



FALL 2007

# OPAL NEWSLETTER

HOUSING ISLAND PEOPLE, HELPING TO MAINTAIN ISLAND CHARACTER

## MT. BAKER ROAD: LOCAL CONSTRUCTION CREW READY TO GO

After a competitive process, OPAL chose Terra Firma NW as the general contractor on the Mt. Baker Road neighborhood. Justin Paulsen and his business partner Brandon Bolt have strong ties with the OPAL community. Terra Firma NW came to Orcas in 2003 to build the Reddick Farmhouse Offices and Apartments and went on to build the homes at Lahari Ridge (2005) and on Madrona Street (2006). Terra Firma's scope of operations includes residential construction, larger scale commercial development and remodeling.



Terra Firma employs 15 crew members, 12 of whom are full-time Orcas residents.

Of Terra Firma's 15 employees, only one is a homeowner—an OPAL homeowner. Another employee is on the waiting list. "We are losing our working base of people 35 and under," says Justin. "I'm convinced that without OPAL we would have a serious workforce crisis on the island. I'd like to see ALL of our employees in their own homes—for the stability it brings to families and to the community. The OPAL web is well cast with people who are vital to the community."

The rest of the team includes local landscape consultant Robin Kucklick and his crew; Transform, a modular building company located in the Skagit Valley; and a local excavation crew to be contracted in late November. Terra Firma will hire the subcontractors (plumbing, electric, concrete, roofing) and says that most will be local companies.

Robin Kucklick has a more than twenty-year track record of designing and installing landscapes on Orcas Island. His work can be seen all over the island—and the county—including: Orcas Medical Center, Senior Center, Islanders Bank, Library Park, and Orcas High School. "I'm impressed with the landscape plan and its sensitivity to the site," said Robin. "It feels great to be part of a project that brings such community good."

Transform is a key partner in OPAL's efforts to stay local and limit our footprint on this project. According to Bill "Boo" Maris, CEO of Transform, "I strongly believe that this is an innovative way to accomplish affordable, sustainable housing. The end result should be an inspiration to others as well as a valuable asset for the families in our community. We are proud to be part of the team."

Site excavation and utilities installation, followed by foundation construction, are scheduled to begin in January 2008. The factory stick-built homes will be delivered (in two or four sections) by ferry or barge. The homes will be lifted into place with cranes and then latched together. Roofing, drywall, and siding will be next—along with some minimal plumbing and electrical work to connect the utility-ready homes to the infrastructure. Building a porch for each home and completing the landscape installation and groundwater retention features, such as rain gardens, will be the final touches. The first 10 homes are scheduled to be ready for occupancy in September 2008.

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: LISA BYERS

### BEGINNING A VISION FOR THE YEAR 2030

A group of visionaries recently came up with 20 ideas for how to make housing more affordable in Seattle. One suggestion: “Put a cap on how much you can sell your home for.” The visionaries were students at Chief Sealth High School. In Nicole Brodeur’s Nov. 2nd *Seattle Times* column, she quotes one student as saying: “People shouldn’t be able to get rich from houses when it keeps good lower- and middle-class people from being able to live in their own city.” These students have a vision, a picture of how they think the world could work more equitably.



The day before this newspaper column appeared, OPAL’s trustees, staff and a few guests spent the morning envisioning what the island might be like in the year 2030 and what OPAL’s role in that future community might be. Creating a vision of the future is not easy. Yet, when asked, most of us are able to describe what aspects of life we value, or how we believe the system should work.

And so this intrepid group of people dared to explore possible futures together. What resulted was convergence on a number of broad themes, and a series of questions to analyze over the coming months.

Three major themes are outlined in bold below, and some of the questions we will seek to answer about OPAL’s future role follow:

(1) **Be responsive to islanders’ needs:** How do we best increase the options for island households of very low income? Could we make stand-alone rental houses work financially? How could we fund or finance an increase in the number of homes for middle-income households? How much demand for these homes is there? Are different configurations of homes viable, such as co-housing? Senior-only housing? Duplexes that combine ownership and rental? Is there a role for OPAL in assuring long-term affordable access to farmland?

