

# Employer Case Study

## Downtown Bellevue



### Big cost savings leads to better employee benefits

The Gardens at Town Square, a retirement community in downtown Bellevue owned by Era Living, is dedicated to providing innovative housing, programs and service choices to its residents. With a 24/7 staff providing housekeeping, dining, care assistance and activities, The Gardens at Town Square proudly keeps its employees on the move outside of work too.



The Gardens at Town Square, Downtown Bellevue

#### Getting Started

In 2008, The Gardens at Town Square was already supporting employee commutes by making transit passes available to employees. But after participating in a Commute Advantage consultation that summer, they switched to FlexPass to save money while improving options available to employees. And one year later in September 2009, their employees were among the first in the region to switch to ORCA Passport, the replacement for FlexPass that makes use of ORCA smart card technology. Employees now have even more benefits, such as unlimited rides on bus and rail systems from six transit agencies, 100% coverage of their monthly VanPool or VanShare fare and emergency taxi rides home. And, The Gardens at Town Square still receives employer pricing on this improved transit pass product.

#### Program Elements

- ORCA Passport
  - Annual employee contribution: \$100
  - Annual employer contribution: \$220
- Limited employee parking onsite

#### Return on Investment

- 25% of employees use ORCA Passport
- Annual savings of \$11,000 compared to buying retail passes
- Reduced demand for scarce parking resources

*“The transit pass options for us continue to get better year after year. As an employer willing to share in the expense of commuting with our employees, we’re able to take advantage of discounted pass programs that let them ride buses, trains and vanpools. With ORCA, our employees can get here from anywhere with one, easy-to-use card.”*

*- Nancy Kuhn, Administrative Services Director*

#### Keys to Success

- **Commute Advantage Consultation**  
The Gardens at Town Square received a detailed cost analysis of various transit pass programs, which demonstrated they could switch to an annual option that costs less and provides more benefits to employees.
- **Cost-sharing**  
The financial contribution from both the employer and the employees demonstrates a shared commitment to commute benefits.
- **Program Champion**  
Nancy Kuhn, Administrative Services Director, actively participates in quarterly employer network meetings and then shares new ideas and promotional materials with her co-workers.