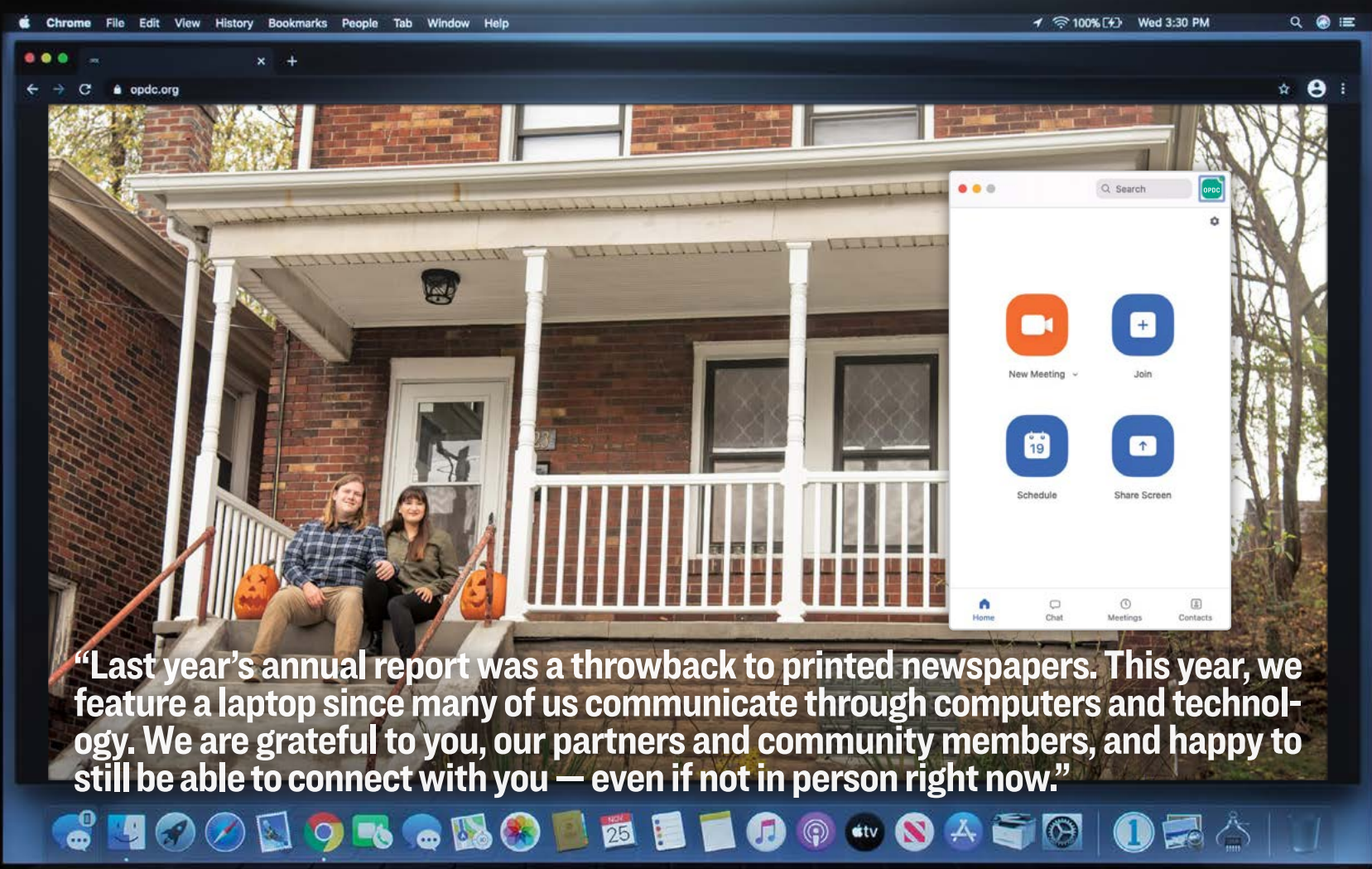


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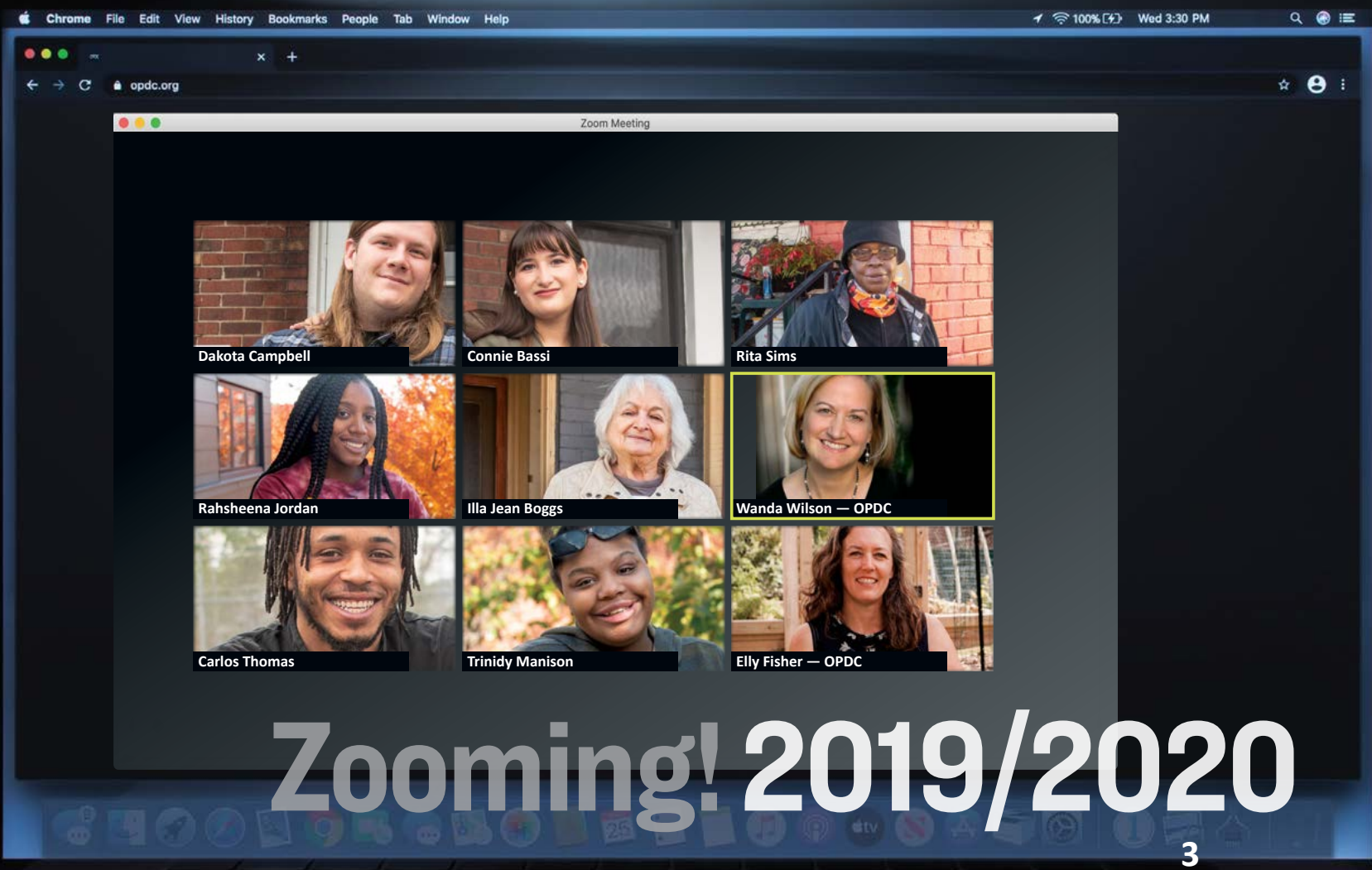


**OPDC**

# CONNECTING TO OUR COMMUNITY

Oakland Planning and Development Corporation — Annual Report 2019/2020





Homeowner assistance. Rent relief. Food distribution partnerships.

