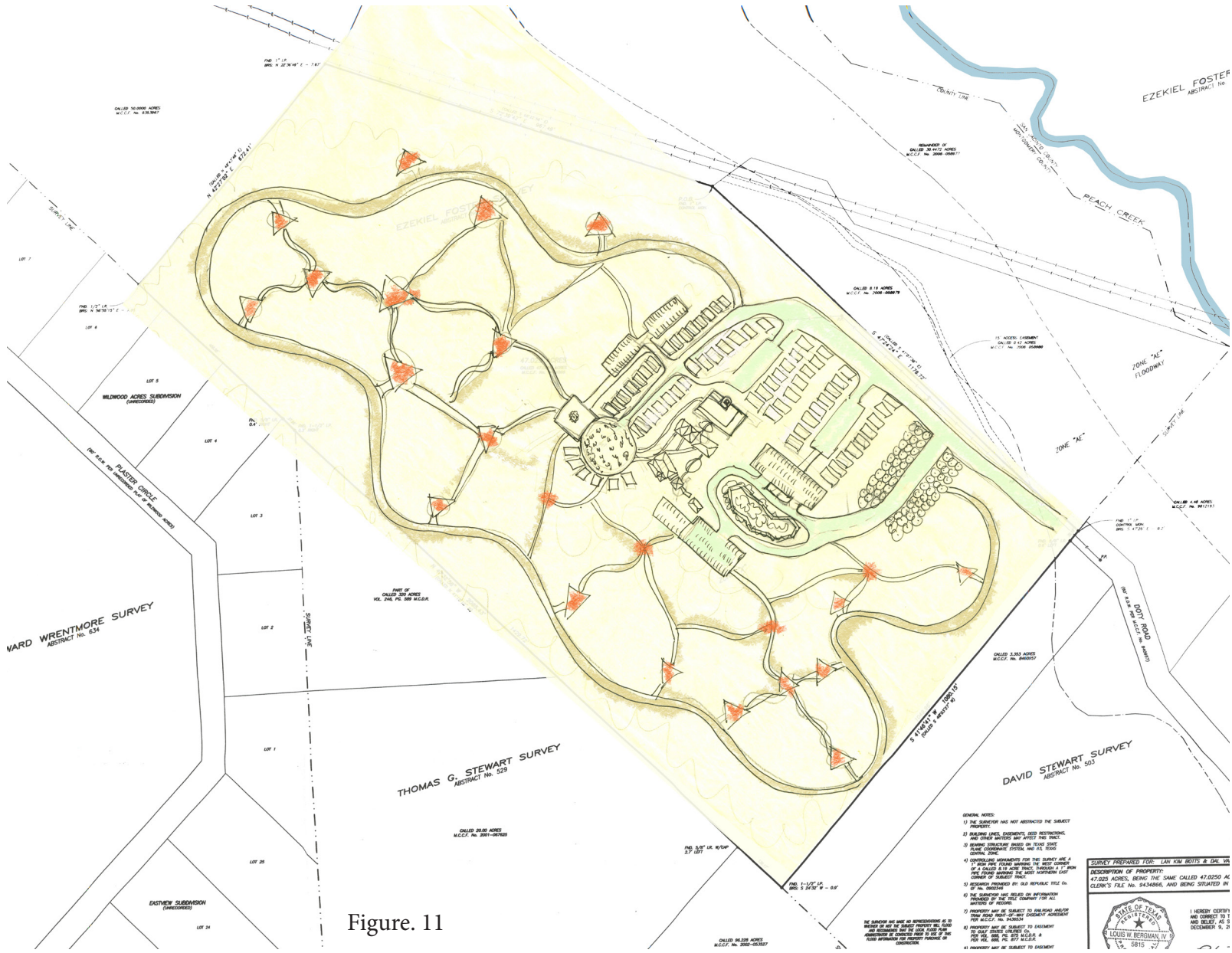


Figure. 11

CONCEPT MAPS

Redefine concept of trails and stopping point and create subcommunity with the wheel shaped which implied from the Dharma Wheel in Buddhism.



