



ABSTRACT

Revised proposal to the Village of Oak Park Trustees for continued service provision for the OPRHC Live in Oak Park program to create affordable housing options while reversing the segregation trends.

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## **BACKGROUND**

Since 1972, the Oak Park Regional Housing Center (Housing Center) has been fostering and sustaining multiracial diversity and integration in Oak Park. Beginning in 1974, the Village of Oak Park (Village) has supported this effort and supplemented it with additional policies and programs. The collaborative work of the Housing Center and the Village has been held up across the region and nation as a best practice and a model in which other communities have replicated. When this partnership is working efficiently, it can have a profoundly positive effect on the community. Most significantly, the collaboration is responsible for Oak Park transforming from a monoracially white community to a diverse and residentially integrated community. This success has resulted in a community that can become more welcoming, inclusive, vibrant, and prosperous.

While this community has done far more than any other community to actively promote diverse participation and avoid segregation, the current moment requires a recommitment and reinvestment in the efforts to ensure Oak Park remains the open and inclusive community that residents cherish.

The Village's draft Vision for Housing identifies some specific challenges related to the diversity and residential integration of Oak Park and urges action. This proposal will address three of those challenges including:

- A. Certain areas of Oak Park remain less racially diverse than the community as a whole.
- B. Oak Park renter households with incomes below \$65,000 face challenges affording housing.
- C. The racial homeownership gap remains wide.

We know that through a reinvigorated collaborative effort, the Housing Center and the Village can address these challenges and achieve progress toward a more equitable community.

The American Community Survey documents that the level of Black/white **segregation** within Oak Park's rental housing market increased by 27% between 2018 and 2022. This occurred during a period of historically low levels of activity by the Village and the Housing Center. As such, it is not a surprise that the Vision for Housing identifies ensuring racial diversity throughout the community as a challenge and increasing racial diversity across all parts of Oak Park as a goal.

Both research at the national level and data at the local level have documented that without **proactive measures** in place, **housing segregation tends to worsen over time**<sup>1</sup>. The reduction in programming, policies, and investments to encourage residential integration have allowed segregation to increase in Oak Park.

To accomplish the goal of improving the residential integration of Oak Park, it is recommended that the Village ensure diverse demand for rental housing in Oak Park and encourage prospective renters to consider options in parts of Oak Park where they are under-represented. This can continue to be accomplished by strategically engaging in **affirmative marketing and intervening** in the rental housing search.

### Considering Diversity: Oak Park's Relationship with the Chicago Region

In the Chicago metropolitan region, 97% of the population identifies as either Asian, Black, Latino, or white. This market of over three million households is the primary market for new residents in Oak Park. To gauge whether Oak Park represents the diversity of regional demand, the Housing Center has compared Oak Park's demographics to see how closely the community reflects the region's overall diversity (these are NOT quotas, limitations, or goals). The three tables below identify population shares in Oak Park and the Chicago Region using data from the 2022 American Community Survey.

**Table 1.** Demonstrates, Latino households are the only significantly under-represented group in Oak Park. Meanwhile, Black and white households are over-represented in comparison with the region.

<b>Table 1: Shares of All Occupied Units</b>	Share of All Occupied Housing Units			
	Asian	Black	Latino	White
Oak Park	6%	21%	7%	63%
Chicago Region	7%	17%	18%	56%
Over/(Under)-Representations	(1%)	4%	(11%)	7%

Source: US Census, 2022 American Community Survey, 5-year averages

**Tables 2 and 3.** Demonstrates the under-representation of Latino households skews higher in the rental market and lower in the homeownership market.

Table 2: Shares of Renter Occupied Units	Share of Renter Occupied Housing Units			
	Asian	Black	Latino	White
Oak Park	6%	33%	6%	47%
Region	7%	28%	22%	41%
Over/(Under)-Representations	(1%)	5%	(16%)	6%
Source: US Census, 2022 American Community Survey, 5-year averages				

Table 3: Shares of Owner Occupied Units	Share of Owner Occupied Housing Units			
	Asian	Black	Latino	White
Oak Park	8%	12%	8%	74%
Region	7%	11%	15%	65%
Over/(Under)-Representations	1%	1%	(7%)	9%
Source: US Census, 2022 American Community Survey, 5-year averages				

**Table 4.** Demonstrates that the changes in Oak Park since 2010 are roughly similar to the changes in the region as a whole. There have been small increases in Asian and Latino shares of households since 2010. Black household shares declined slightly. White household shares decreased the most.

