



## The Value of Integration

**How Intentional Integration Benefits Oak Park Socially and Economically**

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## Introduction

For over 43 years, the Oak Park Regional Housing Center has been committed to its mission of achieving meaningful and lasting racial diversity in Oak Park. Our program has been recognized as a model and best practice within the community and across the nation. Yet, despite the relatively high profile of our model, our value and impact are not fully realized. The promotion of diversity, and especially integration, provides a structure that enables economic and social benefits for the community.

Integration requires intentional action. Without this intention, Oak Park will segregate in one way or another. Neither segregation scenario is acceptable or beneficial to the community. Diversity is a fundamental component of Oak Park's brand and value. Thus, the investment in the Housing Center is critical. The Housing Center's effort to sustain integration positively affects property values, social cohesion, and civic life.

## The Housing Center Model

In its earliest days, the Housing Center worked on integrating both the rental and ownership markets. Quickly though, it was clear that rental integration was both more turbulent and more influential on housing patterns generally. Thus, the focus turned to the rental market. This was also due to Oak Park's significant rental stock. While firmly middle class, rental units still make up nearly 40% of all housing units in Oak Park.

Other factors are important in the focus on rental housing. Rental turnover rates are higher than ownership rates. Typical rental turnover across the nation is about 50%. In Oak Park, this appears to be lower but still at least 30%. Thus, at least one-third of all rental units will change tenants in a given year. This can have either positive or negative outcomes. If intentional efforts are in place, it allows for relatively quick action to integrate a building. More importantly, intentional efforts also promote integration stability. However, if left to the market, turnover can result in rapid segregation.

The rental market is also more malleable. As prospective tenants are making a decision that only involves a one-year commitment, renters are more likely to consider integration than first-time homebuyers who are making a 30-year commitment<sup>1</sup>. The Housing Center can also have significant influence on housing providers (landlords) as well because we provide them with demand and services they would not otherwise enjoy. By providing a service that landlords need, the Housing Center can improve landlords' commitment to integration and fair housing compliance.

As renters become homeowners, those with experiences renting in integrated settings are more likely to become homeowners in an integrated setting. While local data on this is hard to gather formally, residents regularly informally communicate that they first came to Oak Park through the Housing Center<sup>2</sup>.

In addition, the Housing Center learned quickly to collaborate with real estate agents in Oak Park. Real estate agents cooperate with the Housing Center on affirmative efforts and show homebuyers

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<sup>1</sup> Black:white segregation of renters is lower than it is for homeowners. Friedman, Samantha et al. (2013) Housing Tenure and Residential Segregation in Metropolitan America. *Demography* 50:1477–1498

<sup>2</sup> See the Housing Center's Facebook Page for videos of residents talking about their moves with the Housing Center.

properties throughout the community in a manner that will promote integration. While agents cannot be as directly affirmative as the Housing Center, the community is small enough that they can reasonably show houses across the community to all of their clients. This has been a successful strategy for decades. Housing Center employees communicate with managing brokers and many agents annually to reinforce this effort. In essence, the Housing Center outsources this activity, leveraging hundreds of thousands of dollars in activity annually among well-meaning agents and brokers.

Segregation in a rental building also has a greater impact on neighborhood perception than single-family racial change. It is more visible than homeownership segregation, particularly in Oak Park where people typically enter single-family homes from alleys but renters enter from the street. The segregation of rental buildings is an indicator of the racial makeup of a neighborhood. If a building appears segregated, it reinforces a perception of racial isolation.

### **Promoting a Diverse Demand for Oak Park**

In order to build a diverse community, Oak Park must have a diverse demand for its housing stock. This requires an approach that includes 1) promoting the assets and desirability of Oak Park, 2) promoting the open and inclusive nature of the community, and 3) affirmatively marketing the community to ensure demand from all racial backgrounds.

This seemingly straightforward approach is difficult and requires sophistication and finesse. The Housing Center's advertising always focuses on the community, never on one building or apartment. Our advertising message has to balance highlighting the amenities of Oak Park without making it appear that Oak Park is exclusive. And, our advertising strategies need to ensure we promote demand from groups that are under-represented or less likely to choose Oak Park. Because we have constant data from our registered clients, we always know which groups are under-represented or searching for homes in Oak Park at a lower rate than expected. Our mission ensures that we communicate a welcoming and inclusive community in Oak Park.

While some landlords also advertise, they advertise their inventory primarily. In a few cases, they market Oak Park secondarily. This reduces the ability of landlords to promote integration directly because they display their inventory in their advertising and on their websites (as they reasonably want to show off their units). The Housing Center avoids highlighting any unit or building so that we can suggest units affirmatively.

### **Promoting Integration within Oak Park**

Diversity of demand is only a first step in the Housing Center model. Once prospective renters choose to search for housing in Oak Park, they often have preconceived attitudes about where they want to live within the community. While many will state that they want to live in a diverse community, they also state that they want to avoid certain parts of Oak Park. These attitudes correlate closely with racial demographic patterns within and surrounding Oak Park.

Oak Park is more integrated than other diverse suburbs, but it is not perfectly integrated (unfortunately, no community has ever achieved this). Moreover, almost all of the communities that surround Oak Park have clear predominant racial groups and high segregation levels. The Chicago

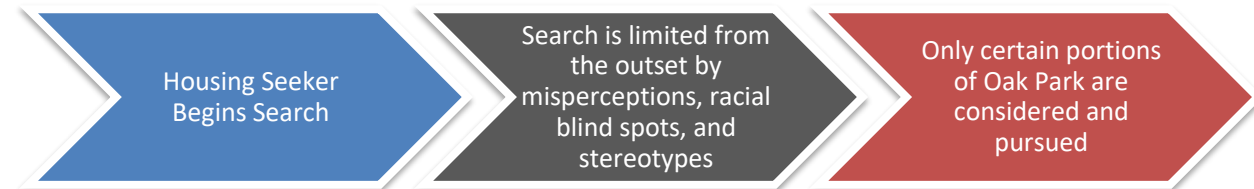
regional residential pattern is also highly segregated<sup>3</sup>. These patterns, which influence attitudes about Oak Park neighborhoods, are outside local control and will continue for the foreseeable future. Thus, Oak Park must continue to counter these forces to remain integrated.

When searching for an apartment, people get information from friends, family, and co-workers warning them about certain parts of Oak Park. Clients who use our services often tell us someone from Oak Park or someone who used to live in Oak Park warned them to stay “west of Ridgeland,” “off Austin Boulevard,” or “as far west as possible.” We tally this anecdotal data but we cannot document it further than that, as no one wants to go on record saying such things.

