

# Oak Park Regional Housing Center



**2016 Annual Report**

## Our Mission

Since 1972, the Oak Park Regional Housing Center has strived to achieve meaningful and lasting racial diversity throughout Oak Park as well as the neighborhoods surrounding it.

Through its rental advising service and growing number of affiliated programs such as Austin Ascending and West Cook Homeownership Center, the Housing Center has accumulated more than 45 years of experience in maintaining racially and economically diverse communities.

In the past year, the Housing Center has been consulting with communities around the nation to assist them with creating intentional, locally generated strategies toward integrated neighborhoods. The year 2016 has seen great and genuine interest from other regional leaders in adopting our model, which promotes prosperous and equitable communities.



## Letter from our Leadership



Oak Park holds a well-earned reputation as a uniquely diverse community. The village is far more integrated than similar suburbs in Cook County, and this intermingling of racial groups continues as we help more clients move each day. Diversity has proven to be one of Oak Park's greatest strengths, bringing a breadth of viewpoints and experiences to our daily lives.

The 2016 year was successful one for the Housing Center in terms of new affirmative moves to Oak Park, advances in our Austin Ascending neighborhood revitalization program, and growth of our West Cook Homeownership Center, which works to assist first-time homebuyers.

We've hosted a range of community discussions and other events that have invigorated attendees to take action in furthering diverse living. We are also excited to announce that we have been collaborating with Chicago neighborhoods as well as communities in other parts of the United States to spread our model of sustainable integration.

However, our work is far from done. On a local scale, history has shown that if our integration model halts, Oak Park will quickly re-segregate. In a broader scope, we also have a responsibility to work against hostilities toward the vulnerable populations who have recently been targeted on a national level. The diversity we sustain in the Oak Park region cultivates a necessary empathy and compassion for our neighbors.

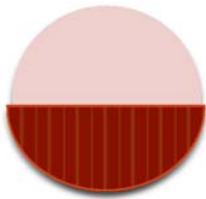
In this report, you'll read about our accomplishments this past year as well as our plans for next year and beyond. To continue our increasingly important work, we need your help. Please consider a gift to the Housing Center to demonstrate your support of our mission.

Sincerely,

Rob Breymaier  
Executive Director

## Our Impact in Oak Park

Every day, the Housing Center staff helps new Oak Parkers find rentals that not only meet their day-to-day living needs but also assist the Housing Center's mission of sustaining or improving the integration of our village. Our 2016 was amazing in terms of meeting both these goals.



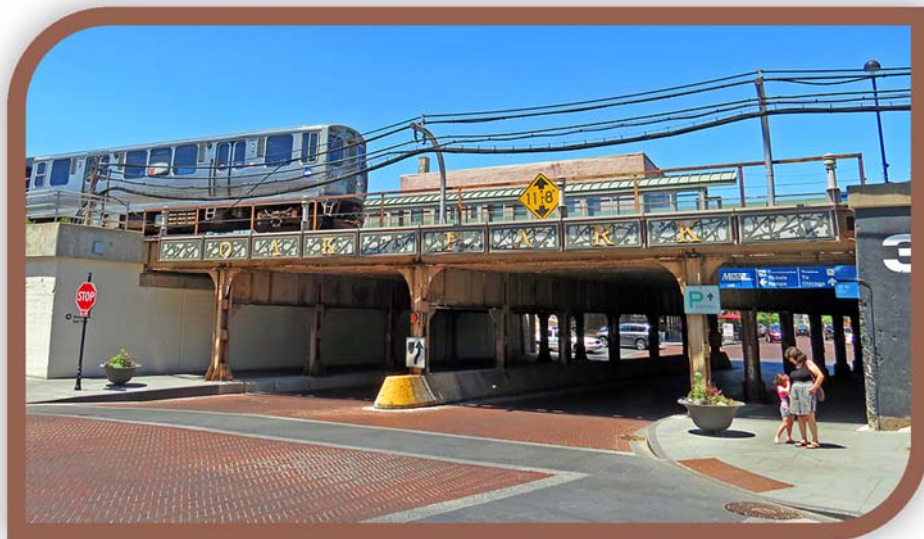
### Without Us

**Less than 50%** of the moves made to Oak Park without our service are affirmative. This means that the majority of non-OPRHC moves add to the community's level of segregation.