These are just some of the old (and new) ways that OPDC has connected with neighbors this year. While the ways to connect evolve with the times, our commitment to Oakland and residents hasn't wavered.

**PAGE 10:** Once we found the Oakland Community Land Trust — it made it possible to persevere and realistic to obtain our home.

Dakota Campbell

**PAGE 17:** OPDC's rent relief program came right in time because I'm pregnant and need to be better with my money before I have my child.

Rahsheena Jordan

**PAGE 22:** Feed the Hood: It's one community feeding another community with the skills and abilities that they have.

Carlos Thomas

**PAGE 9:** We didn't want to spend a lot of time fixing a house. 223 Robinson was ready to go, and a warm place to move into.

Connie Bassi

**PAGE 16:** It's very important to me that my house remain owner-occupied. The CLT will preserve the work I've put into my home.

Illia Jean Boggs

**PAGE 28:** School 2 Career teaches you how to dress appropriately, and prepares you for what you need to interview for professional jobs.

Trinity Manison

**PAGE 13:** A lot of people don't know about the Homeowner Assistance Program—it's made me the happiest person in the world!

Rita Sims

**PAGE 6:** OPDC has struggled along with all of you. We are buoyed by strangers and neighbors coming together to help those in need and by the connections we make locally and beyond through our mostly digital means. This year especially, we have been impressed by your resilience and willingness to help.

Wanda Wilson

**PAGE 32:** Elly's work at OPDC: Finding projects and initiatives that bring people together in a mutually beneficial way.

Elly Fisher

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### Letter from OPDC Board President and the Executive Director

Through this tumultuous year, we have experienced paradigm shifts that will forever change our world. Most of us are now never far from our computers and other devices, which is the primary way we work and connect with others while complying with distancing guidelines. In less than a year, we've experienced a global pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement, and a divided political environment unlike anything in living memory. It is a seriously challenging time for many individuals and communities.

**OPDC has struggled along with all of you. We are buoyed by strangers and neighbors coming together to help those in need and by the connections we make locally and beyond through our mostly digital means.**

Like everyone else, OPDC adjusted the ways we serve our community members under distancing guidelines. When the pandemic started, we created new partnerships and strengthened others, teaming up with volunteers and neighboring organizations to offer multiple food/essential items pickups throughout the week. Our Community Services team delivered masks and supplies to neighbors and made countless wellness checks and phone calls to our most vulnerable residents. We spread the word about financial assistance programs, offered rent relief to our renters, and when we couldn't directly provide help, we connected folks with the organizations that could.

The OPDC staff are primarily working from home, and while

we thought it was something that would last a few short weeks, our projects and services are not on hold. We shifted to our new distanced reality. We support S2C students with school work and career planning, we hold community meetings, we connect with neighbors, hold financial counseling sessions, complete home repair projects, and sell homes to new homeowners — all with distancing and safety measures in place.

Like you, we welcome more normal times when we can once again gather face to face. Rather than everything returning to as it was, we welcome progress toward a more equitable society where racial inequity is no longer sanctioned and allowed to continue. The disparate impact of the pandemic provides an opportunity for us to build back better.

**Staff and board formed a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee this year to improve diversity within our organization and to ensure diverse voices have input in our programs and services.**

This year especially, we have been impressed by your resilience and willingness to help your neighbors. We're honored to partner with you as we navigate these current challenges, seeing you in person or through our screens.

Julia Erickson, President,  
OPDC Board of Directors

Wanda E. Wilson  
Executive Director





## The Oakland Community Land Trust (CLT)

Illa Jean Boggs' Oakland roots date back to her grandparents' house on Lawn Street and her time as a child growing up less than a mile away on Dawson Street. After meeting her husband, Annis, on a blind date in 1959, the couple settled in his home state of West Virginia for a few decades before a return to Oakland brought them to the Victorian-style home she lives in today.