All of this information, in addition to general implicit biases<sup>4</sup> from societal cues, is at play in the minds of rental seekers as they look for a place to live. Web sites and social media also play a role in perpetuating false stereotypes about neighborhoods in Oak Park. The success of the Housing Center’s model is its ability to correct for these misperceptions through conversation (Advising and Guiding) with prospective renters.

The advising and guiding activities are far more important than any other part of the process. It is through direct, face-to-face conversation that Advisors and Guides address irrational fears, provide missing information, replace myths and stereotypes with facts, and engage in gentle persuasion to consider new options. This results in a much different housing search than would occur without the Housing Center.

### **A Typical Housing Search without Housing Center Intervention**



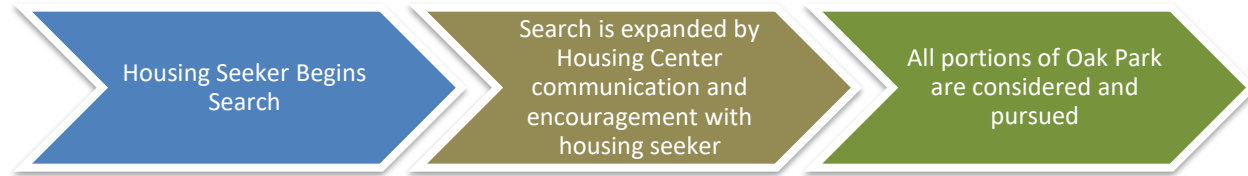
In a typical housing search without intervention from the Housing Center, the housing seeker begins with a limited set of options that are highly informed by racial and economic stereotypes. What we find most often (and the research below confirms) is that most non-African Americans avoid areas that they believe are within or near to predominantly African American areas. The search is limited in a way that will make integration nearly impossible.

A separate phenomenon occurs for African Americans. Despite the reputation and rhetoric of a welcoming community in Oak Park, prospective black residents enter with some hesitation about moving into areas perceived to be the whitest, as promises of equality are not always kept. Some begin by playing it safe so as not to be isolated or spotlighted.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/livability/housing/fair-housing>

<sup>4</sup> Implicit bias science has demonstrated that people regularly make unconscious decisions about race that most often lead to segregation, isolation, and disharmony.

## A Search by a Housing Center Client



When the Housing Center intervenes in a search, the housing seeker is presented with additional options that they normally would have ignored or actively avoided. In the process, the cycle of segregation is disrupted with new information and personalized service to encourage consideration of an integrated move. This includes both active listening and gentle challenges to reduce the reluctance of an integrating move.

Advisors do not simply provide listings. They converse with a client for about 40 minutes on average in their first meeting. In about a third of all cases, clients also revisit for a follow up meeting with an Advisor that normally will last about 20 minutes. Additional calls and emails are regularly exchanged between Advisors and clients while they are searching for an apartment. Over the previous 5 years, the affirmative rate for moves by our clients is 68% and improves to 80% when clients move to units we have in our listings from cooperating landlords.

In cases where 1) we can suggest a unit that will result in an affirmative move, 2) we have keys to the unit, and 3) a client is interested in being shown the unit, the Housing Center will offer to have a Guide show them units. Guides provide additional encouragement for an affirmative move and have further discussion with clients to overcome misperceptions about the community. Moves that result from Guides showing apartments are extremely successful in promoting integration – 96% of the time a guided client will promote integration with their move.

5-Year Total from 2010 - 2014	Moves by Housing Center Clients	Moves by Other Renters	Explanation
ALL Moves	4,612	6,687 (1)	Housing Center is responsible for 40% of moves to Oak Park.
Affirmative Rate	68%	25% (2)	Housing Center affirmative rate is 2.7 times better than the general affirmative rate. The general rate would result in rapid segregation.
Moves to Units Listed with OPRHC	2,798	2,090	Housing Center rents 57% of the units listed with us.
Affirmative Rate	80%	53%	Housing Center affirmative rate is 1.5 times better than the general affirmative rate. The general rate is just barely integrative.
Moves to MFHIP Listed Units	798	339	Housing Center is responsible for 70% of moves to Village-supported MFHIP buildings.
Affirmative Rate	94%	49%	Housing Center affirmative rate is 1.9 times better than the general affirmative rate. The general rate would result in segregation.

grayed data is based on estimates

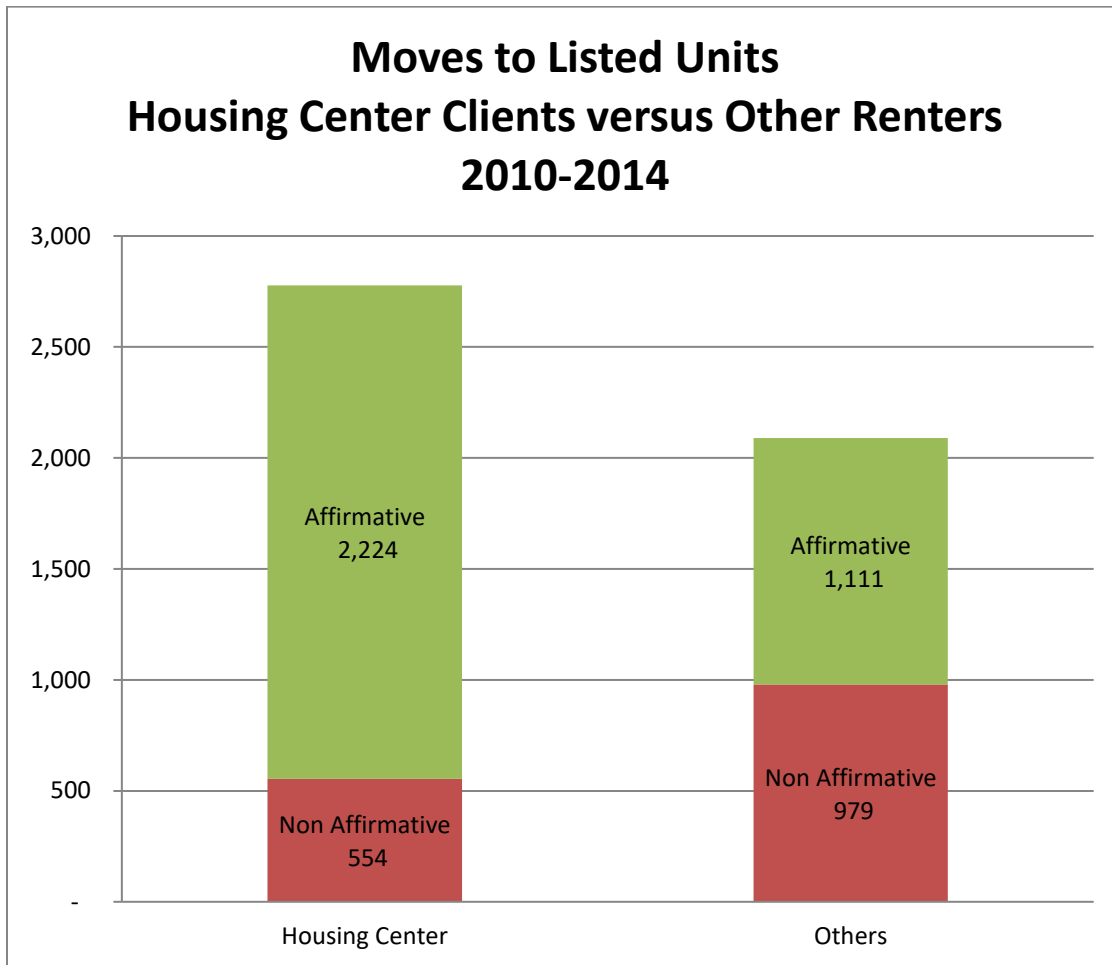
(1) Estimate based on remaining 60% of market turnover minus a 2% vacancy rate.