Figure. 12

MASTER PLAN

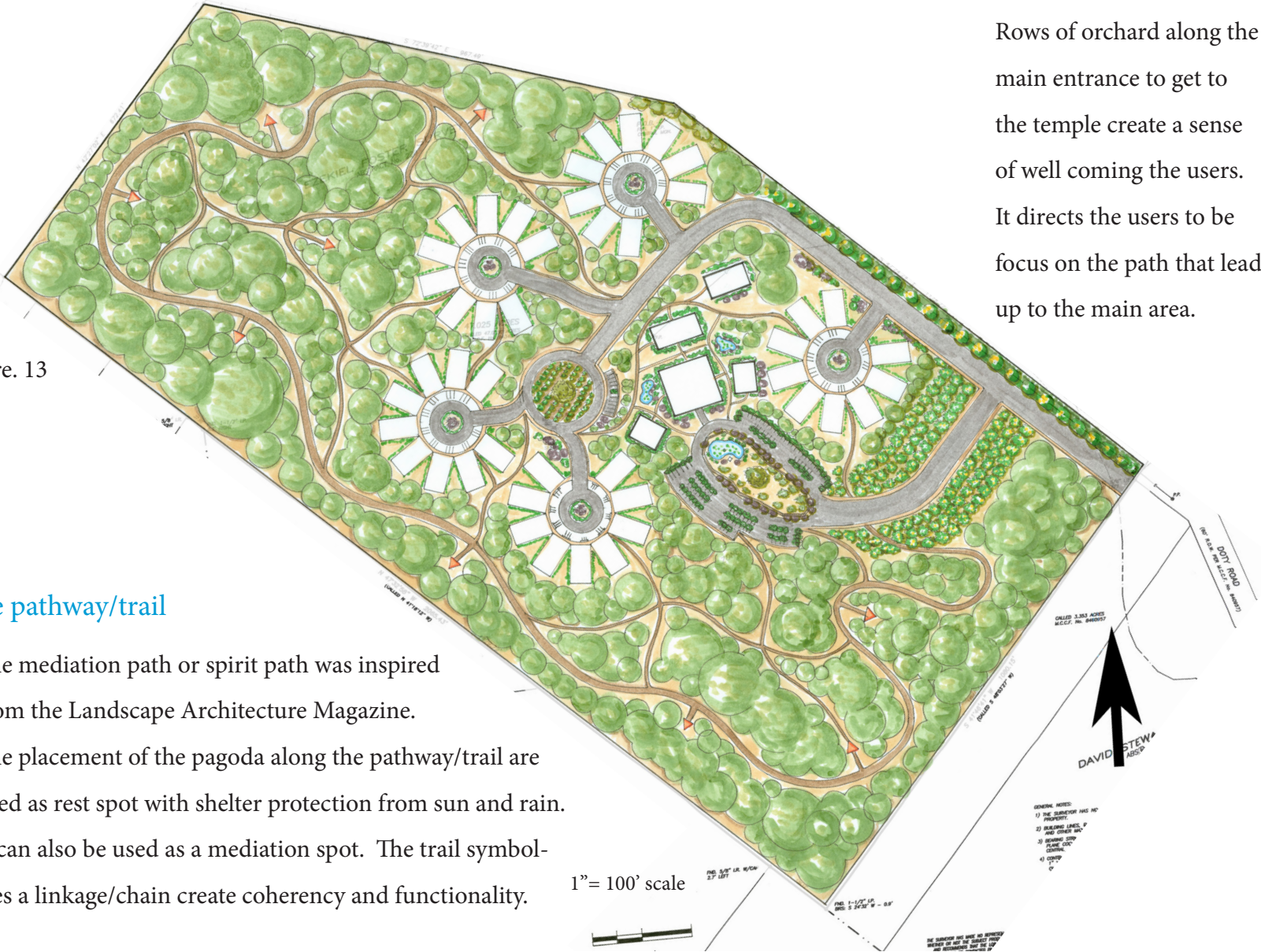
Finalize Design

Rows of orchard along the main entrance to get to the temple create a sense of well coming the users. It directs the users to be focus on the path that lead up to the main area.

Figure. 13

The pathway/trail

The mediation path or spirit path was inspired from the Landscape Architecture Magazine. The placement of the pagoda along the pathway/trail are used as rest spot with shelter protection from sun and rain. It can also be used as a mediation spot. The trail symbol-izes a linkage/chain create coherency and functionality.



- GENERAL NOTES:
- 1) THE SUBMITTER HAS NO PRESENT
 - 2) BUILDING PLANS, IF ANY, MUST BE
 - 3) PLANNING GROUP
 - 4) CHECK

CLOSE-UP OF MASTER PLAN

1" = 40'

A close up view of one of the “wheels” that was inspired by the wheel of dharma in Buddhism. This create a sense of community within a larger community where people are supporting each other in sub-division of group.