(2) **Be creative and responsible in what we do:** When should we be the project manager? When should we let others manage? When could we provide a discrete role, such as owning the land to assure long-term affordability? Should we be more or less engaged with the people who own OPAL homes? With the neighborhood homeowner associations? How much of the gap in affordability should we ask government to fill? How much should we try to fill through private funding?

(3) **Be an educator on topics related to OPAL’s mission:** Does our role as educators include bringing speakers to the island on topics such as local economies and economics? Sustainability? Environmental sensitivity? Stewardship? Social capital? What is our role as political activists?

We will explore these questions and more over the coming months and plan to present a draft plan to you in the spring of 2008. We hope that other groups and organizations will engage in a similar kind of conversation about their role in island life over the next 20-25 years, and we hope that together we can craft a vision for a healthy and vibrant island community in the year 2030.

*Lisa Byers*

#### MISSION

The mission of OPAL Community Land Trust is to acquire and own land so that islanders in need may have access to permanently affordable homes and workplaces. OPAL collaborates with others, develops improvements, and stewards the land in a manner that is cooperative, stable, environmentally sensitive, and socially responsible.

## MT. BAKER ROAD: RAISING THE MONEY TO BUILD THE HOMES

*By Helen Bee, Trustee and Fundraising Committee Co-chair*

How on earth does one raise \$800,000?! That was the question running through my mind last spring when I agreed to co-chair OPAL's fundraising efforts. It seemed like a particularly daunting task given that so many generous donors had just dug very deep to help conserve Turtleback Mountain. And many of those same donors had already donated \$700,000 the previous year to help OPAL purchase the seven-acre property on Mt. Baker Road. Where do we find another \$800,000?

We derived the \$800,000 number by subtraction:

Start with the estimated total cost of the project		\$8,720,000
Subtract homebuyers' mortgages	-	\$4,900,000
Subtract likely state and federal grants	-	\$2,014,000
Subtract potential private foundation grants	-	\$ 300,000
Subtract gifts already donated to buy the land	-	\$ 706,000
<b>TOTAL LEFT TO BE RAISED:</b>		<b>\$ 800,000</b>



\$800,000 still to raise! We didn't need it all immediately, but we would surely need that amount within two years, and OPAL's board has historically started construction only when all funds were in-hand, so our goal was to raise the bulk of those dollars in 2007.

Faced with this task, I spent some sleepless nights. But I knew we had three important ingredients of success: (1) an indisputable need (more people applying for homes than we planned to build), (2) a very strong board and fundraising committee, and (3) a core of remarkably generous supporters. I also knew we had to attract new supporters.

The fundraising plan thus had several elements. First, we quietly focused on individual conversations with our core friends. At the same time, to reach new potential friends, we planned a series of "house parties." The hosts of each party (OPAL board members or existing supporters) invited their friends or neighbors to gather for good food and to learn about OPAL. We told stories, talked about the new neighborhood on Mt. Baker Road, and asked for support. We ended the summer with a celebratory thank-you party at Fred Whitridge's house.



So how are we doing on reaching our \$800,000 goal? As of the end of October supporters have gifted and pledged just over \$527,000, leaving \$273,000 still to raise. Hip, Hip, Hurray! We have enough in hand to complete the early phases of land clearing and to build the first 18 houses, and we have another 12 months to raise the rest. By the end of this year we will also have actual bids for the work, rather than estimated costs, so we can calculate much more precisely just how much more we will need.

Special thanks to Fred Whitridge for hosting OPAL's annual event at his home in September. The event raised more than \$33,000 for the completion of the Mt. Baker Road project. Fred is pictured (above) with OPAL homeowner Sukima Hampton (aka Sunset Rose) during the dollhouse raffle. OPAL Board Vice-President Michael Whellams (below) addresses the nearly 100 attendees in Fred's garden.

We are immensely grateful to everyone who has already given or pledged their support in this campaign, and to all of you who will respond now and in the future. Thank you.