(2) Estimate based on rate of integrated moves in the Chicago region using the Panel Study of Income Dynamics data and a 50% increase in that rate as an "Oak Park effect"

These services are unique to the Housing Center. Primarily for two reasons, landlords do not engage in these activities. First, as owners and managers of housing, landlords do not have the same legal ability to engage in integration activity that the non-profit and property-free Housing Center enjoys. Second, landlords are, as would be reasonably expected, profit-driven not mission-driven. Their primary function is to rent out their units in a profitable manner, not to promote racial integration.

Another factor that makes it difficult for owners to market their units affirmatively is that, with a few exceptions, landlords in Oak Park do not own property in enough different areas of the village to encourage integration. Many landlords own three or fewer buildings. In nearly all of these cases, their buildings are located near each other. The supply available to each landlord does not allow for them to pursue integration efforts without help from the Housing Center.

Data supports this. In moves where the Housing Center advises a client, the integration rate is significantly higher than when the Housing Center is not involved. The following graph shows the significant difference that the Housing Center makes in moves to listed units from cooperating landlords within Oak Park. As shown in the table above, this disparity is even greater for moves to the most vulnerable buildings in the Multi-Family Housing Incentives Program (MFHIP).



It is also worth noting that even for the moves by “Other” renters on this graph, the Housing Center is exerting some influence through its technical assistance to the cooperating landlord listing the unit. It should also be noted that the non-profit Residence Corporations buildings are included in these numbers. If this graph included only private landlords, the affirmative rate of “Other” moves would fall below 50%. This technical assistance includes affirmative marketing and fair housing guidance. It is likely that without Housing Center assistance in these cases the affirmative rate would be lower for “Other” renters.

#### Unique in our Area

Oak Park is unique in the region for its stability and integration. Neighboring communities are showing greater tendencies toward overall population shifts as the following table demonstrates.

Change in Population Shares 2000 - 2013	Austin	Berwyn	Cicero	Elmwood Park	Forest Park	Oak Park	River Forest
White	-1%	-25%	-11%	-11%	-5%	-1%	-5%
Black	-4%	5%	2%	0%	2%	-1%	1%
Asian	0%	-1%	-1%	0%	1%	1%	3%
Latino	5%	22%	10%	10%	2%	1%	0%

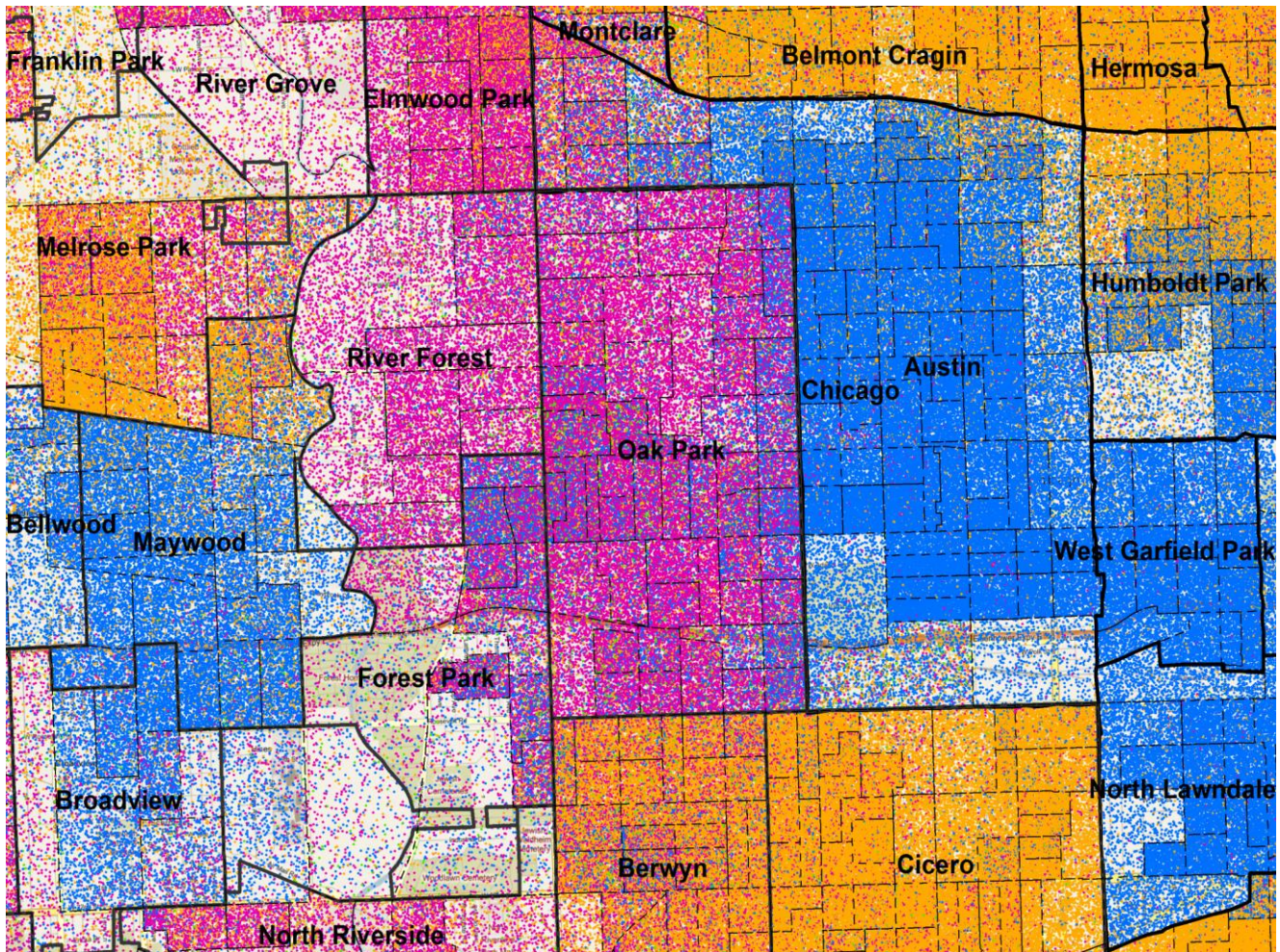
Berwyn, Cicero, and Elmwood Park are experiencing rapid racial changes in their populations. Forest Park and River Forest are experiencing changes at a slower rate. However, population losses are only in the white category. In Forest Park, this is resulting in a greater deviation from the regional average for population shares. In River Forest, this could be progress toward integration if future trends begin to include black and Latino populations at a greater rate. While already predominantly African American, Austin continues to lose white population but is now experiencing an increase in Latino population.

