

## Staying for Good: How Affordability Builds Community, One Homeowner at a Time

When Eros Belliveau arrived on Orcas in the summer of 2007, it was supposed to be temporary. He had a seasonal job at a restaurant after working hospitality in Seattle for years. He settled into employee housing—grateful for a bed, but living with strangers, no privacy and no certainty about what would come next.

“I thought it would be three months, maybe six,” he remembers. “But the island started to grow on me. And once that happens, it’s hard to leave.”

Eros was no stranger to instability. Growing up in North Carolina, he was raised by a single mother who struggled to make ends meet. Frequent moves meant he never felt the security of a home of their own. Those early years shaped his desire for something different: a place to stay, to grow, to belong.

“We never had a house that was ours,” said Eros. “I wanted something different for myself—a place I could put my name on.”

On Orcas, that goal felt out of reach. Rental options were scarce and

prices high. Eros juggled multiple jobs—waiting tables, cleaning cabins, house and pet sitting—doing whatever it took to stay on the island.

Then, through a friend, he heard about OPAL Community Land Trust. He applied, thinking it was a long shot. In 2009, he moved into a house at Wild Rose Meadow. It was the first home he had ever owned. That home changed everything.

The anxiety of wondering where he would live was gone. He could have pets without asking permission. He began to build equity instead of paying someone else’s mortgage. Most importantly, he could stay on Orcas permanently, in a community where he had begun to thrive.

With stability came opportunity. Today Eros works for the Orcas Island School District, a role he describes as deeply meaningful.



*Eros Belliveau (left) with his husband, Tracy Todd, and their dog, Joey, at their Wild Rose Meadow home, a place where they’ve grown roots, joy and community.*

During the summer season he still works in the restaurant industry because he enjoys it. His connections in the community run deep. He serves on the OPAL board of trustees, volunteers for OPAL events, helps with local fundraisers, and has represented OPAL at national housing conferences.

Home has also meant building a personal life rooted in joy. Eros  
(Continued on Page 2)

# Pea Patch Community Campus Moves Forward

Permitting is on schedule (thanks, San Juan County!). The first phase of site work is funded by a \$3 million award from the WA State Legislature's Local Community Projects (thanks, Rep. Lekanoff, our champion!). Weather permitting, earthwork, utilities, stormwater systems and roads could begin this year, paving the way for 20 townhomes in 2026 for households of low income.

Plans shifted when the Orcas Community Resource Center chose to stay in their current Eastsound location. This represents significant savings; the Resource Center will secure a permanent home at a much lower cost and the Campus

## Staying for Good

*(Continued from Page 1)*

met his husband, Tracy Todd, on Orcas—one of his favorite restaurant “regulars” in the early days. They married in the summer of 2024 on a beach just minutes from their front door. Together with Joey, their spirited Jack Russell mix, they have made their Wild Rose Meadow house into a true home.

“I used to carry a lot of anxiety about housing—how long I could stay, whether I’d be priced out. Now I have equity. I have roots. I have a sacred space that’s mine.”

**What does affordable housing mean to Eros? He answers without hesitation: “It means I get to live. It means I get to give. And it means I get to stay.”**



*Supporters gather at the Pea Patch, where good food, friendship, and community take root.*

fundraising goal will be reduced by \$8 million. The Food Bank building will now be sited further south, opening the possibility of future housing or partners. The Food Bank also is adjusting its design for cost savings and efficiency.

Solar panels remain in the plan for the 20 townhomes, however not the larger microgrid project. The Food Bank will be solar ready, with solar panels on their wish list for future grant funding. Buildings will meet

LEED silver standards for energy efficiency.

To date, the campaign has raised more than \$26 million toward a revised (estimated) \$39 million goal, with support from public funds, foundations and individual donors. Contact Suzanne Olson: [suzanne@opalclt.org](mailto:suzanne@opalclt.org) with any questions and to ask about volunteer opportunities.

*Learn more about the Pea Patch Community Campus at [bit.ly/oipeapatch](https://bit.ly/oipeapatch).*

## Kidder Way Nears Completion

Eager anticipation is growing among the 10 island households who will become the new owners of the townhomes at Kidder Way.



*Kidder Way townhomes under construction.*

Construction is scheduled to be completed by the end of November, and buyers will begin moving in after the first of the year.

