

## ~ Housing ~

### Burbank Senior Artists Colony

*Editor's note: This article is the second in a series on innovative and promising practices that expand upon six domains featured in our recent publication, "A Healthy Community Perspective on Aging Well." The domains are Varied Housing Options, Transportation, Community Involvement, Employment, Lifelong Learning, and Supportive Services.*

Eschewing resort-style retirement in traditional venues such as Florida and Arizona, the residents of the Burbank Senior Artists Colony embrace the opportunity to continue their



Visual artists can practice their craft in the arts studio at the Burbank Artists Colony.

creative exploits in the city many of them have worked in for years. Located in northern Los Angeles County and often called the "Media Capital of the World," Burbank is home to many Hollywood studios and other creative management organizations.

The City of Burbank partnered with a local non-profit organization, More than Shelter for Seniors, and the Meta Housing Corporation to leverage the creative capital in the City in the provision of healthy and creative aging programs. The resulting Burbank Senior Artists Colony offers programs and services that contribute to the self-actualization of seniors.

The Burbank Senior Artists Colony

combines amenities such as a 45-seat theatre and screening room, arts studios and classrooms, a computer media arts center, digital filmmaking and editing equipment and facilities, outdoor performance areas and an art gallery and sculpture garden with traditional 55-and-over services. At the Colony, residents write and direct films, perform in music ensembles, paint works of art and act in plays, among other creative pursuits. Many, though not all, of the residents have retired from careers in the entertainment industry.

The Senior Artists Colony is sensitive to the needs of older adults, many of whom live on a fixed income. Meta Housing Corporation works to provide affordable and market-rate housing alongside one another. The 141-unit community offers 70 percent of the units at market-rate rent, while 30 percent are reserved for low-income residents. Additionally, the Colony takes advantage of local amenities in addition to those in the complex. One block from downtown Burbank, residents can walk to many shops and restaurants.

The Burbank Senior Artists Colony represents a new approach to senior housing, one that incorporates healthy aging elements such as lifelong learning and community involvement. Involvement in participatory arts programs has been shown to improve mental health in seniors and reduce need for doctor visits. The Colony was recently recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts as a model for creative aging.

Tim Carpenter, the organization's Executive Director, specifically wanted to create an innovative community that would encourage artistic seniors to continue to collaborate and create. When asked if he plans to create similar communities



A street-side view of the Burbank Senior Artists Colony.

of interest elsewhere, he replied: "Each community we work in and help create takes on its own personality – we are great believers in helping to guide a community and how seniors live and engage inside it – not forcing it. We are looking mainly here in Los Angeles County but considering other areas in the west as we expand."



The courtyard at the Colony features a fountain, a fireplace and ample seating.

For more information on the Burbank Senior Artists Colony, visit:  
<http://www.mtsfs.org/colony.html>

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