Figure. 14

Pathways will weave through the properties to feel the connectedness throughout and within. Creating an experience of with nature by follow your path. The plots that are shown here are not the home-size but property plot.

40'x75' give the members with room from both side and especially the backyard for gardening. Fruits and vegetables can be donated to the Temple.

Perspective of the Path



Perspective view of the spiritual pathway with the pagoda indicates stopping spot.

Figure. 15

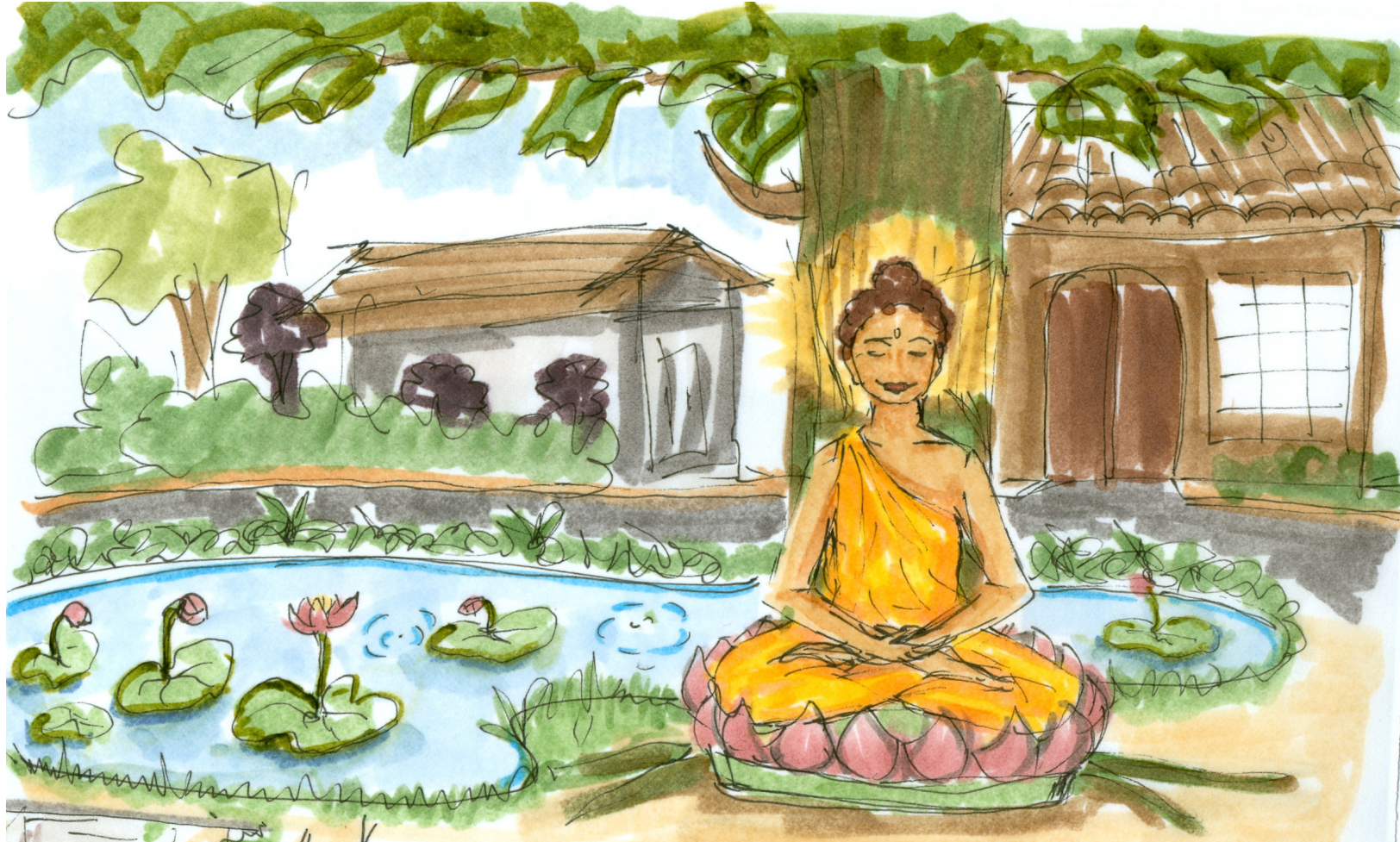
Perspectives of the sub-community



Perspective view of the entry to the ‘Wheels’