## MEET THE TRUSTEES: PATTY JOHNSON

Patty moved to Orcas from Whidbey Island in 1999, joining the OPAL board in 2005 after becoming a homeowner in the Lahari Ridge neighborhood. Patty brings her perspective as a homeowner to the board—her experience has helped OPAL to improve elements of the home designs for the Mt. Baker Road neighborhood—and also her strong belief in the concept of land in trust. “My dad was one of those who went to bat to protect the alpine lakes in the Cascades from development. It’s been ingrained in me to do what’s right for the land.”

Born and raised in Ellensburg, Patty is a retired teacher; she taught primary grades in Bellevue and raised two children before moving to Whidbey and then Orcas. She has been the recipient of two Fulbright Teacher Exchanges—one in England and one in Scotland. In addition to her work with OPAL, Patty is very active: she teaches piano, plays piano for the Choral Society, sings with Orcas A Capella, goes to Friday Harbor for Scottish Country Dance, and is in a writing group. She is also excited about working on the landscaping around her Lahari Ridge home and has already planted 15 native trees. It was while she was planting trees that she realized that, through OPAL, she had achieved her lifelong dream of owning a little “cabin in the woods.”



Patty Johnson and Maclay

“The challenge for me, as a trustee,” says Patty, “is just finding the time to dig in.” Patty appreciates the caliber and commitment of her peers on the board and their shared value of making housing available to people who can’t afford the market rate. Her hopes for the future are to see OPAL’s continued involvement in the evolution of housing on the island and for OPAL to encourage planned giving and endowments to help secure adequate funding for the projects that will be needed. She would also like to see OPAL further explore the possibility of acquiring land for purposes of conservation and public access.

## HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT OPAL COMMUNITY LAND TRUST?

- 1) Join or renew your membership today. A reply envelope is included for your convenience, or go to [www.opalclt.org](http://www.opalclt.org) and click on the “DONATE NOW” button to give online.
- 2) Make a gift to help OPAL finish the Mt. Baker Road neighborhood. Please cut out the coupon below and include it with your check in the enclosed reply envelope. Gifts of all sizes are appreciated and put to good use.
- 3) **MATCHING GIFTS**—Does your company or family foundation match your charitable gifts? Many do, and some even include retirees. Please investigate your company’s policy—you could be doubling your donations and helping OPAL to double its efforts to meet the growing need for affordable housing on Orcas Island.

- Yes! I want to help OPAL build 32 new permanently affordable homes on Mt. Baker Road.
- I pledge:  \$100  \$500  \$1,000  \$5,000  \$10,000  Other Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- My gift is enclosed.
- I pledge this gift in   #   payments to be paid by   month    2007  
 2008
- Please keep my gift anonymous.
- I plan to include **OPAL Community Land Trust** in my will and/or estate planning.
- Please contact me about another gift or question. The best time to call is: \_\_\_\_\_

## FACES OF OPAL: OBERON WOOD NEIGHBORHOOD

By Carol Bee

It's been five years since those exciting days when 10 halves of houses began lumbering off the ferry and winding their way to be reassembled on prepared foundations at Oberon Wood. Five women homeowners and their kids and other well-wishers watched in awe as homes rose before their eyes in hours. And within weeks, they were able to move in!

So, what are they up to now, and how do they feel about being OPAL residents, about living in community, and about the Mt. Baker Road neighborhood developing next door?

**Gail Bulletset**, a familiar face in the Island Market produce department for the past 17 years, says she had “never ever wanted to own a home,” but when daughter Ruby Adrian, now 12, came along, she changed her mind. Now she wanted a safe, stable place for Ruby to grow up, and she knew OPAL was her only means to homeownership on Orcas. Mother and daughter are grateful for their spacious modular home and for this “nice, small neighborhood with a swell bunch of gals that we know and are comfortable with.”



The ladies of Oberon Wood. Gail, Ruby, Christa, Luann, Ursula and Mary. Missing are Mary Ann and Connor.