Only Oak Park is experiencing small, stable changes. This stability is important for planning purposes and for community cohesion. Moreover, those changes are bringing Oak Park closer to regional population averages, indicating that people of all races are looking to Oak Park as a place to live. Indeed, with the exception of Latino difference from the regional share, Oak Park is closer to regional averages for population shares than any of our neighbors. Our overall difference from the regional average is also the smallest.

<b>Regional Averages of Population Shares</b>	<b>Austin</b>	<b>Berwyn</b>	<b>Cicero</b>	<b>Elmwood Park</b>	<b>Forest Park</b>	<b>Oak Park</b>	<b>River Forest</b>
White (Region is 53%)	-49%	-22%	-45%	20%	-7%	11%	28%
Black (Region is 17%)	68%	-12%	-15%	-17%	15%	3%	-12%
Asian (Region is 6%)	5%	-4%	-6%	-4%	2%	-1%	-1%
Latino (Region is 22%)	-13%	38%	66%	-1%	-12%	-15%	-17%
Total Variance	135%	76%	131%	42%	35%	31%	58%

The segregation within surrounding communities also has an influence on decisions to move to Oak Park. Even as we continue to promote integration within the community, segregation dominates most of western Cook County as the following dot density map of 2010 Census data shows.





Key: Pink=White Blue=African American Orange=Latino Green=Asian

### **The Consequences of Lost Intentionality**

Our neighboring communities are not the only places to measure against. Other communities that have worked on integration strategies over the past 40 years can offer additional insight. In particular, it makes sense to consider a group of communities that worked together for over 20 years as the Oak Park Exchange Congress. The Exchange Congress supported information sharing and best practices on promoting diversity and integration among its members.

Both Village Hall and the Housing Center anchored the Exchange Congress. In addition, Evanston, IL; Shaker Heights, OH; and University City, MO were at the core of the group and are the best comparisons. The efforts in the other three communities all predate Oak Park's efforts. In fact, the programs in Shaker Heights and University City formed the basis of the initial efforts at the Housing Center and Village Hall.

While each of the core communities in the Exchange Congress are still diverse, they are more segregated than Oak Park, including some high segregation scores that can be explained through lack of commitment.

Segregation by Dissimilarity 2013 <sup>5</sup>	Oak Park	Evanston	Shaker Heights	University City
White:Black	31	62	50	63
White:Asian	19	49	41	54
White:Latino	18	56	40	58
Average	23	56	44	58
0 - 30 = Low Segregation, 31 - 60 = Moderate Segregation, 61 - 100 = High Segregation				

Evanston quickly lost its focus on promoting housing integration. Instead, they focused on school busing as an integration effort. As a result, Evanston's housing market is twice as segregated as Oak Park. This approach has had significant downsides including higher racial tensions, a conflation of race and class, and clear distinctions regarding investment in different neighborhoods of Evanston<sup>6</sup>. In addition, Evanston also must pay for the costs (economic and environmental) of busing children across town. And, Evanston's school integration efforts have not achieved their desired goals<sup>7</sup>.

In the early 2000s, integration efforts in Shaker Heights and University City waned. In Shaker Heights, their program of providing down payment assistance for moves that promoted integration was overwhelmed by subprime lending practices and lost its effectiveness. The down payment incentive for affirmative moves was irrelevant when homebuyers could finance 100% or more of their home's value. During that time, the funds for that program were re-purposed for short-term programs and are now depleted. Shaker Heights is largely a homeownership community. Thus, increases in dissimilarity scores there are increasing at a slower rate, as change is dependent on turnover rates.

In 2006, University City's program vanished so quickly and completely that no one in government or the former University City Housing Center could be contacted to explain its demise. From observers' accounts, it seems to be a combination of a loss of will and a lack of understanding about the dynamic nature of housing. The apparent hope was that the diversity and integration of the community would remain constant even without an active program. This false hope was common among Exchange Congress communities that almost always segregated when integration efforts ended.

Many communities decided to end or dramatically reduce their integration programs when they felt they had "made it" by achieving a level of diversity they considered successful. However, housing turnover continues indefinitely and, because diverse communities are still rare, internal segregation or full resegregation occurred in nearly every case following the end of integration programs. This has often resulted in a loss of economic vitality as well. The Exchange Congress is now dormant due to a reduction of activity in other communities.

<sup>5</sup> Dissimilarity ranges from 0 (perfect integration) to 100 (complete segregation). For reference, no place has ever been at 0 and even apartheid South Africa was not at 100. The score equals the percentage of a group's population that would have to change residence to an under-represented area for there to be an even percentage of those groups across a community. In Oak Park's case, 31% of blacks and whites would have to move to areas where they are currently in the minority to get a score of 0.

<sup>6</sup> It could also be easily defeated in court following the *Parents United* cases that dramatically restricted voluntary school integration programs.

<sup>7</sup> Moser, Whet "How Integration Worked -- and Failed -- in Evanston. *Chicago Magazine*. <http://www.chicagomag.com/city-life/March-2015/Evanston-School-Integration/>

Of all the communities commonly compared to Oak Park, Evanston is most frequent and has the greatest similarity. The two communities have similar median housing values and rental housing percentages, both are adjacent to the City of Chicago, and both have CTA and Metra rail access. Oak Park compares very favorably to Evanston when it comes to integration. We have much lower dissimilarity and fewer block groups that deviate from our overall averages.

