

Menora Financial buys two South Bend facilities

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SOUTH BEND — A Chicago-area company that began investing in Michiana about five years ago has grown its portfolio here to about \$30 million.

Menora Financial Corp., based in Skokie, Ill., owns apartment buildings — LaSalle Commons and Sunnyside Commons near downtown South Bend, Buchanan Place and West Wind in Buchanan, and North Niles Villa in Niles — as well as some 275 single-family houses in the area.

Earlier this year, the company opened Briarcliff Health & Rehabilitation Center after spending \$3.8 million to renovate a former nursing home on Western Avenue in South Bend.

And, last month, the company bought two South Bend assisted-living facilities from Starlight Care Facilities.

One of the properties, Morningview, is at 475 N. Niles Ave. in a three-story building where Singer made sewing-machine cabinets in the 1800s. The building, which still retains many historical touches such as exposed brick walls and wooden beams, has 52 bedrooms.

The other is Morningside, a 40-bedroom facility where people with dementia can receive care. It's at 18325 Bailey Ave., east of the University of Notre Dame.

“As part of continuing our investment in the South Bend area, we decided to expand into health care,” said Shalom Menora, the company's president.

Menora explained that the three South Bend properties offer care for several different health situations.

“If somebody has surgery and needs to rehab, we've got a place. If somebody's getting a little older and needs assisted living, we've got a place. If someone gets to the point where they need dementia care, we have a place,” he said. “It's not a situation where people are necessarily going to go from one to the other, but we offer everything, and that gives us the ability to always monitor our care.”



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Menora Financial Corp., based in Skokie, Ill., recently purchased Morning View Nursing & Rehabilitation Care Center at 475 N. Niles Ave. in South Bend. SBT Photo/KEVIN ALLEN

Menora said the company paid about \$3.5 million last month for the Morningview and Morningside properties. He plans to invest another \$750,000 to \$1 million in them.

“We will put the money in and make these buildings what they need to be,” he said, adding that the old Singer building is in good shape. “It just needs some updating.”

After more than a century as a manufacturing plant, first as part of Singer and later South Bend Lathe, the building along Niles Avenue was remodeled and reopened in 1986 as the Works Hotel and Restaurant.

The hotel and restaurant closed in 1997, and the building later became Providence House, an assisted-living facility for people with Alzheimer’s disease and other types of dementia. Starlight bought the property from Madison Center, a now-defunct mental health organization, in 2011 and continued operating it as an assisted-living facility.

Roger Ringenberg, the administrator at Morningview, said the building’s past is an asset. That’s why management has decorated walls with historical photos and displayed Singer sewing artifacts inside the building.

“I think that’s one of the intriguing things about this building,” Ringenberg said. “Older people can identify with the history. We try to bring a little bit of that in here.”

The building also has been home to a long list of restaurants over the years: Ciao’s, Spaghetti Works, Basil’s on the Race, Eastern Pacific Grille & Bar.

Menora said he’s negotiating with restaurateurs and hopes to see the building’s restaurant space come back to life.

kallen@sbtinfo.com

574-235-6244

@KevinAllenSBT