

Preparing for the 'age wave':

a new model builds
capacity in San Francisco



The Institute on Aging Senior Campus formally opened in San Francisco, California, in April 2011. Rendering by Clayton Perry

The focus of the new Institute on Aging Senior Campus is to provide everything necessary to enable older adults ‘to maintain their health, well-being, independence and participation in life’

As with any long-anticipated event, the “age wave”—that demographic phenomenon set to transform society—often seemed slightly unreal and distant over the years. Perhaps that accounts for the late, and in many cases inadequate, planning and preparation this slow-building seismic shift has engendered. But a new report¹ from the Washington, DC-based Brookings Institution reinforces the gathering sense that the wave is, indeed, at the shore.

In his report, demographer William H. Frey, a senior fellow at this nonprofit research organization, sees “a clear message” in the 2010 United States Census: “The older population is growing everywhere.” Frey, also a University of Michigan research professor, notes that the 45-and-older age group grew 18 times faster than its under-45 counterpart in the years 2000–2010.¹ Further, Boomers will swell the ranks of the 65-plus population this decade, he reminds readers.

“The specter of a rapidly aging society is now a front-and-center issue for policymakers, politicians, and Boomers themselves,” writes Frey. “All are concerned with the future costs of medical care, retirement programs, and a host of public and private services that must be adapted to an older population.”

Like other cities, San Francisco—California’s cultural gem—is growing older. According to the US Census Bureau’s 2005–2009 American Community Survey,² the citywide median age is now an estimated 38.2 years, which is higher than that of the state (34.6 years) and nation (36.5 years).² Also notable is the proportion and diversity of older adults

in the Bay City. Currently, about one in five citizens is 60 years of age or above,² while more than half the city’s older adults were identified as non-white in the 2000 census.³ Local service providers also estimate that up to 17% of older San Franciscans may be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.³

What about the future? The Association of Bay Area Governments projects that San Francisco’s age 60-plus population will increase from its current level of 148,200 to 174,000 by 2020.³ The proportion of adults ages 85 and older will also rise dramatically—perhaps even doubling by 2030, as predicted by the California Department of Finance.³ And, troublingly, a city report shows that almost one in three adults over 75 lives in poverty.³ So the question becomes how to support this very large and very diverse population in living independently and well.

The Living with Dignity Strategic Plan 2009–2013, published by the San Francisco Department of Aging and Adult Services, presents numerous community-based strategies and objectives from the Long Term Care Coordinating Council. The group’s observations about how to meet the city’s challenges include the following:

“New housing and service models must be developed to take advantage of every opportunity to keep people in their existing housing (e.g., scattered site housing, integration of housing with long-term care services, etc.).”³

The recently unveiled Institute on Aging Senior Campus offers one such model.

An integrated model

A partnership between Institute on Aging (IOA) and BRIDGE Housing Corporation, IOA’s Senior Campus integrates affordable housing with community-based services, including affordable

Resources

BRIDGE Housing Corporation
www.bridgehousing.com

Institute on Aging
www.ioaging.org

Institute on Aging: Center for Elders and Youth in the Arts
<http://ceya.ioaging.org>

healthcare, to support independent living for Bay Area older adults. This new building also enhances IOA’s capacity to serve an aging San Francisco.

An independent nonprofit organization, “IOA provides a wide variety of community-based healthcare and supportive services to older and disabled adults,” says Director of Communications and Marketing Janet Howell. “These services are designed to help people maintain their ability to live independently—even when quite frail—and avoid institutional care. They include, among others, daytime health center programs with special vans for transportation; home care; help with the household; assistance with financial affairs (for example, balancing the checkbook and paying bills); telephone helpline; emotional support; creative arts; and spiritual care and support groups.” The organization serves clients of all incomes in a variety of settings in San Francisco, Marin County and the San Francisco Peninsula region.

With the completion of the Senior Campus, many of IOA’s programs and services, offices and staff are centralized for the first time in its history, saving the organization nearly one million dollars [US] per year.⁴ Over its 26-plus years in existence, IOA has used various leased facilities in the Bay Area, explains Howell. These facilities have

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Owned and managed by BRIDGE Housing, The Coronet apartments occupy the top four floors of the Institute on Aging Senior Campus. This area includes landscaped courtyard areas, a community room, a library and a craft room. Photos by Keith Baker. Images courtesy of BRIDGE Housing

grown increasingly expensive over time. “A long-held dream was for the organization to have a home of its own,” she adds—“a well-designed and conducive setting, where many services could be better integrated.”