In some important ways, Evanston has comparative advantages over Oak Park that would suggest Evanston should be better integrated. Evanston is adjacent to the attraction of Lake Michigan; borders a moderate-income, integrated Chicago neighborhood; and has Northwestern University as an anchor within its borders. Evanston is also located near old wealth northern suburbs and serves as the downtown for those communities. On the contrary, Oak Park is located inland; adjacent to a low-income, segregated Chicago neighborhood; does not have a university anchor; and is nearly surrounded by segregated suburbs. The table below provides a basic analysis of Oak Park and Evanston.

<b>General Statistics</b>	<b>Oak Park</b>	<b>Evanston</b>
Median HH Income	\$78,802	\$67,038
% in Poverty	7%	13%
Median Home Value	\$358,800	\$353,200
Median Gross Rent	\$1,047	\$1,162
% Rental Housing	38	44

<b>Dissimilarity</b>	<b>Oak Park</b>	<b>Evanston</b>
Black:White	31	62
Black:Latino	19	49
Black:Asian	18	56
Latino:White	30	71
Latino:Asian	21	45

<b>Block Group Survey</b>	<b>Oak Park</b>	<b>Evanston</b>
> 90% White	1	7
> Twice Black Avg	6	13
> Twice Latino Avg	0	8
< 10% White	0	3
< 5% Black	1	20
< 3% Latino	6	12
Total Deviations	14	63

Source: 2013 American Community Survey

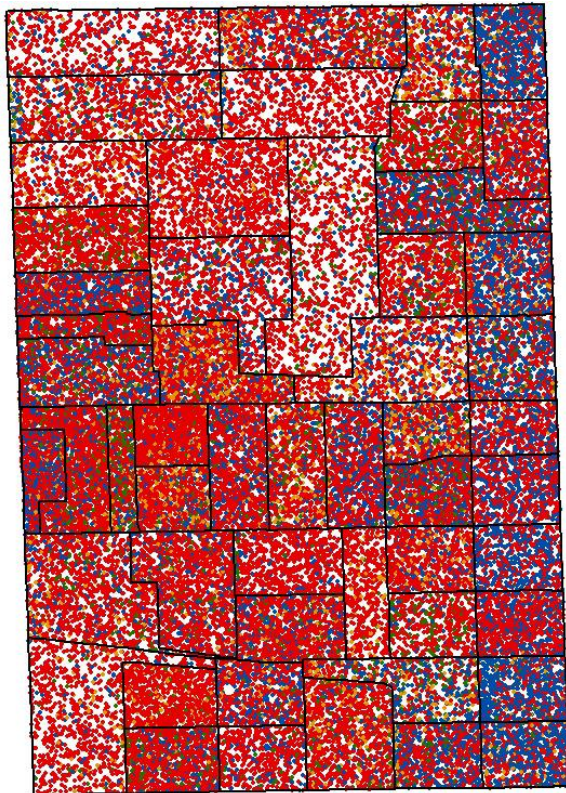
While home values and rents are similar, the parallels end there. Fewer Oak Parkers experience poverty and median incomes are higher in Oak Park. Our segregation is consistently less than half the segregation in Evanston. Oak Parkers are also less isolated from one another. Evanston includes many more block groups where extreme variance from the norm exists. Evanston even includes a block group that is 100% white.

The correlation between race and class is also significant in Evanston<sup>8</sup>. The areas in Evanston with the highest African American and Latino populations are also the areas with lower median home values and the greatest concentrations of high-poverty households.

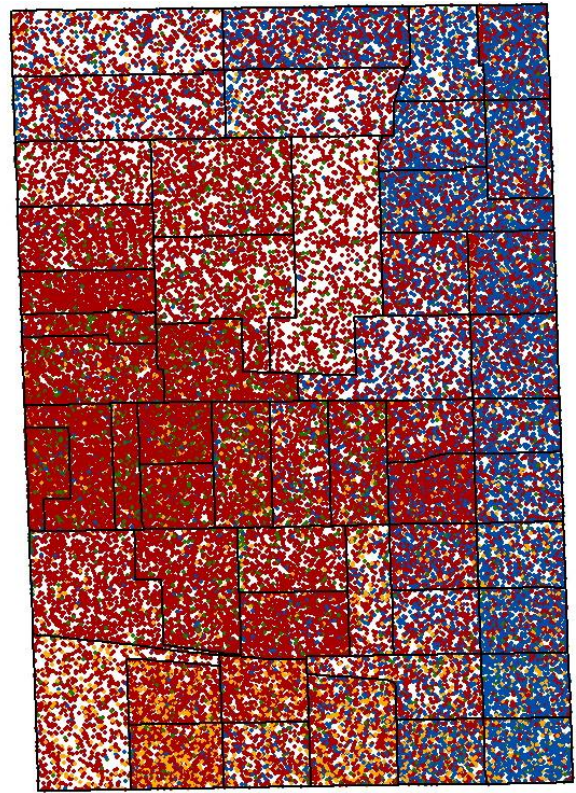
<b>MEDIAN HOME VALUES</b>	<b>Oak Park</b>	<b>Evanston</b>
Top 10 White Block Groups	\$ 507,030	\$ 523,650
Top 10 Black Block Groups	\$ 306,000	\$ 212,800
Difference	\$ 201,030	\$ 310,850

The following visual demonstrates the likely difference in racial distribution for each of the four largest racial groups if Oak Park were to be almost as segregated as Evanston. The map on the left is the current distribution in Oak Park. The map on the right is if Oak Park had a dissimilarity of 61 (1 point less than Evanston's score).

Oak Park with Current Dissimilarity of 31



Oak Park with a Dissimilarity of 61



In this situation, neighborhoods would be identifiable by race and most of our elementary schools would be predominantly of one racial group. This situation is likely to reduce the cohesion of the community and cause an expansion of inequalities. The result would require much greater commitments of resources and would be extremely difficult to reverse. This would be a very different Oak Park than the one we currently value and enjoy living in.

<sup>8</sup> Source 2013 American Community Survey

## **The Value of the Housing Center and Integration**

The intentional effort to sustain the integration of our diverse community is an investment with many social and economic benefits for Oak Park. It results in both a more harmonious and a more prosperous community.

