



# OAK PARK REGIONAL HOUSING CENTER YEAR END REPORT 2020

## **Summary**

This document contains a brief synopsis of the activities that took place while under the Village of Oak Park General Fund Grant for the Calendar Year 2020.

**Athena Williams, Executive Director**  
awilliams@oprhc.org



January 25, 2021

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Tammie Grossman, Director of Development  
Customer Services, Village of Oak Park  
123 Madison Street  
Oak Park, IL 60302

**SENT VIA: Electronic Mail**

**RE: OPRHC 2020 Year End Report**

Dear Tammie:

We all know that the Calendar Year 2020 was like no other year for the entire world with the global pandemic that has seen to date over 400k deaths in the United States. It was not only the COVID-19 pandemic that affected the work of Oak Park Regional Housing Center, but we had various other matters that became setbacks for fulfilling the deliverables of the contract. Those matters include staffing (directly related to COVID-19); poor utility infrastructure in the office; and deficits with our IT services.

Although those setbacks occurred, they also provided insight for the next 50 years of The Oak Park Regional Housing Center. It is been shown that the time is now that we further embrace our mission *to promote and sustain residential integration*, by addressing inclusion and equity as a sustainable method of enforcing the values of the Oak Park Community. We must also continue to embrace our partnership as we continue to support the community and the Oak Park equity statement.

In light of the racial tension that has been displayed in the nation and even highlighted in our own community, OPRHC will answer the call with our Neighbors Knowing Neighbors programming. While, at the same time, working to continue to ensure the integration model in which OPRHC was vital in its creation through various pathways including affordable housing.

Below you will see our 2020 outcomes. Thank you for your time and valued support.

Sincerely,

*Athena Williams*

Athena Williams  
Executive Director

## **BACKGROUND**

Oak Park Regional Housing Center is a 501c3 non-profit organization with a mission to promote and sustain residential integration in Oak Park and beyond. Through the OPRHC contract with the Village of Oak Park, we work to provide a service that provides affirmatively furthering fair housing, which is a tool that sustains the stability of Oak Park's racial integration within the community. Through this contract with VOP, we help rental seekers to expand their housing options and opportunities by marketing Oak Park as a welcoming vibrant community.

OPRHC also works proactively to influence property owners, managers and community residents to embrace the integration of the community and comply with fair housing laws. Taken together, we provide a service that fills the rental process with education while making it quicker and easier for all parties involved- the property owner, the property manager, the tenant. Our programming is also the process by which the Village can ensure that Oak Park presents the community as a balanced diverse market whose demand avoids and alleviates segregation from occurring within Oak Park while complying with fair housing laws.

While we know that times have changed, OPRHC is embarking on pathways that will demonstrate how we can sustain our residential integration through Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing while at the same time working with the Village to promote inclusion and equity.

## **2020 OUTCOMES**

Oak Park Regional Housing Center has been going through transitions since May of 2018 when the last permanent Executive Director parted service. During this time of transition, we saw two Interim Executive Directors, a global pandemic, and confirmation of our 38 year existence in one physical location. These three issues led to a number of challenges that had to be addressed through lessons learned. Even though, we were able to produce the outcomes underlined below that were expected from the 2020 contract.

- Participated in the VOP task force by attending all scheduled meetings. Assisted with organizing the region wide fair housing survey as well as OPRHC administered all follow up.
- Interviewed multiple candidates for Development Coordinator position. Hired Ruby Rose Strategies to assist with all Development activities including but not limited to Marketing Management, Fundraising, and Board Development.
- The endeavor to create a Pro Bono Strategic Plan was not a success as it was not easy to garner "free services" during COVID. Instead, we worked with the Prescott Group to create a new roadmap for a communications plan. Ruby Rose Strategies & A5inc is working with the agency Communications Coordinator to develop new messaging.
- Approximately 2100/2000 clients were registered.
- Exactly 1785 from the required 1500 additional unique clients were registered.
- Exactly 513 from the required 500 moves in the Village.
- Exactly 241 from the required 375 affirmative moves.
- Community Fair Housing Workshops: 9
- Technology: The App was created (a prototype). In order for the App to go into production, the online registration through a new Client Management System has to be coordinated. The CMS is 80% complete. Once the CMS is fully developed, we can then connect an online registration then the App.
- While it was not a part of our 2020 contract, OPRHC reached out to almost 3000 renters to ascertain their needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have a matrix of findings from the VOP renters that shares their concerns about being Oak Park residents that OPRHC would like to discuss.

## **CONCLUSION**

Even though Oak Park Regional Housing Center finally has permanent leadership, we are still undergoing transitions. In time, with collaborations and partnerships, OPRHC can further its mission by becoming the much needed housing and residential services service provider for the Oak Park Community.