

Home at Last! Who Will Call Kidder Way Home?

By Qasim Ali Dino, Communications Manager, OPAL CLT

As we turn the ground at Kidder Way, I can't help but feel a sense of curiosity — **who are the 10 households who will soon call this new OPAL neighborhood home?** What makes them the heartbeat of our community and how will they shape the future of Orcas Island?

Although the selection process is not complete, I met with some of the prospective homebuyers and it's clear that Kidder Way will be a very welcome addition to our vibrant community.

Each household brings its own unique story. Some have lived here their entire lives, others for the past 5 to 15 years, all sharing one common thread: the determination to stay. Whether it's the young elementary school teacher or the small business owner, these new

OPAL homeowners contribute essential services and talents that make Orcas what it is today — and what it will be tomorrow.

One soon-to-be homeowner captured the feeling of relief many are experiencing: "For years, I juggled three jobs just to make rent. Now, I can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel — a place I can call my own."

The excitement is contagious. After years of paying rents as high as \$2,500 per month, many of these families were unsure if they could continue to stay on the island. Now, with the promise of stable homeownership through OPAL, **the future looks much brighter.**

While each household story is different, one thing is certain —

(Continued on Page 3)

A Snapshot of the Kidder Way Neighborhood

10 households, consisting of 20 individuals

- **Adults:** 14 (ages 28 to 50)
- **Children:** 6 (ages 3 to 15)
- **Professional backgrounds:** teachers, healthcare professionals, trades professionals, small business owners, artists and customer service workers.
- **Average time on the island:** 15 years, with some families having lived here their entire lives.
- **Average time in OPAL's homebuyer pool:** 4 to 8 years, patiently waiting for their chance to own a home.
- **Housing challenges:** Current rent costs averaging \$1,500 to \$2,500 per month, with families working multiple jobs.



A glimpse into the future: Elevations of Kidder Way duplexes, soon to be home for households building their futures with OPAL.

Community Campus Update: Pea Patch Site Design Is Complete!

The Pea Patch Community Campus is beginning to take shape. Last December, with support from many islanders and the Orcas Island Community Foundation, OPAL purchased the 11-acre property on Pea Patch Lane, just north of Eastsound Village off Enchanted Forest Road.

OPAL formed a collaborative partnership with the Orcas Community Resource Center and the Orcas Island Food Bank to develop a unified campus where islanders will be able to meet their basic needs for food, social services and affordable housing in one central location.

In late September, after months of community review, the Pea Patch Steering Committee (which includes

staff and board members from each organization) adopted a site plan that includes new permanent buildings for the Resource Center and Food Bank and 20 new townhomes (one- and two-bedroom) for long-term, year-round renting to households with low incomes and that will include supportive services provided by the Resource Center.

The building development will occupy less than half of the whole property. Green spaces, wetlands and public pathways are planned for the western half of the property. (Review the site plan and learn more online at <https://www.opalclt.org/in-the-works/pea-patch-property/>.)

The vision for the campus includes a solar microgrid with battery storage to offset energy usage and keep energy

costs more affordable over time. The project was awarded a planning grant from the WA Dept. of Commerce Community Decarbonization program. Construction of a solar microgrid is dependent on feasibility and grant funding.

The campus will include new facilities for the Food Bank and Resource Center that include a shared conference room with bathrooms, a covered walkway and outdoor plaza area for community events, greater space for private client meetings, a new commercial kitchen, centralized greater warehouse storage space for emergency community food storage and the Resource Center's hygiene supplies, expanded pantry and freezer space, more opportunities for educational programming and mobile health services, and accessible parking for staff and visitors.

The project is now in the permitting phase and site work could begin as soon as the spring/summer of 2025. Construction of the rental townhouses will follow the site work, and then after that the Food Bank and Resource Center buildings. The expected completion date of the whole campus is in 2028.

The collaboration has garnered grants, legislative appropriations and donations totaling approximately \$20 million and will launch a unified fundraising campaign in 2025 to complete the project.



Suzanne Olson (Pea Patch Project Lead) proudly waves the Pea Patch flag at the Orcas Island 4th of July Parade, celebrating community spirit and collaboration.

Your Support for OPAL Creates Housing Affordability With Long-Term Benefits

Affordable housing for local wage-earners is limited. That's why OPAL builds houses and apartments that provide long-term benefits to the community and island residents, allowing them to continue their jobs and raise their families here.

When islanders lose their private-market rental, the inflated cost of a new market-rate home often leaves

them no choice other than to leave. Businesses lose employees, schools lose staff, and the community loses essential workers like healthcare providers and construction workers.

OPAL homes also stabilize housing costs, providing long-term financial flexibility.

OPAL homeowners benefit from lower initial costs and reduced monthly payments, thanks to subsidies that lower the price of the

home, a resale formula that keeps the home affordable in the future, and, for some, below market-rate interest on their mortgage loan (currently 4.6%).

As of October 2024, 70 households are waiting to buy an OPAL home, and more than 100 would rent if possible. Your support helps OPAL continue to create opportunities for islanders to thrive.



Each colorful mailbox represents an OPAL home, made possible by your support.

A Real-Life Example of Housing Affordability:

2021 buyer earning \$37,000/yr	OPAL 2BR, 1BA House
Fair market rent = \$1,216/mo	\$155,000
	Estimated payments = \$1,040/mo

How many buyers own their OPAL home after five years?

Of 166 OPAL homebuyers, 57.8% still own their home; 17.5% sold and purchased a market-rate home; 24.7% sold and moved into rentals. OPAL owners sell for many reasons.

With every resale, OPAL's affordability passes to the next buyer.

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(Continued from Page 1)

they have all faced the challenge of high rents, a limited housing market and the desire to remain in the community they love.

One parent explained, "We've lived here for over a decade and every year, I wonder if we have to leave the island

because of rising costs. Kidder Way changes that."

I'm particularly struck by the grit of the islanders who will make their forever homes at Kidder Way. They've faced an uphill battle in securing a permanent home but have persisted.

As one applicant put it, "This isn't just a home for my family — it's a place for us all to continue making a difference." With construction underway, the excitement is growing. In Kidder Way, these 10 families won't just live — they'll thrive.



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*With Your Help, We've Built Homes and Changed Lives for 35 Years.
Join Us in Shaping the Next 35.*

OPAL's New Board Members

Welcoming Jami Mitchell and Mandy Randolph



With warm smiles, Jami Mitchell (left) and Mandy Randolph (right) join OPAL's Board.

We're excited to introduce **Jami Mitchell and Mandy Randolph**, two dedicated community leaders who have joined OPAL's Board of Trustees.

Jami Mitchell is well known for her creative leadership with events like Doe Bay Fest and Imagine Arts & Music Festival, and for her eight years at the senior center. Currently serving as the County Human Services Manager, she's deeply involved

in the community, volunteering with several local organizations. Jami's passion for stable, affordable housing is rooted in her belief that it's key to overall well-being — a value she brings to OPAL's mission.

Mandy Randolph comes from a family of builders and has a strong understanding of construction. With years of experience in real estate through TWilliams Realty, Mandy knows firsthand the challenges homebuyers face on Orcas. As a lifelong islander and retired Farm to Classroom teacher, she's deeply connected to the community. Mandy is committed to helping OPAL create homes for middle-income families, a price point increasingly hard to find in today's market.

We are thrilled to welcome Jami and Mandy to OPAL's Board as we continue our work toward housing solutions that benefit all islanders.

Visit us online at www.opalclt.org