### With Us

In 2016, **83%** of the people we assisted made affirmative moves to Oak Park, increasing our level of integration.





“I wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for the Housing Center. That’s a fact. They are still relevant and important...If the Housing Center weren’t here, we’d be digressing rather than **progressing.**”

- *Jeremy Howell, Oak Parker, current board member*

“...for our kids to be immersed in that [embracing of differences] and be a part of that diversity is very important.”

- *Katie Howell, Oak Parker*



## Local Leadership

Throughout 2016, the Housing Center led a number of energized community conversations around issues of diversity, integration, and equity in Oak Park and across the Greater West Side.

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### Forecasting the Future of Oak Park's Integration

The community gathered for a **panel talk** on sustaining integration and leveraging it for greater prosperity and equity. Journalist Charlie Meyerson moderated the panel that included our executive director, Rob Breymaier; Maria Saldana of the Oak Park Residence Corporation; and Linda Francis of the Success of All Youth Initiative. The floor was also opened for input from residents.

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### Moving from Protest to Action

We held a series of **discussion groups** that guided community members toward **taking action** on issues of local and national concern. Residents identified their greatest concerns and the Housing Center created working groups for them to join. In 2017, the Housing Center will continue to convene and support these groups for sustained impact.

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### Connecting Oak Park and Austin

The Housing Center is playing an important role in bringing together residents of Oak Park and Austin to **"Erase the Border"** between our communities. Working with residents and leaders, we are helping to build networks that cross geographic, racial, and class lines.

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The Housing Center was grateful to work with partners on these conversations including the Oak Park Public Library, the Success of All Youth Initiative, the Community of Congregations, the Suburban Unity Alliance, and the Community Relations Commission.

# Austin ASCENDING



**Austin Ascending** is an initiative of the Housing Center that seeks to promote Austin as a **desirable, valuable community through reinvestment**. Owners of 2- to 4-unit buildings can apply for grants that are put toward rehabilitations, given that they rent out their units in a manner that promotes diversity and integration. This dynamic uplifts longtime residents who have been excluded from other opportunities, while enhancing the region's racial integration.

Participants of Austin Ascending have reported repeatedly that “it brings Austin to the attention of people who might not think of living there.” Austin Ascending also facilitates community events, conducts neighborhood surveys, and holds sustainability programming open to the public. In the past year, we worked with **29 owners** and invested **\$82,000** into the community.



**The West Cook Homeownership Center** is a HUD-Certified housing counseling agency that operates under the Housing Center. It provides pre-purchase and first-time homebuyer workshops, as well as down payment assistance and credit counseling.

In 2016, we held our **1st Annual Housing Fair**, which hosted more than 100 participants, including 10 lender partners and 4 industry partners. In WCHC's homebuying program, more than 400 prospective owners were counseled on budgeting, credit, navigating the homebuying process, and closing.

In addition, WCHC also sold **24 fully rehabbed homes** in the past year. Our new homeowners have contributed to stabilizing communities and building wealth through homeownership.

Finally, WCHC's financial literacy programs served **8 schools** in 2016. Students in K-8 learned about basic banking, saving, and distinguishing between needs and wants.



“Long before there was a call for sanctuary, the Oak Park Regional Housing Center was doing the **hard, steady work of promoting integration and diversity in Oak Park**. My family and many of our friends have benefited from their services. The Housing Center was the first to welcome us and teach us about the history of white flight and integration in Oak Park.

Institutions like the Housing Center make sanctuary possible because they have done the critical groundwork of **putting our values into action.**”

- *M.G. Bertulfo, Oak Parker*



## Regional Leadership

The Housing Center has also worked with others across the Chicago region to promote policies and research around the Affirmative Furthering of Fair Housing in a variety of settings, including the following.