**Mary Getten**, author of *Communicating with Orcas: The Whales' Perspective*, makes her living in an unusual way. As a telepathic animal communicator, she consults on the phone with clients all over the world, teaches workshops, and leads whale-watching trips. After many years of renting, Mary says, “It was wonderful to have the security of ownership. I could finally create a beautiful yard and not worry about having to move next week.” Although she initially had reservations about living in a close neighborhood, she appreciates the “nice sense of camaraderie” that has developed.

**Luann Pamatian** not only is Mom to teens Connor and Ursula, but holds several jobs—dental assistant, masseuse at Rosario, and caterer. She also likes to “dabble in theater,” garden, and volunteer for the Orcas Island Prevention Partnership. Moving in to Oberon Wood was “a dream come true,” she says. “I'd never owned a house before, and as a single parent, I didn't think I ever would.” She's been “pleasantly surprised,” too, by how well living in this neighborhood suits her and her kids. “It's been a good fit for us.”

For **Mary Ann Slabaugh**, life has recently taken a dramatic turn. She's living and working in North Bend, Wash., where she's an environmental teacher at the Waskowitz Outdoor School. She reports, “It's fabulous for me, [although] I miss my island time and community, [and] I'm not planning to move from the island anytime soon, if ever! I plan to stay an island girl.”

The newest resident, **Christa Frazier**, bought her house in September. Christa lived on Orcas for 14 years into the 1980s and came back two years ago to “stay put in the only place I ever felt at home,” she says. Being able to buy an OPAL home was a great opportunity that she appreciates very much. And she especially likes Oberon Wood: “We're all ladies; we have our own private space, but we have each other to say ‘Hi’ to in passing and to give a helping hand when there's a need.” Semi-retired, Christa devotes herself to community service via the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Regarding the Mt. Baker Road neighborhood, all these women are happy that so many folks will get to own what they have: “a place in paradise.” They also praise OPAL for doing its best to mitigate their and other neighbors' concerns, as well as for taking great care to steward the land responsibly. Still, having that many people and houses so close by, preceded by a lot of construction work, will affect Oberon Wood. They will miss the pastoral peace and quiet next door, along with the privacy provided by all the trees on that border. Long-term, however, they're hopeful about having good relations with their new OPAL kin.

### FAREWELL TO CAROLYN MOULTON

It is with some sadness that we say goodbye to Housing Services Coordinator Carolyn Moulton. Carolyn and her business partner, Nick Stowe, have lived on Orcas almost 10 years—eight years as partners in Wildlife Cycles and five of those as OPAL homeowners. Carolyn came to work for OPAL in early 2005. “After going through the process of buying our home, I knew I wanted to do something to give back to OPAL and the island community,” said Carolyn. “The work OPAL does is tremendously rewarding—and I have found a strong affinity with the community land trust model.” Carolyn and Nick are selling their OPAL home and their share of the bike shop to head off-island. We will miss Carolyn’s steady competence, enthusiasm, creativity in problem solving, good humor, and warm smile. On behalf of the OPAL board and staff, we wish Carolyn and Nick godspeed in their next big adventure.



THE SAN JUAN COMMUNITY HOME TRUST has been busy creating a preliminary site plan for a new mixed-income neighborhood on 15.5 acres of land bordering the Town of Friday Harbor, near the elementary school, fairgrounds, and former gravel pit (now an undeveloped park). The Buck Property land is expected to be added to the Friday Harbor Urban Growth Area. Once annexation is approved by the Town, they plan to begin developing the first 60 units of clustered housing on 5.5 acres, reserving 10 acres for a future development. The Home Trust’s project was selected by the San Juan County Council for a \$1 million Community Development Block Grant application to the state, for possible funding in 2008.

LOPEZ COMMUNITY LAND TRUST’s fourth affordable housing project, Sustainable Community Homes, is located just north of the Village on Lopez Road. Work on infrastructure and underground utilities is nearing completion. Over the winter, construction of LCLT’s office and two rental units (housed in one building) will begin. It is slated for completion in late spring 2008. When weather permits in the spring of 2008, foundation work on the 11 homes will begin.