Her three-story house retains many original details that she has lovingly restored or has plans to bring back to their glory. She's heard that her house, built in the late 1800s, originally had a fireplace in nearly every room. Much of the original woodwork, including the staircase leading from the ground to the top floor, is intact. She recently renovated her bathroom; a kitchen re-do, focusing on replacing the flooring, is next on her wish list.

The first time Mrs. Boggs heard about OPDC's Community Land Trust (CLT), she knew she wanted to get involved. She attended an Evening of Oakland Storytelling event when Abass Kamara, a fellow parishioner at her church and OPDC board member, announced the CLT while making introductions to the audience. Recognizing his enthusiasm for the new program and realizing its potential impact on the neighborhood, she thought, "I need that!"

Community land trusts can be found across the nation and are proven tools for neighborhood stability and equity. OPDC started the Oakland CLT in 2018 to provide permanent, affordable homeownership opportunities for low to moderate-income buyers in Oakland. Homes remain owner-occupied permanently, allowing families to plant roots while encouraging diversity of residents.

In early 2020, Mrs. Boggs contacted OPDC and took the first steps for her house to join the CLT. The CLT enables older residents to age in place. When joining the CLT, OPDC purchases the land from the homeowner. The CLT helps seniors remain in their homes by providing funds that can then be used for home renovations, to pay bills, or whatever they choose — there are no restrictions on how to spend the money. They do not need to move, and they're now able to enjoy their home, and any new upgrades, for as long as they like. When they decide it's time to move, they'll contact OPDC once again. We'll buy the house or connect a buyer to do so — it will always be owner occupied.

Despite COVID hitting right around the time she contacted OPDC, the process wasn't interrupted, and in August, we officially welcomed Mrs. Boggs' home into the CLT.

As an Oakland homeowner for over two decades, she's appreciated her neighborhood's walkability and convenience to nearby communities like Squirrel Hill, Shadyside, and the South Side, where she used to walk to play bingo. She enjoys the trails of Schenley Park and the annual rebroadcast of the 1960 Pirates World Championship at Forbes Field Wall.

Mrs. Boggs plans to remain in her house for as long as possible and continue these local experiences. When the time comes for the next owner to move in, she hopes they enjoy the home's history while putting their touches and care into it for generations to come.

The Senior Aging in Place program is made possible through Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development Neighborhood Assistance Program with corporate partners Northwest Savings, UPMC Health Plan, and Wexford Science + Technology.

**"It's very important to me that my house remain owner-occupied. The CLT will preserve the work I've put into my home. It won't become dilapidated, and future generations will enjoy it."**

**ABOVE/BELOW:** Illa Jean Boggs, Oakland resident, on her front porch and with OPDC Executive Director Wanda Wilson on the CLT closing day.





## The Oakland CLT — Working with Homeowners to Join the Community

Through the CLT, Oakland residents have a tool to achieve two important community goals: maintaining homes for owner occupants permanently and providing permanently affordable homes for low/moderate income buyers. Oakland residents oversee the Oakland CLT as part of this legacy for the future. OPDC works through challenges in each project that becomes a new home in the Oakland CLT — and this year COVID-19 added additional obstacles. When the pandemic hit, resulting in real estate and work stoppages, our team turned to some slightly unconventional ways to retain the buyers of 223 Robinson Street to add another home to the Oakland CLT.

OPDC completed a full renovation of 223 Robinson Street. We replaced the roof, rebuilt the porch, and completed extensive concrete work around the property. We updated the electrical and added a new furnace, water heater, and gas lines. We installed a new bathroom, kitchen appliances, and countertops. We were able to preserve several of the home's original features like the fireplace surround and the original hardwood floors, which we refinished. Student volunteers from Carlow University assisted with painting, and BNY Mellon volunteers helped with landscaping work.