As IOA President and CEO David Werdagar, MD, MPH, stated in 2008: “Consolidation of our programs in a single building will have another less tangible, but even more important, benefit for IOA and the 20,000 people we serve annually. Every day we rely on the input of experts from multiple disciplines working in close collaboration to develop effective solutions to the complex needs of the people we serve. The Senior Campus will allow for greater interaction among IOA’s expert staff, which we believe will lead not only to improved care, but also to new innovations in how we deliver services to our clients.”²⁴

IOA began to develop this base of operations in 2000. That year, the organization purchased a property and launched an \$18-million capital campaign, which has drawn donations totaling \$15.7 million to date. In the years of plan-

ning that followed, Howell observes, “a unique opportunity became apparent: to locate IOA services together with affordable seniors housing. And so, in collaboration with BRIDGE Housing, a nonprofit affordable housing developer, plans for a Senior Campus gradually unfolded,” she says.

An holistic approach

Officially opened on April 2, 2011, IOA’s Senior Campus is a \$100-million building located in San Francisco’s Richmond District, “a vibrant central location close to shops, cultural activities and educational institutions,” Howell states, adding that the area is also well-served by local transit. Such lively pedestrian- and transit-oriented neighborhoods encourage older adults to feel a part of, and participate in, the greater community. (Learn more in the article “Shaping vibrant affordable communities: insights, observations and trends” on pages 8–15.)

At 50,000 sq. ft., “the first two floors of the six-story Senior Campus structure—and a sub-lobby level with an auditorium and conference rooms—constitute

the new home of IOA,” according to Howell. “The top four floors comprise The Coronet, 150 apartments owned and managed by BRIDGE Housing.” These apartments include 29 studio, 110 one-bedroom and 11 two-bedroom units. “Fifty-three of these apartments are reserved for quite frail older adults,” Howell adds, “who will participate in an all-inclusive healthcare program, known as the Lifeways PACE program.” (Operated by IOA, Lifeways PACE is part of the national PACE program, a US Medicare initiative that provides coordinated care and services for eligible older adults.) Other community residents are expected to benefit from their close proximity by using IOA’s programs and services.

The Coronet incorporates California Mission design elements, and includes landscaped courtyard areas, two community rooms, a craft room and underground parking. Additionally, original artworks from a local nonprofit decorate common areas. Apartments at The Coronet “are geared to [adults]

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Master developer BRIDGE Housing partnered with the Institute on Aging (IOA) to create a mixed-use senior campus in San Francisco. The new building offers 150 affordable apartments for older adults and a facility for IOA’s aging services. Rendering by Clayton Perry

ages 55 and older with annual incomes ranging from [US]\$11,295 to \$34,400 for a household of two (15–40% of San Francisco Median Income),” offers a BRIDGE Housing release. “Rents range from \$271 to \$811 per month, depending on apartment size and resident income.”⁵ This housing was substantially funded by the San Francisco Mayor’s Office of Housing, which contributed \$24 million toward the project’s costs.⁶

IOA’s floors feature an array of amenities and spaces, including 70 offices, two clinics, and two adult day care centers—an Adult Day Health Center and an Alzheimer’s Day Care Center. The Ruth Ann Rosenberg Adult Day Health

Center has felt the impact of recent cuts to California’s Medicaid (MediCal), which funds approximately 70% of the program. Ongoing uncertainty has prompted IOA to restructure the Adult Day Health Center into more of a social day model for now, offering structured activities, intellectual stimulation, socialization and the like for participants, but no health services. The organization has accommodated clients as best possible, and hopes it can continue to evolve services.

Another IOA amenity is the senior fitness and rehabilitation center. This program offers conventional physical therapy and nontraditional approaches,

including tailored fitness training, to enhance the physical and mental functioning of clients. In addition, a geriatric consultation clinic will open in 2012, in partnership with the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine.

IOA’s fully equipped education center features an auditorium and five meeting rooms for professional and community educational events. These spaces “provide educational opportunities for clients, staff, residents and health professionals in the community,” says Howell. For example, professional trainings take place monthly on a wide variety of topics. Examples include:

- Staying Mentally Fit: Brain Fitness and Fun
- Safety First! Fall Prevention for Seniors
- Elder Abuse Prevention: Trends and Best Practices
- Communication Tools

The auditorium hosts films and live performances as well, including those produced by IOA’s Center for Elders and Youth in the Arts (CEYA) program. This award-winning arts program brings together youth and older adults to create works of art—from poetry and painting, to songwriting and theater—under the guidance of professional local artists. CEYA provides programming to older adults in their homes, at the Senior Campus, and at sites such as assisted living and residential communities, Lifeways, and adult social day and day health programs. The Senior Campus

provides CEYA with a fully equipped studio for its use and houses its Corporate Art Lending Program.

