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New Senior Center Looks to a Greener Future

By Emily Feinberg

On August 10th 2007, Senior Community Centers completed and opened their newest endeavor in City Heights. Their new building offers affordable housing to low-income seniors, a group of San Diegan's who are often overlooked or fall through the cracks. Set in a calm, senior-friendly area, City Heights Square's 150 units provide an ideal living situation for older members of our community.

The City Heights Square building is one of the first centers devoted completely to low-income seniors, and the second project of Senior Community Centers. Paul Downey, President and CEO of Senior Community Centers, explains that there are three driving forces behind building this center. "First, in less than 10 years the number of seniors needing housing will double due to the baby-boomers coming-of-age. Second, the renting prices in San Diego are often not conducive to those living off of a low income like \$800/month, and third, we want to provide supportive housing services and become a family that many of the residents lack."



Senior Community Centers provides a home for the elderly.

Along with City Heights Council member Tony Atkins, Downey explained that the seniors who are already in the facility are "adjusting really well." City Heights Square is conveniently located near common bus routes, a new library, shopping areas and parks. "This Senior Community Centers' project ensures that our seniors have an affordable, quality place to live; one that provides easy access to services, which are vital to the health and safety of its residents," explains Atkins.

The seniors at this facility come from all over the world. "Our biggest challenge was to incorporate all of the diversity that

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we have in our community while working to ensure cultural sensitivity," says Downey. Not only are they stressing cultural awareness by providing indiscriminate housing for seniors of all cultures, they are doing it in a way that is safe for the environment, or "green". Using solar panels to provide much of the energy needs of the building, Senior Community Centers are 15% more efficient than California's energy standards.

Anticipating a need for environmentally friendly living situations, Senior Community Centers are a non-profit organization attempting to cradle the past while embracing and moving forth into the future.

Senior Community Centers partnered with Chelsea Investment Corporation to provide funding from the San Diego Redevelopment Agency, the Centre City Development Corporation and 9% tax credit. Both CIC and SCC believe that this venture couldn't have been possible without the help of the community, but they still need as much support as they can get.

Residents of Senior Community Centers must be 62 years or older and have an annual income of \$22,000 or less. The center is located at 43rd Street and Polk Avenue in City Heights. Fortunately, there are still units available at the City Heights location, so if you or someone you know is interested in residency, contact Hyder Property management at (619) 235-6572 or look online at www.servingseniors.org.