This spring, right before the pandemic struck, we signed a sales agreement with Dakota Campbell and his partner, Connie Bassi. Dakota, originally from the Columbus, Ohio area, and Connie, who hails from Chile by way of Philadelphia, both arrived in Pittsburgh for college around 2013. After renting in

West Oakland, they migrated to Shadyside, but wanted to return to Oakland when it came time to house hunt due to their mutual love of the neighborhood, proximity to parks, and work. Connie easily walks to work from Robinson Street.

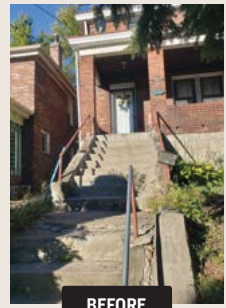
When she first arrived in Pittsburgh, Connie didn't know she would buy a house here, but recognized the convenience of city living and wanted to stay in Pittsburgh. "The Oakland CLT was a great option for us — we didn't want to spend a lot of time fixing a house. 223 Robinson was ready-to-go, and a warm place to move into."

Dakota and Connie know many neighbors by their first name, a stark contrast to their time as renters in the East End. Dakota commented, "When we lived in an apartment building of 20 people, we didn't know anyone. On Robinson Street, families live here; people on the street know each other. It's a friendly and diverse neighborhood. When we were looking for a house we could call our own, it made sense to move out of an area of old money and into a progressive area where the younger and older generations blend."

A week after signing the agreement in March, due to COVID-19, Allegheny County issued stay-at-home orders which halted all real estate activities, including home inspections. OPDC stayed in close communication with the buyers, letting them know we would work through the delays as they came. Then, Dakota's employer furloughed him.

As the county and state begin reopening specific sectors, we could move forward with items like the home inspection.

*Continued on page 10 —*



BEFORE



AFTER

ABOVE: Before and after photos of 223 Robinson. Exterior work included a complete porch rebuild and extensive concrete work.

however, the buyers could not secure the mortgage with Dakota furloughed. OPDC remained committed to working with the buyers to get them into the property.

Around this time, Dakota got involved with the community garden across the street from their future home and then requested to start gardening and work on yard improvements at 223 Robinson before moving in. OPDC readily agreed. He found a new job, but the bank would not be able to close on their mortgage for several months because of the lapse in employment.

Recognizing their investment in the community and challenges posed by the pandemic, we entered into a short term rental agreement on the house at Robinson once their Shady-side lease ended in July until the November closing on the home.

While COVID created a few bumps in the process, Dakota said, "We'd 100% recommend the Oakland CLT to other first-time homebuyers. People our age are already faced with a bit of adversity when buying their first home. Young professionals want to live in the city more than in the suburbs. The Oakland

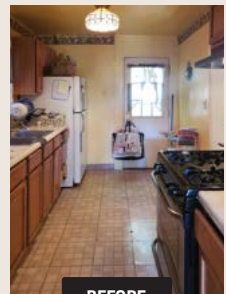
CLT provides this opportunity to those who want to live there."

**"OPDC followed up with us every week, and our mortgage counselor at First Commonwealth bent over backward to help us. Annemarie (of OPDC) even pointed me towards a potential job. A regular realtor wouldn't follow-up as closely or even rent to you for three months. Once we found the Oakland CLT — it made it possible to persevere and realistic to obtain our home."**

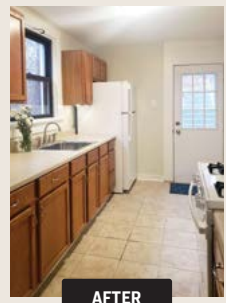
*— Dakota Campbell, West Oakland CLT homeowner.*

The Oakland Community Land Trust has a few more properties on Robinson Street that will join the CLT in the future, to which Dakota added, "I'm looking forward to CLT neighbors in the next few years!"

Welcome (back) to West Oakland, Dakota and Connie! Thank you to the Oakland Community Land Trust funders, including the Housing Opportunity Fund, PHFA-PHARE, and McAuley Ministries.



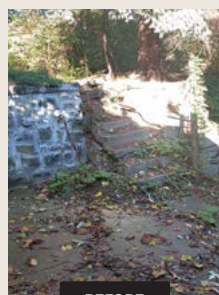
BEFORE



AFTER

ABOVE: Kitchen upgrades included new appliances, countertops, and flooring.

