

Pea Patch: A Community is Taking Shape

The Pea Patch Campus is beginning to be shaped into the community we've been imagining.

Over the summer, local contractor Island Excavating completed site preparation, utility connections, stormwater management (no, the big hole they dug in the ground is not a swimming pool!) and laid the foundation for a new entry road.

This fall, building construction gets underway on the neighborhood's 20 townhomes with completion expected by the end of 2027.

Dawson Construction is building the affordable long-term rental homes, designed by Environmental Works – the same architectural firm behind April's Grove.

The neighborhood will include five buildings, each with four dwellings under each roof; a mix of studios, one-bedroom, two-bedroom townhomes affordable to households with very low incomes.

Funded in part by the Washington State Housing Trust Fund, the homes will be available to seniors, people with disabilities, people exiting homelessness or marginal housing situations, veterans and

local wage earners. To be eligible, applicants must currently live and/or work on Orcas Island.

Affordable housing is about more than rent that fits the household budget. All tenants will be offered voluntary supportive services to help them

make the most of the stability that affordable housing provides. A member of the support team will keep office hours in the Curtis Farmhouse commons building and provide connections to social service resources.

Monthly rents are expected to range from \$485 for a studio to \$1,038 for a two-bedroom home. Eligibility requirements and applications will be available in fall 2027.

A Permanent Home For the Food Bank

OPAL's partner at the Pea Patch, the Orcas Island Food Bank, is building a permanent home on



What began as a vision is becoming a neighborhood! Work continues at Pea Patch, bringing Orcas Island one step closer to 20 new affordable rental homes.

the campus. OPAL owns the 11-acre property and will lease land to the Food Bank for a 99-year renewable term. The lease covers maintenance and operations, but no cost for the land.

The Food Bank building will consolidate activities that currently take place in five different locations around the island. The building will provide sufficient storage and workspace to meet the Food Bank's food distribution needs for the next 75 years. It will also include a commercial kitchen where donated food can be transformed into prepared meals for seniors who

(Continued on Page 3)

Jamie Cier: A Legacy of Community Commitment

Jamie Cier defines philanthropy as giving – sharing your time, skills and knowledge, and contributing what you can financially.

For the Pea Patch Community Campus, Jamie has given and shared a lot. She has served on the

“ This gift to the Pea Patch is a vote of confidence for the project and a parting gift to the community I love,” said Jamie.

“We have a great team and the Food Bank is positioned for success – in large part because of the consistent support of OPAL Community Land Trust, and especially Lisa Byers, in keeping us on track through all the surprises that a project of this scale includes.”

— Jamie Cier

Food Bank board, participated on the Pea Patch campaign committee, and volunteered at events. Her recent multi-year pledge is another significant contribution toward completing the campus, continuing her legacy of getting involved to ensure that people on Orcas have what they need to thrive.

Jamie’s connection to Orcas Island began in 1968, when she started visiting each summer with her family from Seattle. In 2013, she moved to the island from Denver to become manager for the local WaFd bank. She retired in May 2026 and has since moved to northwest Missouri to be closer to her family.

During her years at WaFd, **Jamie saw firsthand the difference that stable housing can make.** WaFd was the first local bank to make mortgage loans for community land trust homebuyers and the mission made sense to her. Several of her employees lived in OPAL homes and



Jamie Cier is the Food Bank Board Treasurer and a major donor to the Pea Patch Community Campus

she witnessed how the stability of permanently affordable housing gave them – and their children – a stronger foundation for success.

That same belief in the power of community is what drew Jamie to Pea Patch. Her involvement with the project has taken many forms, but the goal has remained the same: **creating a place where essential community resources can grow and where Orcas families can build stable, connected lives.**



Visiting the Pea Patch property to see construction progress are (from left) Island Excavating President Nic Vierthaler, Amanda Sparks, Suzanne Olson, Rep. Debra Lekanoff, Lisa Byers and Alexis Annis.



This piece of Orcas Island history has a new purpose ahead. The Curtis Farmhouse will be relocated within the Pea Patch property and thoughtfully renovated to serve the future neighborhood.