This effort was made possible thanks to hundreds of private donations, as well as county and state funding, along with the mortgage financing obtained by each owner. The permanent affordability of these homes will benefit the Orcas community — buyer after buyer — for years to come.



# Legacy Gifts Sustain Orcas Community for Generations to Come

**“OPAL is one of the few organizations I know that is designed to help people today with a basic need—housing—and also to provide homes for future generations of islanders.”** – This was what one islander said about why they specified a donation to OPAL in their will.

Bequests made to OPAL by supporters have enabled:

- Construction of April’s Grove, 45 townhomes of affordable rental housing;
- Acquisition of the Bartel Road property for future housing;
- Purchase of the Owl Lane property located near the ferry landing; and
- Purchase of the Kidder Way property, where construction is now underway for 10 more homes that will be owned by longtime islanders.

**Without bequests, OPAL might not have been able to acquire any of these properties.**

OPAL’s board of trustees has established two endowment funds:

*The Stewardship Fund:* Because OPAL will own the land in perpetuity, it is necessary to plan for and fund ongoing stewardship to care for the land, for the houses and apartments, and for the families who live in them.

*The Opportunity Fund:* OPAL has been successful, in part, because of its ability to be nimble and responsive to opportunities. This fund enables OPAL’s trustees and staff members to respond to opportunities, such as the acquisition of real estate, or to provide bridge financing for project development.

**Would you like to make a legacy gift to OPAL?**

For more information, contact the OPAL office at [opalclt@opalclt.org](mailto:opalclt@opalclt.org).



*One of 32 houses at Wild Rose Meadow—made possible thanks to legacy gifts that keep housing affordable for generations of islanders.*

## There are several ways to make a legacy gift to support OPAL:

**Give Through Your Will** – List as a beneficiary in your will: OPAL Community Land Trust, PO Box 1133, Eastsound, WA 98245. Your legacy gift can also be made in tribute to or in honor of someone.

**Give Through Your IRA or 401(k)** – Designate OPAL as a beneficiary in your retirement account.

**Donate Securities** – From your brokerage account directly to OPAL’s brokerage account. There can be significant tax advantages in donating securities to OPAL.

**Donate Your Land or Home** – In addition to making an outright donation of land or housing, you can also establish a life estate, which enables you to enjoy your property and have it come to OPAL as a gift after you die.

**For more information:** [www.opalclt.org/donate](http://www.opalclt.org/donate).

If you would like to discuss making a gift to OPAL, please contact Executive Director Lisa Byers at 360-376-3191 or [opalclt@opalclt.org](mailto:opalclt@opalclt.org).



Physical Location: 286 Enchanted Forest Road  
P.O. Box 1133  
Eastsound, WA 98245  
office@opalclt.org • www.opalclt.org

EVERY DOOR DIRECT MAILING

#### IN THIS ISSUE

Writing/Editing: Vicki Brems, Lisa Byers, Qasim Ali Dino,  
Minor Lile, Suzanne Olson  
Photography: Qasim Ali Dino  
Layout and Design: Qasim Ali Dino, Mary Ann Sircely

*You are the reason OPAL can keep creating homes  
and strengthening community, year after year.*

### *\$100,000 Still Needed*

## Purchase of Eight Rental Homes Is Nearly Funded

OPAL's purchase of eight two-bedroom apartments on Crosswind Lane in Eastsound is on track to close in December, with more than 95 percent of the needed funds in place.

Because the acquisition is being paid for with private donations (not government grants), these homes will serve islanders earning moderate to middle incomes.

The property was offered to OPAL by a family with deep Orcas roots. They want the apartments to continue providing year-round affordable housing in perpetuity. They are donating one of the units. OPAL also received a significant anonymous cash donation that will cover most of what's needed to complete the purchase.

**"We're almost there," said Lisa Byers, executive director. "A final \$100,000 is needed to pay for closing costs and some initial planned maintenance. We welcome donations before December."** For more information, contact [lisa@opalclt.org](mailto:lisa@opalclt.org).



*Crosswind Apartments will be permanently affordable homes for moderate- and middle-income islanders.*

Visit us online at [www.opalclt.org](http://www.opalclt.org)