BELOW/Left to Right: Dakota and Connie; New patio retaining wall; Drywall repairs and cosmetic upgrades, including new tiling and cabinets, improved the home's full bathroom.



BEFORE



AFTER

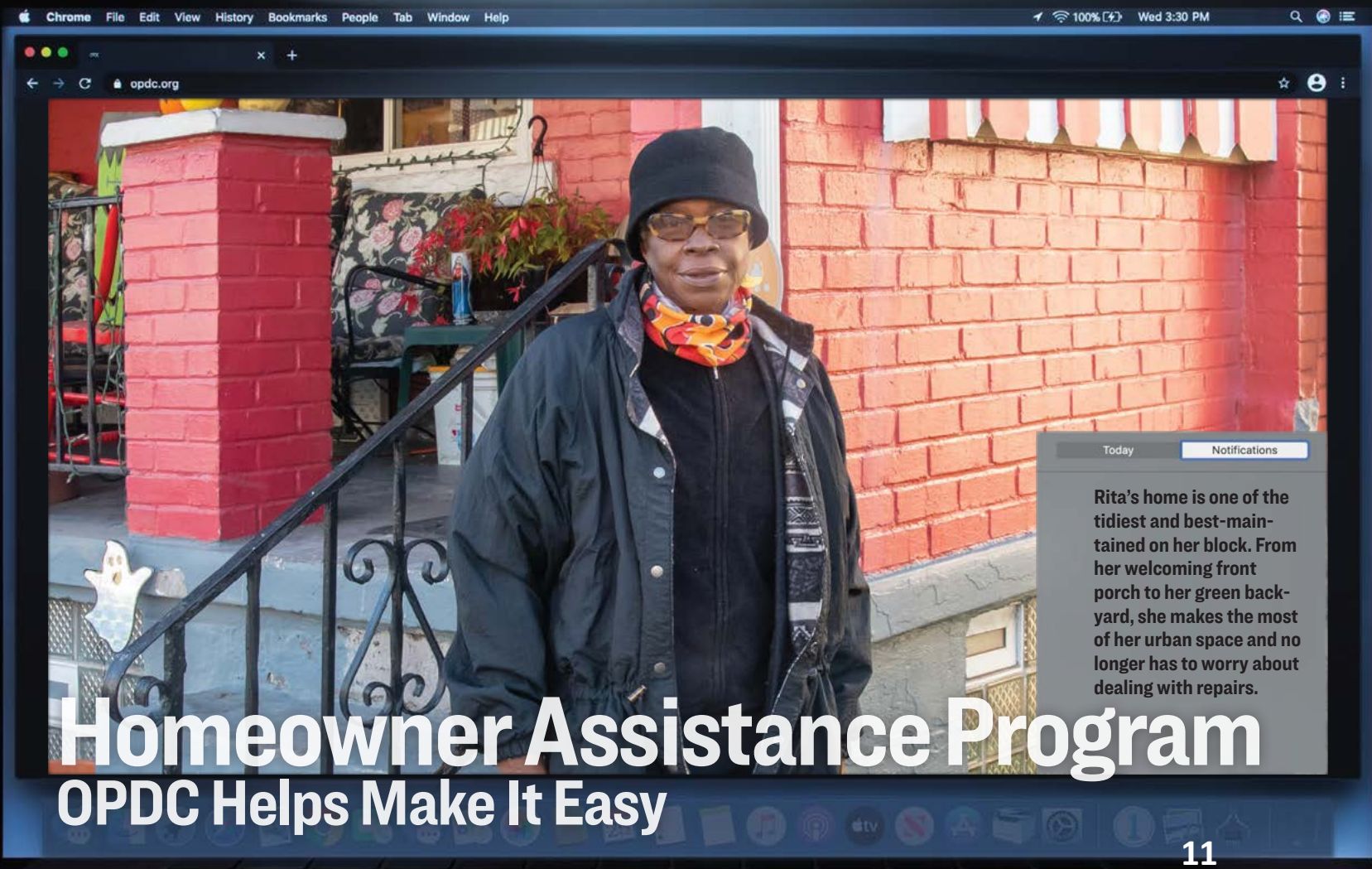


BEFORE



AFTER





**Making Maintenance and Repairs Worry-Free**

The process to complete and pay for home repairs can be a daunting task for homeowners of all ages. But we know this is especially true for senior homeowners in our community, many of whom simply cannot afford the necessary repairs. This is why OPDC offers home repair programs to help residents make updates and modifications that add value to their homes, keep them within code, and enhance their quality of life.

OPDC raised funds through a state program, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Keystone Communities Program, to be able to offer façade grants to senior homeowners. OPDC became a program administrator for the Homeowner Assistance Program (HAP), funded by the City of Pittsburgh Housing Opportunity Fund (HOF), through the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA). By doing so, Oakland residents who applied to HAP could receive personalized assistance from OPDC staff to navigate the program rather than being within the city-wide pool of applicants. OPDC also raised funds through Pennsylvania DCED Neighborhood Assistance Program to offer home repair resources to senior homeowners through the Oakland Community Land Trust (CLT).

Five Oakland residents, including Rita Sims of South Oakland, utilized HAP this past year, benefiting from a pre-COVID short waiting time. Formerly of Homewood, Rita has called Oakland home for nearly 30 years. When a friend told her about HAP, she wasted no time and started the application process.

**“If you’re considering this program, I say, go for it! If you wait a long time, then any little projects will build up and turn into a lot of work. There was a short waitlist for this, and the process was easy.”**

— Rita Sims, South Oakland homeowner.

*We’re grateful for the collaborative partnership of Rebuilding Together Pittsburgh.*

*Rebuilding Together offers free home repairs to Allegheny County seniors, residents on permanent disability, and veterans who income qualify.*

Continued on page 13 —



