

Potiker Family Senior Residence

San Diego, California

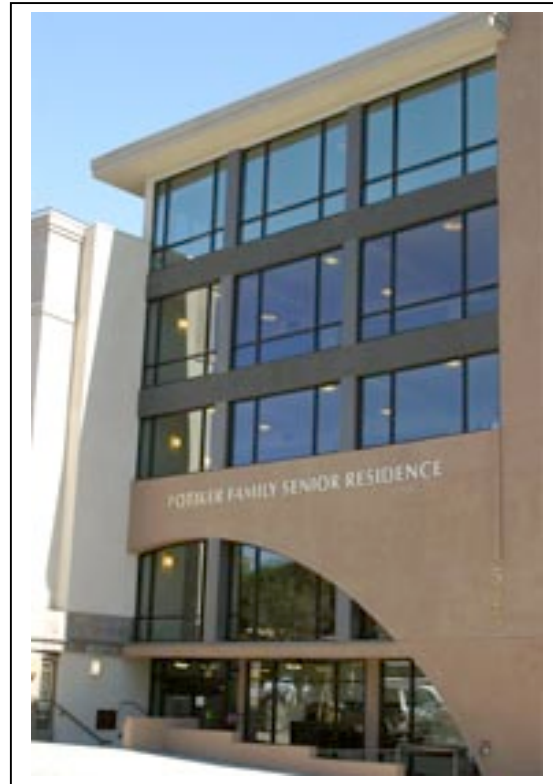
Senior Community Centers of San Diego

The Organization

Senior Community Centers (SCC) provides services for low-income, at-risk seniors in downtown San Diego at SCC's Broadway Day Center and two permanent housing project developed and managed by the SCC, one of which is the 200-unit Potiker Family Senior Residence. The SCC started with a senior day center in 1970 with funding from Catholic Charities. Senior Community Centers' programs for high-risk seniors include meals, affordable housing, treatment for existing mental and physical health problems, preventative care and health education, and social services including assistance in securing entitlements and referrals to community partners.¹

Many of these services are provided at the SCC's Broadway Day Center, which serves adults 60 years of age and older who are on fixed incomes, mostly below the poverty level. The Broadway Day Center attracts homeless clients with its breakfasts and lunches served by local volunteers from companies in downtown San Diego. The Center also offers the services of social workers, a registered nurse, and a psychiatric nurse. As trust develops, the clients use more and more of these services.

The SCC's housing efforts started with placing homeless older adults from a



cold/wet shelter in nearby SRO units with short-term vouchers. The San Diego Redevelopment Agency then leased 20 units for a SCC transitional program in a 200-unit SRO a half a block away from the Broadway Day Center.

The SCC offers money management and representative payee services to all its clients. It encourages clients to put \$400 per month in a bank account in order to accumulate the \$1500 - \$1800 to move into permanent housing. Some clients move to market housing, some to board and care, some back with family, and many move to the Potiker Family Senior Residence, a permanent housing project developed and managed by the SCC.

Because of the success of the Potiker Family Senior Residence, the SCC opened a second permanent housing

project, the 150-unit City Heights project, eight miles from downtown San Diego in August 2007.

The Project

Guided by the Corporation for Supportive Housing and in partnership with Chelsea Investment Company, the CSS opened its first permanent housing project for older adults under the name Market Square Manor in 2003, later changing the name to Potiker Family Senior Residence (PFSR). The PFSR contains 200 studio units of affordable housing for very-low income seniors and provides meals and social services.

Located at 525 East 14th Street between Market Street and Island Avenue, the building is close to public transportation and retail establishments. The rooms are rented furnished and like the bathrooms, rooms are large. There is a large community space in the lobby as well as community spaces on each floor. There is an exercise room and several balconies. The on-site kitchen serves two meals daily although the tenants can avail themselves of the common-area kitchens. The coin-operated laundry operates at cost. The project also provides executive and administrative offices for the SCC.

Most services are offered on-site and are provided in a non-clinical, “clubhouse” modelⁱⁱⁱ by focusing on tenants’ interests in jobs, relationships with each other, and personal responsibility.

Paul Downey, president and CEO for SCC noted that the Potiker Center has been recognized nationally and “Is almost the gold standard for what affordable housing should be. We have

affordable rents, plus, we have supportive services which are critical to seniors being able to function and to survive and to flourish.”



Asset Management

Since the project opened in 2003, SCC contracted with Current Change Consulting Analysis and Evaluation Network for a three-phase comprehensive service planning assessment that was conducted over several years and during the tenures of two different management companies. While the assessment was primarily geared to identifying residents’ service needs, it also provided SCC with the tenants’ candid opinions of the approaches of the two property management companies, including the current firm that has a history of working with special needs buildings.