Typically, when a community sees a change in diversity, that change is accompanied by patterns of segregation. Examples of this are abundant in the Chicago region, including in nearby community areas and suburbs. Moreover, this trend has continued throughout history to the present day. In fact, segregation has been a historically consistent and fundamental form of perpetuating inequality in America, particularly since the Reconstruction era. During the Great Migration to Midwestern and Northeastern cities, segregation was heavily enforced by local, state, and federal government policies. As a result, the most segregated cities and metropolitan regions in the nation are in the Midwest and Northeast. 24 of the 30 most segregated metro regions are in the Midwest and Northeast. Chicagoland consistently ranks in the top five most segregated regions<sup>9</sup>.

This is also true for communities that at one time had integration efforts in place but later scaled them back or abandoned them. As noted above, Shaker Heights, OH, a community often considered in the same context as Oak Park dramatically scaled back its efforts to promote integration and has since sustained its diversity but is losing its integration. University City, MO, the community whose model was the basis for the Housing Center, abandoned its programs in 2006 and is now in the high-segregation range.

Meanwhile, segregation often results in many negative economic consequences, particularly in the areas that have higher minority populations, but also for whole communities. The Voorhees Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago has mapped how incomes have declined in Chicago census tracts that have racially segregated to become predominantly minority tracts. They also demonstrated that the current income inequality divide is almost identical to the pattern of racial segregation in Chicago<sup>10</sup>.

The negative effect on a whole community is more pronounced in suburban contexts where populations and geographies are smaller. Often, the negative consequences of segregation overtake a whole suburb. The result is lower property values, lower tax revenue, and diminished services within that municipality. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning has mapped regional opportunity. This includes access to employment, quality education, and other important quality of life factors. It also includes the fiscal capacity of each municipality. There is an extremely close correlation between communities of color, constrained fiscal capacity, and a lack of opportunity<sup>11</sup>.

Thus, racial integration strategies in diverse communities are more than social justice programs, they promote economic prosperity as well. For instance, as discussed above, property values are much more even across Oak Park than in Evanston, which is similarly diverse but less integrated.

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<sup>9</sup> Currently the Chicago region is the 5<sup>th</sup> most segregated. 3 adjacent regions are 1<sup>st</sup> (Gary, IN), 3<sup>rd</sup> (Milwaukee, WI), and 74<sup>th</sup> (Rockford).

<sup>10</sup> <https://voorheescenter.wordpress.com/2015/03/11/a-deepening-divide-income-inequality-grows-spatially-in-chicago/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/livability/housing/fair-housing> (Disclosure - OPRHC Executive Director was a co-author of this report.)

Many of the Chicago region's south suburban communities were members of the Exchange Congress and formed a collaboration called Diversity, Inc. to promote diverse and integrated communities. They included the municipalities of Flossmoor, Homewood, Matteson, and Olympia Fields. All of these communities continue to provide housing for middle class or working class households. However, because of implicit biases, racial blind spots, and general perceptions that reduce interest in south suburban communities, they suffer economically.

Two phenomena are particularly detrimental to these communities. Depressed home values and retail redlining. If segregation were to occur within Oak Park, it is reasonable to expect that areas with greater African American populations would lose value and be less desirable for retail development. This is a consistent outcome of segregation due to structural forces that negatively value neighborhoods of color.

The chart below shows that even though Flossmoor and Olympia Fields have higher median incomes than Oak Park's, the median home values are lower. In the case of Flossmoor, the difference is astonishing. While mean income is \$22,000 higher, median home value is \$102,000 lower. Homewood and Matteson have slightly lower incomes but the corresponding home values are about half those in Oak Park. These lower property values reduce property tax revenues and strain the fiscal capacity of these communities to provide high quality services and comfortable lifestyles.

Community	Median Home Value	Median Income
Flossmoor	\$ 256,500	\$ 100,941
Olympia Fields	\$ 246,500	\$ 85,917
Oak Park	\$ 358,800	\$ 78,802
Homewood	\$ 180,100	\$ 70,121
Matteson	\$ 167,500	\$ 70,000

Flossmoor is similar in many ways to the suburb of LaGrange. The two communities have nearly identical median incomes. Both have Metra access and a similar commute into downtown Chicago. Both are similarly residential with about the same owner-to-renter ratio. The only significant difference is race. Flossmoor is 41% white. LaGrange is 82% white. The difference in home values is striking. Median home values in LaGrange are \$437,600, while in Flossmoor they are \$256,500. Racial dynamics clearly play a significant role in home values between the two communities.

Retail redlining also harms these communities. They lose retail opportunities due to the perceptions associated with the racial makeup of the communities. Retail redlining has been documented in research. William Bellinger and Jue Wang found that African American communities are systematically underserved by retail, even though Latino and low-income communities are not<sup>12</sup>. Direct discussion with south suburban municipal officials concurs with this research. They struggle consistently to attract new businesses to their communities.