NATIONAL CLT NETWORK NEWS: On Oct. 12th, the members of the National CLT Network adopted the following Core Principles:

1. **Perpetual Affordability:** We will create homes that are affordable now and ensure their affordability for future generations.
2. **Community Health, Cohesion and Diversity:** We will strengthen the communities in which we work by enhancing the quality of life through affordable housing, community building, education, access to land, and advocacy on behalf of lower income people, people of color and others most often marginalized in society.
3. **Community Stewardship of Land:** We will steward the land for a variety of purposes that benefit the community, such as affordable homes, community based businesses, community supported agriculture, and preservation of green space.
4. **Perpetual Sustainability:** We will create high quality buildings that are environmentally sustainable; we will create exceptional organizations that are economically sustainable; and we will create programs that support residents and staff in achieving long-term success.
5. **Representative Governance:** We best serve our communities if we identify the key stakeholders and involve them in the decision making for the organization, particularly residents on community owned land.
6. **Resident and Community Empowerment:** We will build financial assets, develop leadership skills, create stability, offer mobility and community involvement for our residents, and provide opportunities for our members, board and staff to engage more fully in their community.

## MEET THE MEMBERS: DAVID AND BARBARA EVANS

“We islanders place a high priority on giving back to the community. What happens to others in the community affects us all; we are all pulling our paddles together.” —*Barbara Evans*

Barbara started coming to Orcas from Southern California more than 22 years ago with her late husband, Bing. What began as a five-year plan to move permanently to the island became a two-year plan when they happened onto the piece of property they would later buy and had a “this is it” epiphany. Barbara, who has a background in environmental architectural design, went to work for San Juan County Bank (Key Bank) and is now a retired (and busy) communitarian, student of theology, and working artist.

David is a retired Congregational minister who spent the last 25 of his 36 career years in Tiburon, California. David came to Orcas nine years ago for a Robert Bly conference, stayed an extra week to visit with friends, and decided to move to the island permanently. He and Barbara have been married four years; their courtship began when Barbara invited David to be her dance partner for a series of classes.

Both David and Barbara have had experience with affordable housing in their “past” lives. David’s church in Tiburon was a partner in redeveloping a cluster of World War II cottages as affordable homes. Barbara was instrumental in creating affordable home designs for the Irvine Company. And the art of home is central to their lives. “Home is where the heart is, where people are sheltered, secure, and can go deep together,” explained David. “To know that it is possible, through OPAL, to assist in the creation of that possibility for other islanders is a rewarding way to give back. OPAL is an expression of the heart at work.”

Practicing what they preach, David and Barbara volunteer for and support art and music on the island (Emmanuel, Chamber Music Festival, Orcas Center, Orcas Writing Conference) and sing with the Choral Society. Barbara also currently serves on the Senior Center’s subcommittee for assisted-living solutions.

David and Barbara have six children between them—including Barbara’s daughter Suzie Phillips of Suzie’s Barbershop on Orcas—and seven grandchildren. Their home in the Rosario area is a living example of their philosophy of balance and beauty and a true expression of their love—for each other, for their family, and for the place where they live.



David and Barbara Evans

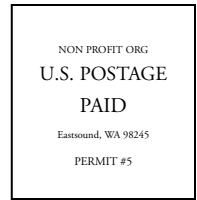
### OPAL WISH LIST:

- 2 - 4 padded folding chairs
- Phone system (8 phones + voice mail) for the OPAL office
- Volunteers to help with: planting, landscaping; painting the OPAL shed and picnic table; mailings; special events

Please call Carol Ely at 376-3191 if you can help with any of the above. *Thanks!*



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**IN THIS ISSUE**

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**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

**ANNUAL MEETING: April 2008**

*Stay tuned for more information on a special speaker*

**MT. BAKER ROAD HOUSESETTING AND OPAL COMMUNITY PICNIC: June 2008**

*OPAL's first annual community picnic*



Halloween at Bonnie Brae. From top: Olivia Brunner and Adia Dolan; Brenda and Anika Ivans; Axel and Birdie Greening, Desmond and Kim Secunda, Adia Dolan. Thank you for all of the generous donations of candy that were distributed by Bonnie Brae, Opal Commons and Lavender Hollow households.