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Conducting research with the **Metropolitan Planning Council** to determine the **economic cost of segregation**.

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Publishing a **report** on strategies to promote **affordable housing in high-opportunity communities**.

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Serving on the board of the **Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance** and providing **technical assistance** on racial integration techniques to housing counseling agencies.

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Serving on the **Illinois Housing Counseling Coalition's Steering Committee** and the **Housing Working Group of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning**.

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Strategizing with **HUD's Region V leadership** to consider strategies that would help support and promote racially integrated communities. **HUD's leadership has long admired the "Oak Park model"** and met with the Housing Center to determine how this could be replicated in other communities across the Great Lakes Region.



## National Leadership



In 2016, the Housing Center presented our model of creating and sustaining integrated communities in cities around the Midwest and East Coast, including Baltimore, Cleveland, and Detroit.

The most exciting development came in **Columbia, MD**, a community of more

than 100,000 located halfway between Baltimore and Washington, DC. After a series of consultations between the Housing Center and community leaders, a local project was undertaken to create a model similar to that of the Housing Center.

Columbia is a planned community that was established as a racially integrated community in the 1960s. While remaining diverse, it is beginning to see segregation take hold. Community leaders recognized that this was an undesirable change and contacted the Housing Center to find a solution.

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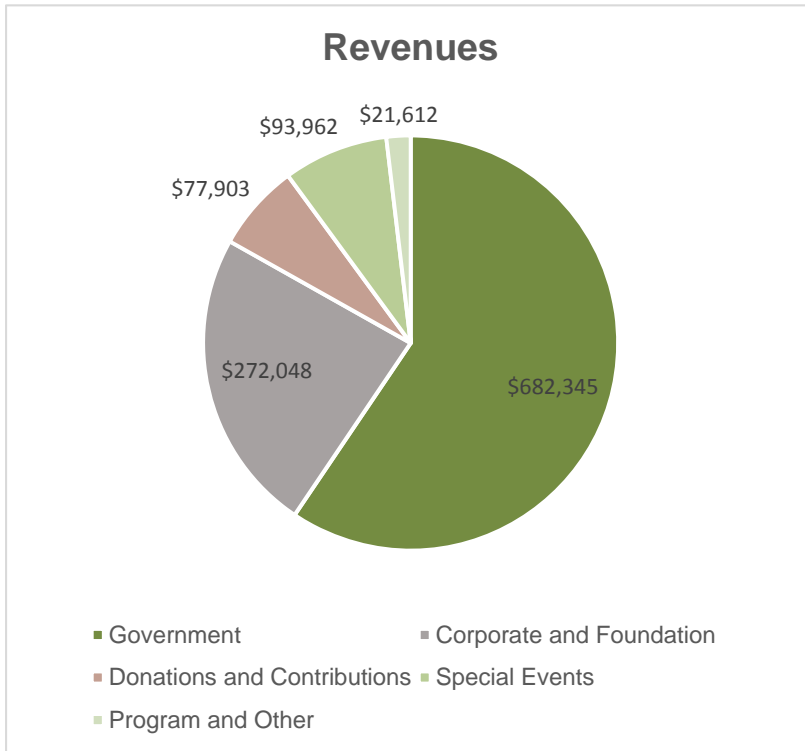
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# Financials



Government	\$682,345
Corporate and Foundation	\$272,048
Donations and Contributions	\$77,903
Special Events	\$93,962
Program and Other	\$21,612
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<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$1,147,870</b>



Salaries and Contracts	\$850,049
Occupancy	\$94,186
Advertising	\$42,609
Programs and Operations	\$96,568
Fundraising	\$23,461
Other	\$3,916
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<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$1,110,789</b>





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Illinois Housing Development Authority  
Village of Oak Park

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Active Real Estate Inc.  
Allstate  
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