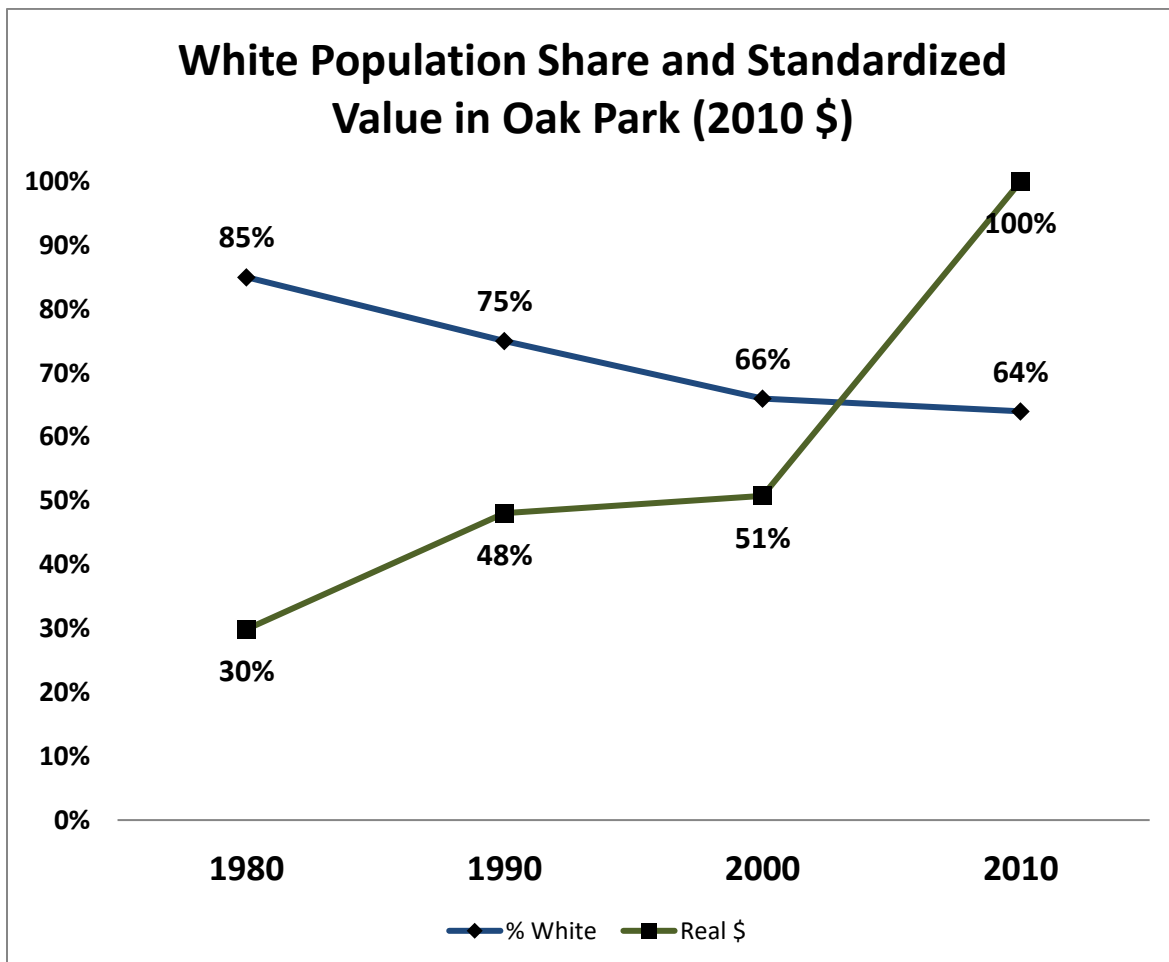
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<sup>12</sup> Bellinger, William and Jue Wang (2011) Poverty, Place, or Race: Causes of the Retail Gap in Smaller US Cities. *Review of Black Political Economics*, 38:253-270.

Equally unappealing would be a community that segregated toward an exclusivity that significantly reduced populations of people of color, in Oak Park. While research does not indicate that this would typically result in economic losses, Oak Park would certainly suffer socially. Diversity is a core value of Oak Park. Failure to sustain a diverse and integrated community would be a loss to the identity and sense of place in Oak Park. In essence, our integrated diversity is our community's brand. To lose our diversity and integration would likely cause some instability as more progressive-minded homeowners reconsidered their commitment to living here.

Through our intentional efforts to sustain integration, we have built our diversity into a competitive advantage for Oak Park. Those searching for a predominantly white community with a quality of life similar to Oak Park have hundreds of choices in the Chicago region. What brings them to Oak Park is a unique quality of diversity with prosperity. Our diversity also sustains other parts of Oak Park life that we value. It enhances our arts and cultural life and fosters a civic mindedness and generosity among residents. The diversity of Oak Park sets us apart from other communities in the region and often puts us in a positive media spotlight that markets the community nationally.

Oak Park has created an environment where diversity and prosperity coexist. This is due to the intentionality of the integration strategy in Oak Park. It is unlike communities where diversity broadens without an integration strategy. The following graph shows the uncommon nature of Oak Park's increasing value as it also becomes less white.



## Supporting Research

In addition to the data from Oak Park and other diverse communities, research on this topic heavily supports the need for intentional efforts to sustain integration.

Jeffrey Timberlake while at the University of Chicago found that segregation self-perpetuates due to a lack of information and racial groups' asymmetrical comfort with diverse communities. This article uses data from Atlanta during a time of increasing racial change of African Americans and whites across the metropolitan area. However, the data is relevant as racial change is also occurring rapidly in western Cook County and throughout the Chicago region.

Timberlake identified a cycle that begins with African Americans moving into a predominantly white neighborhood. What follows are exits by whites with the lowest tolerances for integration. As the initial whites leave, they are replaced most often by African Americans looking for integrated communities to live in. This triggers another group of whites with the next lowest tolerance to leave and the cycle continues. This cycle is very similar to the resegregation of Chicago's west side and the southern suburbs of Cook County. Timberlake's conclusion calls for engaging in intentional integration to break this cycle. He includes a combination of encouraging integration and improving racial relations, both activities currently employed by the Housing Center.

These findings are consistent with research conducted by Lincoln Quillian of Northwestern University. Quillian analyzed data collected from multiple census years to determine how often people move to more integrated settings. He found that whites are very reluctant to move to a census tract where the African American population percentage is higher than in their current census tract<sup>13</sup>. Quillian demonstrates that, "White avoidance of predominately Black and racially mixed neighborhoods is a very important process upholding segregation."

Matt Hall of Cornell University analyzes demographic data and segregation. In direct correspondence this year on the subject<sup>14</sup>, Hall provided that:

Since 1999 only 11.5% of whites made moves where the destination neighborhood was at least 10% less white than origin neighborhood. For African Americans, only 33.9% of blacks made moves where the destination neighborhood was at least 10% less black than origin neighborhood.

In the 220 suburbs of Cook, DuPage, and Lake Counties that make up our strongest markets for demand, 95 suburbs are beyond the 10% threshold. The population of those 95 suburbs is equal to a third of the suburban population.

This trend in the general housing market is extremely segregating. Additionally, these documented patterns correlate with Timberlake's findings that African Americans are more interested in integrated settings and this imbalance triggers eventual resegregation.

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<sup>13</sup> Quillian, Lincoln. (2002) Why is Black-White Residential Segregation so Persistent?: Evidence on Three Theories from Migration Data. *Social Science Research* v31,p209.

<sup>14</sup> Hall's cv is here: [https://far.human.cornell.edu/FAR/uploads/webcv/msh284\\_webcv.pdf](https://far.human.cornell.edu/FAR/uploads/webcv/msh284_webcv.pdf)



Research by Quillian and Hall is not alone. University of Pennsylvania professor Camille Zubrinsky Charles has conducted extensive research into racial housing preferences. In a multi-city survey, Charles found that only 45% of whites are willing to even consider a move into a neighborhood that is one-third black and fewer than 30% of whites would consider moving into a neighborhood that is majority black<sup>15</sup>. Charles found that Latinos and Asians have similar attitudes toward black neighborhoods, always finding them to be the least desirable of any racial makeup.

It is small wonder that these findings keep being repeated. Research on how racial factors influence decisions has been growing over the past decade. Most prominent are studies on implicit association (sometimes referred to as implicit bias).

