



Nikkei Senior Gardens Case Study

In the mid-1990s, the leaders of the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center had an ambitious dream: to establish a senior living community that would provide a warm, caring home for Japanese Americans and others in their area.

They envisioned a peaceful Japanese-themed garden and restaurant-style dining offering Japanese and American cuisine, with chopsticks and a teacup at each place setting. They wanted to provide a wide array of stimulating activities and high-quality care for those needing assisted living or memory support services.

Their dream began to take shape in the form of Nikkei Senior Gardens, which eventually would offer 78 apartments serving 86 residents at full occupancy. But the founders of Nikkei soon realized that the operation and management of such a community required specialized expertise. They turned to Seniority, which had already achieved success at a similar Japanese American senior community, Kokoro, in San Francisco.

In 2004, Seniority was engaged to provide operations management and marketing services for Nikkei Senior Gardens. Seniority hit the ground running, working hard to provide the critical leadership it knew was needed during the community's pre-opening.

Among Seniority's first orders of business was to hire an executive director with the unique qualifications required by such a community, including significant experience in opening a new community. Next, Seniority brought in a talented director of sales and marketing with the specific skills and experience needed for opening and actively marketing the community. As the project proceeded, positive results became evident. Nikkei enjoyed a successful transition through the licensing process, and the community met its ambitious pre-opening sales goals.

A full array of services and deliverables provided by Seniority positioned the community for a smooth opening and successful operation. These included:

- A detailed operating budget created with the realistic lens of costs, needs and obstacles in a challenging economy
- Comprehensive management, sales and marketing plans with special attention to the needs and interests of Nikkei's Issei (elder) target audience
- Meticulous pre-opening planning, including comprehensive checklists prior to opening day
- Clear documentation for enrolling residents, encompassing best practices and learnings from other successful Seniority communities
- 346 pages of carefully crafted policies and procedures for staff and personnel at every level
- Clearly articulated assisted living policies and procedures, written to ensure a superior experience for residents in every stage of care
- Rigorous operational standards to far exceed legal requirements
- Performance surveys for residents and employees to ensure continued satisfaction and ongoing improvements



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The Results

As the January 2009 opening drew near, Seniority hired all remaining management and line staff. The opening was a major success, with more than 500 community leaders, prospects and interested parties in attendance to enjoy community tours as well as live Japanese musical performances, Japanese cuisine and artful floral displays. The event was covered by the media, including local television news.

Seniority's marketing efforts clearly bore fruit. Just six months after its unique opening celebration, Nikkei Senior Gardens was 50 percent occupied. With Seniority's guidance, interest remains continuous and strong, as seniors of Japanese and other backgrounds seek out this community dedicated to offering high-quality care in an environment that respects and celebrates Japanese heritage and culture.