PHOTOS: Resident homeowner Rita Sims of South Oakland.



## OPDC Helps Throughout the Entire Process

OPDC found contractors to do Rita’s repairs, including bathroom and electrical upgrades and roof repair. With her roof no longer leaking and “no more buckets needed,” Rita praised the completed work. “The contractors were friendly and clean — I appreciated their work ethic.”

Rita’s home is one of the tidiest and best-maintained on her block. From her welcoming front porch to her green backyard, she makes the most of her urban space and no longer has to worry about dealing with repairs.

**“A lot of people don’t know about this wonderful program — it’s made me the happiest person in the world!”**

— *Rita Sims, HAP participant and South Oakland homeowner.*

Living just a few hundred feet away from Rita, Tara Lewis is another resident who utilized HAP funds to make some necessary repairs. Tara moved to Oakland from Vandergrift about 25 years ago. “I love that Oakland is about 15 – 20 minutes from everyone and everywhere!” she says.

Tara’s repair projects included replacing windows, fixing her staircase, and replacing some wiring. She heard about HAP right when she was about to get started. “I was on my way to doing this myself when a woman with OPDC was on my street, handing out flyers. I said, ‘I’ll take one,’ and it turned out that I was at the right place at the right time!”

**“There was no way that I wouldn’t apply. Everyone who owns a house should look into this program.”**

— *Tara Lewis, HAP participant and South Oakland homeowner*

OPDC awarded seven façade grants this past year. Robert Harper has lived in Oakland for decades. His family moved to Neville Street when Robert was four years old, and ten years later, moved around the corner to what had been his grandfather’s home. As an adult, Robert moved back to the Neville Street house, while his sister still lives in the other family home. Robert heard about the façade grant program through one of OPDC’s public meetings. He needed chimney pointing and added that “thanks to the grant it became possible, with a loan, to afford new siding.” Pleased with the process and results, he recommended the grant program to his sister, Kathleen Johnson, and neighbor, Ron Reid, both of whom applied to the program.



