

## ~ Housing ~

### Aging in Place...Housing and So Much More

*This article is part of an on-going series highlighting innovative and promising practices that promote healthy aging. To learn more about how to make your community more aging-friendly, please see our publication, "A Healthy Community Perspective on Aging Well," available at [www.civicpartnerships.org](http://www.civicpartnerships.org).*

The Unity Council, a non-profit community development organization based in Oakland, California, "made a decision many years ago to focus services in Fruitvale and to look comprehensively at creating a healthier and safer community for all," according to Marsha Murrington, Executive Vice President.

The Unity Council's three housing facilities in the Fruitvale neighborhood provide a total of 187 units for low-income seniors. Residents at Las Bougainvilleas, as well as Posada de Colores and Casa Velasco, participate in a variety of recreational and social activities on site. Courtyards and community rooms create space for parties, exercise classes, informal chats and movie nights. Residents also receive transportation and assistance accessing benefits and community resources to continue to live independently. The affordable housing and support services have allowed one 107 year old resident at Posada de Colores to live there for 30 years!

Las Bougainvilleas is one of the three senior housing facilities owned and operated by the Unity Council in the Fruitvale neighborhood. Its 68 one-bedroom apartments for seniors aged 62 and older are HUD-subsidized, so residents pay only 30 percent of their adjusted income in rent. Las Bougainvilleas is an award winning, high density development designed to encourage resident interaction and a pedestrian lifestyle. Located on the corner of the Fruitvale Transit Village, residents can easily access shopping,

health care, the library, a multi-service senior center, and public transit via walking paths and pedestrian-friendly streets.



Valuable as the affordable housing and on-site support are, it was the development of the Fruitvale Transit Village that allowed older adults in this neighborhood to not only age in place, but age in their community. The mixed use complex includes a transit hub, retail plaza, senior center, library, health center and housing units. Fruitvale Village grew out of the community's protest to BART's (Bay Area Rapid Transit) plans to build a parking garage at the site. Not only would the parking structure have isolated the Fruitvale station from the neighborhood's commercial center, residents feared it would increase problems in an already crime-ridden and deteriorating area.


The community protest led by The Unity Council resulted in a partnership with BART and the City of Oakland to design and develop a 257,000 square foot transit village in which the needs and voices of community residents played a major role. Of particular importance for older adults was the decision to locate the San Antonio Senior Center, the Cesar Chavez Library and La Clinica de La Raza in

the Fruitvale Village.

Tracy Jensen, Senior Services Administrator for the City of Oakland wasn't surprised by that decision. "The City has historically taken responsibility for programs for seniors and children. Fruitvale is just another manifestation of that commitment," commented Jensen. "It is so important to have this external site for the senior center so residents get out and have different experiences than they can have at a housing facility," observed Murrington.

Another enhancement to the Fruitvale neighborhood that has benefited senior residents has been the establishment of a weekly farmer's market. The market, located in the plaza areas in and around the transit village, provides high quality, locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables at affordable prices and accepts food stamps.

In addition to enriching the community with important services, the human service tenants/owners of Fruitvale Village also draw people to the retail stores in the village and contribute valuable revenue to the project. As part of the project's complex capitalization, the City of Oakland pre-paid 20 years rent for the senior center and library.

"It's not just good for older adults, but good for the city and community to have these services so seniors can age in place," stated Jensen. The co-location of senior housing and Fruitvale Village takes that one more step and allows seniors to "age in community." 

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