Table 4: Changes in Population Shares for All Occupied Units	Oak Park			Region		
	2010	2022	Increase / (Decrease) from 2010 to 2022	2010	2022	Increase / (Decrease) from 2010 to 2022
Asian	4%	6%	2%	6%	7%	1%
Black	21%	20%	(1%)	18%	17%	(1%)
Latino	5%	7%	2%	15%	18%	3%
White	69%	63%	(6%)	60%	56%	(4%)
Source: US Census, 2022 and 2010 American Community Survey, 5-year averages						

### **Broadening Oak Park’s Diversity and Integration Across the Community**

The decrease in Black households (following decades of growth in Black households) and the historic under-representation of Latino households are significant local concerns held by residents of Oak Park. Meanwhile, the decrease in white households is less of a concern due to the historic over-representation of white households in the community. As such, efforts to ensure diverse demand will primarily focus on the declining Black population and the under-represented Latino population.

The Housing Center suggests joint affirmative marketing efforts with the Village and the residents of established affinity groups to increase demand from Black and Latino households that would include the following:

1. Targeted advertising to Black and Latino professional organizations.
2. Joint support and external marketing for Juneteenth and Convivencia Festivals.
3. Social media campaigns highlighting current Black and Latino Oak Parkers’ experiences in the community.
4. Increased awareness around the Power of Engagement to create one goal inclusive of our current affinity group populations.
5. The establishment of a Cultural Center to create a “Third Space” for BIPOC residents and community participants.

## **IMPLEMENTATION: Includes but not limited to -REVERSING THE SEGREGATION TREND**

The increase in segregation between 2018 and 2022 correlates closely with decreases in activities by the Village and the Housing Center to proactively encourage residential integration and expand housing choices that break the cycle of segregation. When prospective renters and owners consider Oak Park, the Cycle of Segregation and their mental maps of racial perception influence their choices of where to consider to choose to live within the community.

This trend can be reversed through cooperative action by the Village and the Housing Center to disrupt the cycle of segregation by:

1. Increasing the capacity of the Housing Center.
2. Revising and restoring incentives that encourage landlords to work with the Housing Center.
3. Establishing a marketing and referral system within the Village of Oak Park.
4. Continuing and reinvigorating strategic meetings with the Village, the Housing Center, and landlords in the community.
5. Establish a VOP rental subsidy program for renters with a total housing annual income less than \$60,000.
6. Create a down payment homeownership program based on homeownership rates across the Village of Oak Park.

## **CONCLUSION**

Sustaining Oak Park's residential integration (and therefore the integration of District 97 schools, neighborly social networks, park use, among other factors) requires encouraging prospective tenants to consider options in areas where they are under-represented. Although the Housing Center has seen many challenges in the past four years, with over 75 years of experience collectively in rental advising, community touring, community development, homeownership, and financial education, we are still here and ready to move forward. With your understanding and assistance working collaboratively we can enhance the quality of life of current Oak Park residents while creating a more "Welcoming Community" to incoming residents. The Housing is requesting the following funding:

- 1) In an effort for the Housing Center to recover from the offset of the financial hardships due to the pause in funding for FY22-23, the balance of the General Fund agreement amount of **\$176,250** and the CDBG amount of an amount of **\$69,598.55**.
- 2) An amount of **\$400,000 for FY24** to support capacity building efforts to move forward to re-establish implementation of programming which would function to create affordable housing options while reversing the segregation trends.

## **FOOTNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> References to prominent research articles on the subject

<sup>1</sup> Professional organizations may include: Association of Latino Professionals For America, Black Professionals Network, National Alliance of Black School Educators, National Association of Black Accountants, National Black Nurses Association, National Black MBA Association, National Society of Black Engineers, National Society of Black Physicists, Society of Black Academic Surgeons, Society for Hispanic Professional Engineers, Society of Mexican American Engineers and Scientists, Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science

<sup>1</sup> Cycle of Segregation, Dr. Maria Krysan, UIC

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