Finally, the Friendship Line, IOA’s telephone helpline, “now has suitable facilities to accommodate the trained volunteers who assist in staffing its 24/7 operations,” Howell notes. This service offers emotional support and reassurance to older adults who call the helpline, as well as crisis intervention, counseling, elder abuse prevention help, and information and referral. Volunteers also make outreach calls, providing individuals with medication and well-being checks as well as a friendly ongoing connection.

“As the needs of the community continue to evolve,” Howell observes, “we will continue to do so with the services we offer.”

‘A vibrant place’

In creating the Senior Campus, IOA has sought to build capacity for its current and future services by ensuring ample room for program expansion. Developing this project took more than 10 years, and during that time, the organization had to address a variety of issues.

The Senior Campus was constructed on the site of the Coronet Theater, a large, single-screen movie house built in 1949. While some San Franciscans quietly lamented the theater’s loss, others in the local community expressed concerns about such things as the new building’s scale and context, as well as its impact on neighborhood traffic and parking.⁷ Over the nearly four-year planning approval process, the campus architects adjusted the design to incorporate com-

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San Francisco muralist Neil Seth Levine designed the elaborate "Tree of Life" mosaic in the foyer of the Institute on Aging Senior Campus



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munity input and planning commission requests—adding more parking, for example. The project received final approval in spring 2006.

“IOA made certain that the Senior Campus was designed in a way that the façade would mesh well with the surrounding buildings to keep our neighbors happy,” comments Howell. “More importantly, the facility had to be comfortable and functional for our participants—everything from the circular interior shape (representing the “Tree of Life” and allowing participants to find their way back to the center garden courtyard) to the floor patterns and wall coverings (for visual stimulation) were designed with the older adult in mind. We were also very aware of the financial limitations many older adults and their families have,” Howell adds, “therefore a key component was ensuring that we continue to offer affordable services despite the large expense of the project. The Senior Campus Capital Campaign was created for this purpose—IOA will continue to raise funds until our (\$18 million) goal is reached.”

Award-winning San Francisco architect Ignatius Tsang created the design for the interior of IOA’s campus. Envisioning the campus “as a vibrant place where older adults come to engage in stimulating activities from arts to exercise to meditation,” Tsang drew from nature, particularly trees and tree rings as metaphors for aging, to infuse natural design elements in the building.

According to IOA materials, office and activity spaces are designed around a central Garden Court to maximize access to natural sunlight in the building. Walls of windows throughout IOA’s campus showcase private gardens and courtyards, including the Robert and Audrey Sockolov Friendship Courtyard, a peaceful outdoor space intended for relaxation and reflection. The focal point, however, is the central curved

staircase, with its clear design allowing visibility to all three floors. Rising next to the three-story staircase is a colorful “Tree of Life” mosaic fashioned by local muralist Neil Seth Levine from over one million ceramic tiles. This inspirational tree motif demonstrates “the natural, beautiful and imperfect phenomenon of aging manifesting nature’s passage of time,” IOA explains, and honors the older adults who pass through the building each day.

A model campus

IOA’s Senior Campus combines affordable independent-living seniors housing with community-based long-term healthcare and supportive services—a unique model nationally, say IOA’s Werdegar and Howell. As Werdegar explains, “The focus of IOA’s new campus is to provide everything necessary to enable older adults in the Bay Area to maintain their health, well-being, independence and participation in life.” This model also offers “research opportunities on the relationships between affordable housing and long-term care services,” Howell adds.

“IOA programs take on added importance in the current economic climate,” Howell believes, “because they point the way to improving the care of older and disabled adults while achieving significant cost savings. The programs enable older adults to ‘age in place,’ to stay in their own homes and avoid costly emergency room visits, hospitalization and nursing home placements. As our population continues to age, the need for the services we offer will increase,” she states. “Our campus can serve as a model on how communities can integrate healthcare and housing for those with modest incomes.”

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Images courtesy of the Institute on Aging

Institute on Aging mission

Our mission is to enhance the quality of life for adults as they age by enabling them to maintain their health, well-being, independence and participation in the community.

We fulfill this mission for a diverse community by developing and providing innovative programs in health, social service, creative arts, spiritual support, education and research.