Nilanjana Dasgupta at the University of Massachusetts has provided summary research on over 100 implicit association research projects<sup>16</sup>. Dasgupta found that the evidence points overwhelmingly to unconscious biases that perpetuate prejudices and behaviors, including racial avoidance. Moreover, the research demonstrated that intentional strategies can reduce biases.

In a housing and community context, strategies for overcoming bias require intentional efforts to promote integration, communicate the value of inclusion, and provide opportunities to practice unbiased behavior. These are exactly the strategies of the Housing Center model. We promote integrated environments, discuss the value of inclusive living patterns with our clients, and encourage our clients to make affirmative moves that counter biased behavior.

Prevailing attitudes are racially informed but not necessarily based on explicit racial prejudice. They can be indicative of misperceptions and misconceptions. In 2004, UIC professors Maria Krysan<sup>17</sup> and Tyrone Forman found that people of all races are poorly informed of neighborhoods and communities where they are not in the majority. When Krysan and Foreman asked their survey participants which of 41 scientifically selected communities in the Chicago region they had searched for housing in, respondents showed a racial bias to their searches. Interestingly, only Oak Park, which affirmatively markets to all three groups, was common as a top choice among whites, blacks, and Latinos<sup>18</sup>.

Krysan's research is extensive on this subject. Her work has also demonstrated that race has an effect on the perception of a neighborhood regardless of the perceived quality of that neighborhood. In an experiment where she and her colleagues controlled for the quality of a neighborhood, the results showed that presence of African Americans reduced whites' desirability even in the highest quality neighborhoods.

Racial attitudes do not stop at the neighborhood level either. John Hipp at the University of California at Irvine found that prospective housing seekers use signals (photos, decorating, magazines etc.) within

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<sup>15</sup> Charles, Camille Zubrinsky. (2001) Processes of Racial Residential Segregation. From O'Connor, Alice et al. eds. *Urban Inequality: Evidence from Four Cities*. p237.

<sup>16</sup> Dasgupta, Nilanjana (2009) *Color Lines in the Mind: Implicit Prejudice, Discrimination, and Potential for Change in Twenty-First Century Color Lines*. Andrew Grant-Thomas and Gary Orfield eds. Temple University Press

<sup>17</sup> Ms. Krysan is a resident of the Austin community area and a board member of the Housing Center. Her cv is here: [http://soc.uic.edu/docs/default-source/cvs/2015-Faculty-CVs/krysan-cv-12\\_17\\_14.pdf?sfvrsn=2](http://soc.uic.edu/docs/default-source/cvs/2015-Faculty-CVs/krysan-cv-12_17_14.pdf?sfvrsn=2)

<sup>18</sup> Krysan, Maria and Tyrone Foreman. (2004) *Chicago Area Study*. (Disclosure: Krysan is a Board member of the Housing Center.)

a household unit to determine the race of the prior resident<sup>19</sup>. In cases where these signals show the prior resident's race was different from the prospective resident's, the likelihood of a move reduces significantly. Hipp found this to be true of whites, African Americans, and Latinos. He also found that this signaling effect was even stronger in diverse communities.

The clear theme of this research is that promoting integration requires effort to include white demand in diverse places. Whites, and to a lesser extent, Asians and Latinos will mostly avoid neighborhoods they perceive to be African American. This concurs with the prevailing attitudes of clients who visit the Housing Center. We also see hesitancy by African American clients to consider moves to the whiter parts of the community. This is less pronounced and based on different concerns. The reluctance of whites, Asians, and Latinos is based on fear of crime and beliefs that areas nearer to Austin must be less pleasant. African American concerns focus on harassment and isolation.

The conclusion in the research on how to promote integration is consistent – engage in intentional efforts to promote integration. HUD-funded research on this matter by four experts on diverse communities found “that the most stable diverse communities have developed the institutional structures, social arrangements, and political-social environment to sustain their diversity. Among these structures are community organizations developed specifically to promote the community as racially and ethnically diverse<sup>20</sup>.” They conclude that “stable diverse neighborhoods will not develop on their own; they require active intervention to counter misconceptions about diversity and a lack of institutional support for diversity<sup>21</sup>.”

Cleveland State University professor Dennis Keating provides the most direct statement regarding neighborhood and community integration. In his study of racial change in Cleveland's suburbs (including Shaker Heights), Keating emphasized that “to achieve the goal of community integration, affirmative housing policies are required<sup>22</sup>.”

Oak Park was specifically discussed in a 2002 article by Evan McKenzie (UIC) and Jay Ruby (Temple). They wrote an article intended as a critique of Oak Park's integration strategies. However, they concluded that the Housing Center was critical to integration in Oak Park

[T]he reason for its creation has not changed. White people are reluctant to rent in neighborhoods where there are a significant number of black tenants... If Oak Park is to continue to realize its goal of dispersed integration then the Center will have to continue to induce white demand in East Oak Park.<sup>23</sup>

Their research included having Ruby volunteer for an extended period as a receptionist for the Housing Center. During this period, he discovered that “white clients who knew almost nothing about Oak Park

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<sup>19</sup> Hipp, John. (2012) Segregation Through the Lens of Housing Unit Transition: What Roles Do the Prior Residents, the Local Micro-Neighborhood, and the Broader Neighborhood Play? *Demography* 49:1285–1306.

<sup>20</sup> Nyden, Phil et al. (1998) *Neighborhood Racial and Ethnic Diversity in U.S. Cities. Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research*. v4, n2, p9

<sup>21</sup> Ibid p266

<sup>22</sup> Keating, W. Dennis. (1994) *Race, Housing, and Neighborhoods. The Suburban Racial Dilemma: Housing and Neighborhoods*. Temple University Press. p4.

<sup>23</sup> McKenzie, Evan and Jay Ruby (2002) *Reconsidering the Oak Park Strategy: The Conundrums of Integration*. p30

arrived at the Center convinced they knew where the ‘bad’ places to live are located<sup>24</sup>.” These “bad” places correlated with perceptions of racial segregation in the community.

### **Conclusion**

The Housing Center serves Oak Park both economically and socially. The Housing Center ensures strong and stable property values and provides a foundation for community harmony that makes diversity an asset. Our mission to achieve meaningful and lasting racial diversity in the community is critical to the public brand and core values of Oak Park.

Because the housing market is always in motion, the work of the Housing Center constantly remains relevant. Thousands of moves into and within Oak Park occur annually. Each one of these moves can result in either integration or segregation. As the data show, the Housing Center is critical to ensuring positive outcomes of these moves. Without the Housing Center, Oak Park will surely segregate.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.