



**A Brief History of  
Miracle Square, Inc.**  
An Independent Living  
Community For  
Seniors and Adults  
with Disabilities  
Who Receive Very Low  
Incomes

Miracle Square formally opened in October 1982 with the concept of placing seniors and adults with disabilities on low incomes living in Pima County nursing homes but who demonstrated the ability to live independently with non-medical forms of support. At first, the agency was called Miracle Square Project; since it was a project of Tucson Metropolitan Ministries (TMM), though it is not a religious organization. Named after the vacant motor court motel that was deemed appropriate for the project, it was decided by the forming committee that the name Miracle Square suited the mission of the project. Times were different in the early 80s and today, it would be difficult to replicate the project while providing such low-cost housing.

The original facility at 2601 N. Oracle included 18 apartments that were designated as Moderate Rehabilitation Housing Units (Mod/Rehab), provided with the assistance of the City of Tucson as the Housing Development Authority (a payee source for Housing and Urban Development). This designation was widely used in large complexes in the east (i.e. Chicago and New York City) that required remodeling over time to improve the facilities and apartments. Monthly rents for Mod/Rehab units are higher than local fair market rents. The designation also made it possible for Miracle Square to select appropriate residents for our program; unlike the Section 8 program. Over the initial years we utilized the higher rents to make needed facility and unit improvements.

The first Executive Director, Peggy MacDonald, was hired and oversaw important improvements at the complex, developed policies and procedures, and importantly, changed the status of Miracle Square to a legal 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The name was legally changed to Miracle Square, Inc.

Once incorporated, Pima County funded our agency through Pima Health Services and provided over \$70,000 per year for administrative and maintenance needs. The agreement with Pima County was vital and included giving priority to those in County nursing homes for placement in vacant units. Since its inception, Miracle Square's rents and rental subsidies have only provided for about 60% of the annual budget.

In 1991 Miracle Square hired Tom Cowdry as Executive Director and he continues to work at the agency. In the mid 90s significant changes began to happen at Miracle Square. Pima Health Services was unable to provide funding and the agency had to secure additional funding from private sources and the City of Tucson to continue operations. During that decade Congress attempted to end the Mod/Rehab agreement and Miracle Square ended up with only 4 Mod/Rehab units at our facility. Other tenants were provided with Section 8 vouchers allowing them to continue to live at our facility.

Significant capital was raised in the mid-90s, allowing Miracle Square to add four additional units to the original facility. A new and appropriate accessible van was purchased through PAG and several older apartments were renovated adding additional floor space and greater accessibility.

Also, in the mid-90's Miracle Square began its partnership with the University of Arizona College of Nursing and became a qualified training site for graduating nurses. We typically have three rotations per year and students meet with residents and develop interventions for them to help residents with the challenges they face to remain independent.

In 2000 Miracle Square assumed management responsibility for the Coronado Hotel which was a 41-unit Mod/Rehab facility with every unit subsidized. A decade later, the Downtown Development Corporation decided to sell that facility with the new owner maintaining the Mod/Rehab status but it was recently sold again and those affordable units were lost to Tucson.

Miracle Square has never been a state licensed facility (i.e. Assisted Living). However, the agency focuses on providing decent affordable housing and vital support services to seniors and adults with disabilities. We focus on the values of our residents and strive to provide dignity, comfortable homes, and well-being for them. Most of our residents have lived in their units for at least a decade and our most senior resident, a veteran, has lived in his unit for almost 30 years!

Today, Miracle Square's services include:

- Personalized advocacy to assist residents with receiving benefits, schedule medical appointments, assess health providers, conflict resolution and more;

- Accessible transportation for vital services including medical appointments, pharmacy, banking, weekly grocery shopping, and food bank;

- Food and paper goods pantry (which has become paramount during the pandemic);

- Light housekeeping;

- On-site staff coverage;

- Routine encounters to ensure the safety and well-being of our residents;

- Responsive repair of all items needed for the comfort and well-being of residents;

- Social group activities and meals for residents including arts and crafts, and training;

- Provision of an extensive library with books, cd movies and music, games and more;

- Interaction with nursing students with individuals and groups to enhance residents' ability to live independently.

For more information see: [miraclesquare.org](http://miraclesquare.org)