Planning for the Next Generation:

OPAL's New Director of Finance & Operations

As OPAL has grown, so have the “behind the scenes” demands on finance and operations. Millions of dollars need to be budgeted and accounted for each year — everything from monthly rents and



Alexis Annis, Director of Finance & Operations

lease fees, neighborhood reserves and home sales, to hundreds of donations, multiple grants of all sizes, and costs of ongoing construction and maintenance. OPAL's internal operations have also become more complex as the organization has matured.

Alexis Annis joins OPAL as Director of Finance & Operations, bringing nearly 30 years of experience across nonprofit organizations, higher education and operations. Most recently, she served as Director of Finance & Operations at the Cowen Institute at Tulane University, where she strengthened financial systems and supported organizational growth. For Alexis, joining OPAL is also a homecoming. After nearly three

decades in New Orleans, she has returned to the Pacific Northwest, with deep family ties to Orcas Island. Her mother and stepfather have lived here for 30 years, and Alexis spent summers visiting the island with her daughter.

“OPAL's mission of delivering affordable housing in perpetuity means we're in it for the long haul,” explained Executive Director Lisa Byers. **“Just as we steward our neighborhoods, we are also working to steward the organization itself.** This includes carefully, thoughtfully planning for OPAL's next generation of leaders. We're excited to welcome Alexis and are gratified and energized by the trust the Orcas community puts in us.”

Pea Patch: A Community is Taking Shape

(Continued from Page 1)

are no longer able to cook and for people without kitchen facilities.

Construction on the Food Bank building is expected to begin in mid-2027, with completion anticipated by the end of 2028.

The campaign to build the Pea Patch Community Campus is closing in on its \$40 million goal. To date, roughly \$33.5 million has been raised from public, foundation and private sources to support site work and building construction.

The remaining \$6.5 million is needed to pave road surfaces, install landscaping and lighting, improve the health of greenspaces, relocate a public path out of the wetland, install solar power and build operational capacity of the Food Bank as the organization shifts

to owning its new building and expanding its services. For OPAL, there is still a need to cover the cost of moving and renovating the historic Curtis Farmhouse — the place where Bart Curtis and his brothers grew up when the house stood at the corner of North Beach and Mt. Baker roads. The farmhouse will become the new commons building for the Pea Patch neighborhood — with laundry, an office, meeting room and small day kitchen — giving this beloved piece of Orcas history a new purpose.

Thank you to the many in this community whose generosity has helped us make it this far! In collaboration with the Orcas Island Community Foundation, OPAL and the Food Bank will run an island-wide campaign in 2027 to fund the final phase and create a lasting safety net for generations to come.



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, Qasim Ali Dino,
Suzanne Olson
Photography: Qasim Ali Dino, Robb Most,
West Coast Homes
Layout and Design: Mary Ann Sircely

Every new home, every helping hand, and every act of generosity reminds us of what makes this island such a special place to call home. Thank you!



The walls are going up! Construction of OPAL's five new Lydia Lane homes is well underway at West Coast Homes in Lynden.

Lydia Lane: **Construction is Underway!**

Thanks to your generous support, construction is underway on five new OPAL homes to be located on Lydia Lane. West Coast Homes in Lynden began building the modular houses in September and anticipates completion by early 2027. Once ready, the houses will be transported to Orcas Island and placed on their foundations during the first half of 2027.

Designed for larger island families, each one-story 1,200-square-foot home will offer three bedrooms, two baths, and be located on roughly half-acre lots — OPAL's

first new-construction ownership homes of this size in more than 10 years. Future homeowners will be able to personalize their homes by choosing from a set of options for exterior and interior paint colors, wood and tile flooring, and countertops.

Site preparation will begin as soon as San Juan County issues building permits, which is anticipated in early 2027. When complete, the Lydia Lane neighborhood will include a total of nine OPAL homes, alongside five homes built through Homes for Islanders.

Visit us online at www.opalclt.org