



January 10, 2022

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1041 South Boulevard  
Oak Park, IL 60302  
(708) 848-7150  
[www.oprhc.org](http://www.oprhc.org)

Lisa Shelley, Village Manager, Interim  
Village of Oak Park  
123 Madison St.  
Oak Park, IL 60302

**SENT: Via Electronic Mail**

**RE: Reply to Email Notice of Default, dated December 8, 2021**

Dear Lisa,

Please accept this correspondence to provide updates regarding the 2020 Audit and the request for an additional \$100K for Marketing and an additional \$100K for a market/feasibility study.

**AUDIT**

The 2020 Audit is late due to the timing of billing and staffing issues for both the auditing firm and OPRHC. The delay in the 2019 audit, which resulted in delayed payments to OPRHC resulted in delayed payments to the auditing firm, Prado & Renteria, who was paid in June 2021. At that time, P&R stated they could not provide a timeline until they completed other clients. Since August 2021, we have received multiple engagement/timelines (see attached). We are anticipating the **2020 Audit to be completed by April 30, 2022.** In addition, because the audit process requires work YTD, we will be completing the 2021 Audit at the same time. Which means we anticipate **the 2021 Audit to be completed by June 15, 2022.** NOTE: our 990's are completed and available if needed.

I would also like to add that due to the restraints of staffing issues, OPRHC has engaged a Not For Profit Accounting firm (Charity CFO) that will handle all of our accounting needs in a timely manner as we move forward.

At this time, OPRHC would like to request that the contract is amended to reflect a release of funds for services provided.

**REQUEST FOR \$100K FOR RESEARCH/FEASIBILITY STUDY**

Although OPRHC submitted a request for a study that would justify the residential integration services provided for the past 50 years, we have decided to **rescind this request for now.** OPRHC has brought/will be bringing Americorp Vista's onboard who are working to develop an engagement and planning process to research the feasibility of OPRHC and its services to the Oak Park Community.

**REQUEST FOR \$100K MARKETING**

Please see attached/below, the budget and description of marketing services.

Sincerely,

*Athena Williams*

Athena Williams, Executive Director

CC: Tammie Grossman, VOP, Director of Development Services; Paul Stephanides, VOP, Atty;  
Tracey Wik, OPRHC Board Member, VOP liaison.



## **Oak Park Regional Housing Center Marketing & Community Outreach Narrative**

**Our marketing priority is promoting Oak Park to hard-to-reach communities and demographics, including higher-income Black and Latino housing seekers.** We are implementing a niche marketing approach, channeling multiple marketing efforts towards one or two well-defined segments of the Greater Near Westside and the Far West Suburban populations. Some of our marketing strategies will include direct mail, billboard signage, community newspaper ads and web info, special events, and Google and social media advertising.

**The aim of these strategies is to:**

### **1) Promote Oak Park to minority housing seekers.**

- a. Seek those who can afford Oak Park's market rate rents; and
- b. Fit racial demographics that further integration and diversity.

We will target the right universe of housing seekers using a resident file software which contains a list of more than 400,000 residents from throughout the Chicagoland area. This software can micro-target housing seekers by race, homeownership, gender and several other indicators, including income. The resident file software aids our marketing campaigns by: enabling a more cost-efficient marketing campaign in which we are able to communicate with a smaller, but more accurate universe of residents; and improving our messaging by adding more information about our target housing seekers, including their housing needs, interests and concerns.

**We follow local housing trends to learn about prominent housing challenges.** A UIC study found that in Cook County affluent Blacks are more likely to live in poor Black communities than among white residents who are closer to their income level. "It's about choosing to live near family, church and culture that you know," said Courtney Jones, a broker with Chicago Homes Realty Group. A more recent NBER study found that landlords are less likely to respond to applicants with Black and Latino-sounding names, a practice that contributes to rising residential segregation.

**Housing studies are helping to shape our outreach strategies in the following ways:**

1. We promote Oak Park's rich *cultural* diversity, not just its racial diversity;
2. We advocate for more equitable investments in Black and Brown businesses, entertainment and cultural experiences, signaling to housing seekers there's ongoing progress in Oak Park on equity;
3. We educate Oak Park landlords on improving racial sensitivities, especially when rejecting applicants and "actively welcoming" residents of color to remove all perceptions of discrimination.

### **2) Promote Oak Park as a community committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

Through our Power of Engagement, we will harness the collective impact of organizations and individuals throughout the VOP to move measurable indicators for equity. By building this DEI coalition, we aim to collectively impact integration and racial equity in the Oak Park Community, creating a model for the nation.

**The Housing Center leads community events that engage and empower our Black and Brown neighbors.** In 2014, we led a discussion titled “Being Latino in Oak Park.” And in 2021, we led a community conversation on race following our theater benefit featuring a special viewing of Paradise Square, a musical about racial integration in the 19th century. We also host housing services fairs and convene Oak Park’s equity advocates.

**In-person & virtual events will promote Oak Park by:** Shaping public opinion about Oak Park’s commitment to diversity; Developing Ambassadors who promote living in Oak Park to friends and family; and Creating & Reinforcing a sense of community and belonging among Black and Brown residents.

## **IMPLEMENTATION: A Multichannel Marketing Plan**

The Oak Park Regional Housing Center will pursue broadcast and narrowcast marketing to achieve widespread information-sharing (broadcast) while penetrating into key audience segments with very specific and culturally-relevant messages (narrowcast).

### **Marketing Plan Objectives**

1. Commemorate the Housing Center’s 50th anniversary as a strategy for raising awareness on the Village of Oak Park’s historic achievements in housing justice;
2. Promote the “Oak Park Model” as a national best practice for residential integration, while it is being duplicated in Columbia Maryland and other states;
3. Share information on landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities;
4. Expand/improve Oak Park’s community of housing providers who support our mission;
5. Market our apartment listings in new areas in order to connect with a wider range of active housing seekers.

### **Broadcast Strategy:**

The Housing Center will advertise broadly through street visibility, radio and cable television:

- Niche radio stations targeting African American and Latinx communities are broadcast methods that reach specific audiences.
- Unlike network television, cable is neighborhood-based broadcasting. The Housing Center will launch a cost-effective, geographically-focused television ad campaign.
- Billboards and other printed, place-specific marketing are a preferred information source in lower-income communities.

### **Narrowcast Strategy:**

The Housing Center’s more targeted communications will touch specific individuals with more personally-relevant, culturally-impactful messaging:

- Telecommunications including text messages, live calls and robocalls enable us to target specific individuals in real time, to promote readily-accessible resources and opportunities, particularly community partners.
- Digital marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), Google and Facebook ads and HTML-enriched email deployment empower us to reach targeted communities by “following” them across their internet visits and marketing to them on sites where they already frequently and normally visit.
- “Advertisement groups,” are part of our digital strategy, where multiple CBO’s pool resources to promote a collection of ads that share similar targets (such as Latinos/Blacks) and similar themes (such as housing/equity).

- Direct mail is one of the most impactful ways to target special groups with relevant compelling messages because mail is the most official form of direct communication, delivered directly to recipients by USPS, a government agency. For these reasons, people are much more likely to read their mail than any other form of communication.

**Conclusion:**

Working with community partners such as the OPEDC, Visit Oak Park, the OPRF Business Chamber and others, we are sure to meet our targets to develop a more welcoming Village of Oak Park.