For instance, as a result of the latest set of tenant assessments, SCC reinforced its strong asset management beliefs for affordable housing for older adults with special needs: (1) train property management staff so they understand the population and community from the perspective of the SCC and from the perspectives of the residents themselves; (2) nurture a culture of seamless accountability to the residents in which property management and SCC staff each have their own roles, but residents

never feel shuffled from one to another when they have concerns; (3) provide clear written and oral explanations regarding rent and building procedures when residents move in and at periodic intervals after move in, as moving can be a difficult time to try to understand emotionally charged issues such as rent and rules; and (4) ensure that every staff person understands the need to treat residents with respect and as autonomous decision-makers in their own lives, even though they require some assistance to live independently.

SCC also recommend clearly articulating the needs of the population and the agency's mission when hiring a property management company. While the property manager needs to receive timely rents and keep resident interaction at a minimum, this need not happen to the exclusion of good human service delivery methods. Management meetings are held for all residents to attend, in the dining room, with a sound system.

Physical Features

The Potiker Family Senior Residence is a five-story mid-rise project in the East Village of San Diego. It includes a commercial quality kitchen for dining room meal service for residents and other clients of the SCC, a library, recreation rooms, a TV room, outdoor courtyards, and a garden (made possible through the City of San Diego's donation of the land after the discovery of an earthquake fault that rendered the plot unbuildable).

Both private units and community rooms offer views of the street, creating at once a feeling of security and a connection

with the city. Outside, the buildings occupy a city block and yet fit in with, rather than dominate, the community because they are built on the same scale and with many similar features as the surrounding buildings.

The design allows for good tenant interaction and for space for diverse service programs. The first floor is wheelchair-accessible from the sidewalk and includes a comfortable reception area.

The SCC executive offices are located on the first floor. Despite the efficiency inherent in on-site administration, SCC staff caution that having offices on-site creates an institutional feel that should be avoided.

Funding

Since this was the Senior Community Centers' first permanent housing project, they turned to the Corporation for Supportive Housingⁱⁱⁱ for guidance. That technical assistance led to a partnership between SCC and Chelsea Investment Corp. as co-developers^{iv}.

Next, the Centre City Development Corporation, a representative of the Redevelopment Agency, secured the site for this project^v. The Corporation paid \$2.2 million for the property and sold it to the developers for a nominal amount. Facing a total development cost of \$18 million, the developers sought financing from a broad range of real estate finance and social service agencies from both the public and private sectors. They arranged financing, including 9% low income housing tax credits and other loans and grants. The San Diego Housing Commission loaned \$1.6

million with no payments as long as residual receipts go to services, which they do at \$100,000 per year^{vi}. A grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank's Affordable Housing Program and a small permanent loan completed the financing for the project. The Potiker family donation paid off the predevelopment loan. An SCC board member who owns a physical therapy business donated the gym equipment.ⁱ

Because of low debt payments, tenant rents support operating costs and some services. The remaining services are funded by San Diego County tobacco settlement funds^{vii}, the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) under Title V of the Older Americans Act^{viii}, an earmark courtesy of Congresswoman Susan Davis for a second social worker, and fundraisers.

Tenant Characteristics

SCC received a grant from The California Endowment^{ix} grant that allowed SCC to survey the Potiker Family Senior Residence tenants in depth. The assessment based on 2003 data and released in 2006, revealed diverse physical, emotional, intellectual and social backgrounds:

ⁱ The new City Heights project followed the Potiker financing structure model with the Redevelopment Authority buying the land, \$21 million in 9% tax credits, a Commission loan with residual receipts going to services, and a search under way for a donor to take out a \$2.5 million bank loan. One hundred thousand dollars for services is included as an above-the-line expense. The project will receive California Mental Health Services Act Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) funding for 24/7 services for 25 units.)

- The minimum tenant age was 62.
- Seventy-seven percent of the tenants were over age 65.
- 76% were male.
- Sixty-three percent were white, 14% Hispanic, 9% African-American, 6% Filipino, and 4% other.
- The primary language of 84% was English, 6% was Spanish, and 6% was Tagalog.
- Five percent said that they needed an interpreter.
- Mean monthly income was \$947.36;
- The most typical income sources were Social Security retirement and SSI.
- Fewer than 10% reported incomes from Social Security Disability or VA pensions, although 38% reported being veterans.
- While 18% reported 8 years or less of formal education, 21% said they had some college or post-high school training and 26% reported having a college degree and/or post graduate education.
- One-quarter of the tenants never married, and only 9% are currently married.
- In the year prior to leasing at Potiker, 28% had been homeless at least once (33% of the men and 14% of the women).ⁱⁱ
- Many tenants suffered an injury or illness years ago that the CSS staff believe contributed to their homeless status. The seniors, however, discount such connections.

