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head put on leave

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Avenidas@450Bryant senior center
expanded and rebranded

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A new, state-of-the-art enrichment center for older adults in downtown Palo Alto opens its doors to the public Monday, April 1.

The 22,000-square-foot center, called Avenidas@450Bryant, combines the senior service agency’s carefully renovated historic home in Palo Alto’s former police headquarters with a newly constructed contemporary section, representing a doubling of the previous space. Though separate in structure and design features, the old and new buildings share plumbing and heating systems and are seamlessly connected by a corridor.

The additional space will support an abundance of new programming for seniors that was in high demand but simply not possible to accommodate in the old building, said Avenidas CEO Amy Andonian. The agency also will continue to offer some programs at Cubberley Community Center, which served as its headquarters for 18 months during the construction and renovation of the downtown site. (See sidebar.)

“We’re going to be able to really focus on health and wellness,” Andonian said. “We’ll have the opportunity to do more evidence-based programs in partnership with groups like Stanford, Palo Alto Medical Foundation and El Camino Hospital. We want to be a community hub where people can come to access any program or service or resource to age successfully.”

For yoga and Pilates buffs, a soft floor with a walnut finish in the new fitness studio replaces the concrete one where classes previously were held in the old building. The new center has dedicated spaces for art classes, technology, reading, discussion groups, game playing — even separate rooms for massage and podiatry consultations.

There’s also office space

The new Wellness Center wing at Avenidas includes a third-story balcony that looks out onto downtown Palo Alto. The space will provide outdoor lounge space that also can be used for special events. Photo by Veronica Weber.

A monthly special section of news & information for seniors

L i v i n g W e l l

Avenidas makes its debut

Downtown’s modernized senior center opens with new tech center, classrooms, wellness areas, public cafe

by Chris Kenrick

The newly renovated Avenidas@450Bryant is a mix of old and new. The center features the historic architecture of the original Birge Clark building as well as a new and modern 11,000-square-foot Wellness Center, which are connected by a pedestrian bridge. The top of the new wing can be seen on the right, behind the Birge Clark building.

Programs to continue at Cubberley (continued on next page)

The senior services agency Avenidas will continue some of its programs in the 1 Building of Cubberley Community Center, which served as its headquarters for 18 months during the construction and renovation of the Avenidas downtown headquarters.

The public is invited to a free open house Saturday, March 23, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. to preview programs that will be offered at newly named Avenidas@Cubberley center. Programs will include bridge, tax advising, jewelry making, vocal training, dance fitness, Avenidas Blooms — which recycles, rearranges and distributes floral arrangements to those in need — and a new culture club designed to provide classes and activities for a culturally diverse population, initially focusing on Mandarin speakers. The culture club will offer Tai chi, brush painting, pingpong and Mahjong.

Activities and classes officially begin at Avenidas@Cubberley on Monday, April 1.

— Chris Kenrick

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A public cafe — including a separate entrance facing Bryant Street — will be managed by the firm Catered Too!, which manages cafes in the Computer History Museum and the San Jose Museum of Art. It will open at 6:30 a.m. — in hopes of attracting younger newcomers, Andonian said. "That's part of the charm and appeal of Avenidas, you might not know that anything has changed because, from the exterior, nothing has changed," Kennedy said. "The building is fun and also respects the community we're here to serve. Although we see ourselves as building for everyone in the community, we also wanted the building to be geared toward those who come take classes here. "We want people to feel like not only is this a fun place, but it doesn't feel old."

Nearly half of the $20-million budget came from just two sources: $5 million from the City of Palo Alto, which still owns the Birge Clark building, and $4 million in donations from Cindi and Curtis Priem, a co-founder of NVIDIA. Other major donors included the Rena A Estes Trust, the Floyd Family Foundation, Jill Freidenrich, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and Bill Reller. Several anonymous donors also provided gifts of $1 million or more, Andonian said. An opening gala was held for friends and donors Saturday, Feb. 23, featuring a talk by Brooklyn-based anti-ageism author Ashton Applewhite. The public is invited to preview the new building in an open house Saturday and April 1. Contributing writer Chris Kenrick can be emailed at ckenrick@paweekly.com.

**About the cover:** The newly renovated Avenidas senior center in downtown Palo Alto features a new cafe, wellness center wing, computer learning area and other modern updates. Photos by Veronica Weber and Nadine Priestley. Cover design by Rosanna Leung.

**SEE MORE ONLINE**

**Watch a video tour of the newly renovated Avenidas@450Bryant by Weekly photographer Veronica Webb posted on YouTube.com/paweekly/videos.**

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