Figure. 16

Perspective from the gathering area to the temple

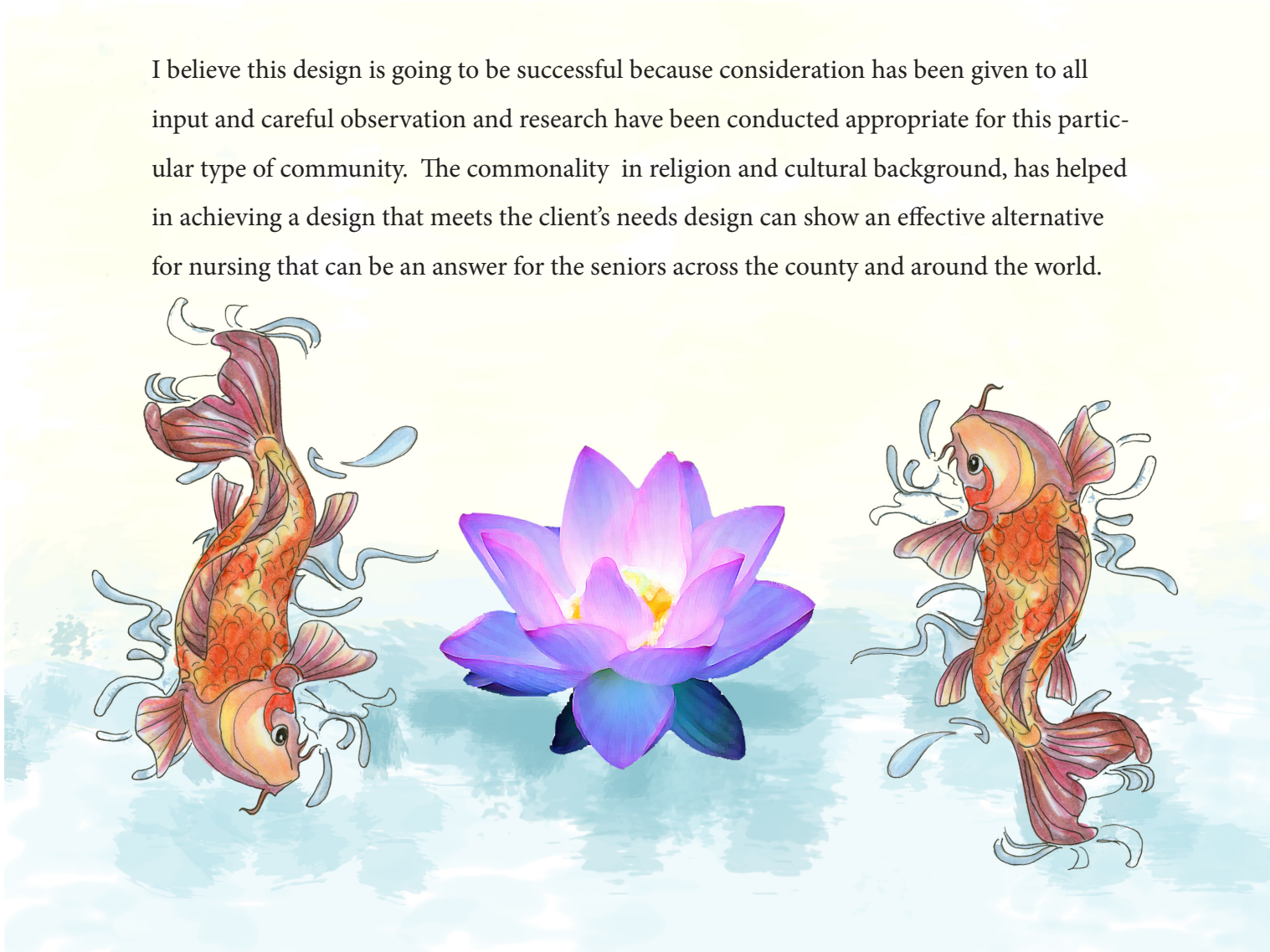


Buddha statue under the Bodhi Tree next to the koi pond containing lotus.

Figure. 17

CONCLUSION

I believe this design is going to be successful because consideration has been given to all input and careful observation and research have been conducted appropriate for this particular type of community. The commonality in religion and cultural background, has helped in achieving a design that meets the client's needs design can show an effective alternative for nursing that can be an answer for the seniors across the county and around the world.



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