ⁱⁱ Staff at the CSS Broadway Day Center have seen an increase in the past year of 60-62 year olds with no income, which they attribute to baby boomers who lost jobs and went through savings, insurance, homes, and family support.

- Twenty-five percent reported they had fallen at least once in the prior six months.
- Thirty-five percent of the tenants report having been institutionalized.
- When asked where they lived immediately prior to moving to Potiker, 41% said an apartment or house, 33% an SRO hotel, 15% shelter or streets, 4% nursing/board and care, and 7% other arrangements.

Supportive Services

SCC secured funding from The California Endowment to implement the Culturally Responsive Geriatric Support Service Model for Supportive Housing. As a result, PFSR offers culturally and socially sensitive supportive services, including physical and mental health education and counseling, health monitoring, and legal counseling in order to address residents' needs before they become barriers to maintaining their housing status. In addition to these on-site services, SCC also collaborates with Sharp Downtown Senior Health Clinic (along with Sharp Mesa Vista Psychiatric Health Hospital).^x

The SCC staff believe that homeless older adults benefit from a transitional program prior to permanent housing. They note that as few as six months of homelessness make any older adult frail, so that homeless older adults need to be stabilized and have their physical and mental health needs met in transitional housing with no time limit prior to moving to permanent housing.

Prior to leasing at Potiker, a caseworker meets with the potential resident to

create a service plan. SCC learned how crucial this step was when they did not include it at initial leasing. Many tenants isolated and resisted subsequent efforts to engage them. Now, new tenants work with and trust Potiker services staff even before moving in.

Many activities at Potiker are offered using a “clubhouse” mental health model that focuses on resident interests (rather than on limitations and disabilities) and helps them come out of isolation. An Older Adult Rehabilitative Specialist on staff coordinates the clubhouse programs, including those that are resident-led and that allow tenants to offer their skills to others. The clubhouse meets once per week, mostly to announce the schedule of clubhouse programs. In addition to the clubhouse programs, a resident-led group, the Ambassadors, functions as a residents’ committee. Started by a resident to help address safety concerns, these meetings facilitate information sharing. While this is a resident-led group, the Older Adult Rehabilitative Specialist attends the meetings to gain and provide information.

In addition, Potiker offers two hot, nutritious meals daily.

The California Endowment grant also allowed SCC to survey tenants regarding services that help them maintain independence, stability and participation in the larger community. Respondents reported participating in these activities at Potiker, 75% of which are offered as part of the clubhouse:

- AA meetings
- Ambassadors group
- Bible study group

- Classes on physiology, anatomy
- Clubhouse meetings
- Community meetings
- Computer club
- Dancing
- Exercise class
- Gardening
- Gym
- Hebrew study group
- Job training program
- Knitting club
- Library
- Musical events
- Potlucks and picnics
- Singing club
- Talking with other residents
- Trips
- TV room
- Volunteer work at the Windmill Thrift Store
- Watching the San Diego Padres fireworks at PETCO Park from the outside deck
- Yoga

Tenants with Medi-Cal are referred to the San Diego County's In-Home Support Services program. This program combines health-care services with social support services with the goal of keeping older adults as independent as possible. The program gives seniors the option to remain at home with needed care and support rather than going to a hospital or nursing home. In addition, the SCC staff offers individual coaching for tenants who lack housekeeping skills, which they have found more effective than group classes about housekeeping.

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- ⁱⁱⁱ For Information on the *Corporation for Supportive Housing*, see: <http://www.csh.org/>
 - ^{iv} For information on *Chelsea Investment Corp.*, see: <http://www.chelseainvestco.com>
 - ^v The *Centre City Development Corporation* web site is: <http://www.ccdc.com/>
 - ^{vi} The *San Diego Housing Commission* web site is: <http://www.sdhc.net/>
 - ^{vii} For the *San Diego Health and Human Services Agency* web site, see: <http://www2.sdcountry.ca.gov/hhsa>
 - ^{viii} For information on *Title V of the Older Americans Act*, see: <http://www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaprogram/olderworkers/olderworkers.asp>
 - ^{ix} For information on *The California Endowment*, see: <http://www.calendow.org>
 - ^x For the *Sharp HealthCare* website, see: <http://www.sharp.com>

ⁱ The *Senior Community Centers'* web site is: www.servingseniors.org

ⁱⁱ For a description of the clubhouse model, see: <http://www.iccd.org/article.asp?articleID=3>