**“Oakland Planning and Development was very helpful. Having dealt with other public agencies, I can attest that OPDC is excellent at assisting citizens, and I doubt many people could succeed without their help.”**

— *Robert Harper, Oakland façade grant recipient and North Oakland homeowner.*

LEFT:  
Resident homeowner Rita Sims of South Oakland on her front porch.

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# Storytelling

**Debuting in 2015, An Evening of Oakland Storytelling serves as OPDC’s signature fundraiser.**

This event has traditionally taken place in unique Oakland locations, complete with drinks and catering from local restaurants. The main event is a collection of Pittsburghers telling their best Oakland-inspired stories.

As 2020 morphed into a non-traditional year, we embraced virtual programming and held our first-ever all virtual event!

We partnered with the City of Asylum to present the event as part of “The Show Must Go On(ine),” the region’s first virtual shared programming channel. If you missed the event or want to re-watch it, visit [bit.ly/oaklandstorytelling2020](http://bit.ly/oaklandstorytelling2020)

After we put out a call for participants, this year’s lineup consisted of local singer-songwriter Sierra Sellers, South Oakland native Teirek “Ty” Williams, and writer Laura Zurowski.

From the local storytelling non-profit, Storyburgh, Pam Monk hosted meetings on Zoom with the storytellers, crafting their ideas into compelling, personal stories about time spent in Oakland. Storyburgh founder, Will Halim, recorded and edited their final performances. Local artist and puppeteer Dave English served as the event’s emcee and brought his homemade Andy Warhol puppet to add to the event.

Sierra kicked off the program with a three-song set of songs from her recent EP, Ophelia, based on her time spent with friends on Ophelia Street. Attendee Lezetta Cox, Executive Director of Peoples Oakland, noted that Sierra’s performance was “powerful!”

Ty started the storytelling with a story re-affirming his devotion to Oakland and, inspired by his grandmother’s example, his decision to return home after college to volunteer with youth in his community. Bonnie Anderson commented, “Your grandma is to be commended. What a wonderful mentor!”

Laura celebrates the city’s steps through her *Mis.Steps: Our Missed Connections with Pittsburgh’s City Steps* project. She took the audience back to when she met local step historian Bob Regan and their shared passion for neighborhood history, and of course, steps! Sierra returned to wrap up the evening with an uplifting story of discovering herself in Oakland and how it inspired her album.

Despite the transition to online, nearly 100 people registered and enjoyed the stories and music. We are thankful for everyone who helped create the event, the attendees, and the sponsors: Walnut Capital, NexTier Bank, UPMC, PNC, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, 90.5 WESA, and 91.3 WYEP.

**“Thank you for an entertaining evening! Great music and stories about a neighborhood that I hold so dear!”**

— *LeeAnn Anna, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Host Committee Member*

BELOW,  
Left to Right:

Screenshots from an Evening of Oakland Storytelling:

Dave English, emcee

Laura Zurowski

Sierra Sellers

Teirek “Ty” Williams



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**OPDC developed Oakland Affordable Living (OAL) to respond to the ever-present need for affordable housing, especially modern, accessible units.**

The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) development at Allequippa Place and Wadsworth Street completed in 2018 boasts a 100% occupation rate, with an extensive waitlist. The 49 units range in size from one to three bedrooms and offer comfortable housing options for seniors, individuals, and families in the West Oakland neighborhood. Public amenities include a playground and a shared community room with free Wi-Fi and space for community workshops.

We believe everyone deserves a safe, healthy living environment. As a core part of OPDC’s mission, we offer quality, affordable housing to lower-income individuals.

Just because it’s affordable doesn’t mean it can’t look attractive. OAL is modern and eye-catching, thanks to the design firm, Loysen + Kreuthmeier Architects, and contractor, Sota Construction. Their keen eye for details and practice of design with residents’ needs in mind haven’t gone unnoticed.

**“Affordable housing doesn’t have to mean formulaic, or cheap-looking, or snoozy, yet it’s always an uphill battle to try and steer things away from such outcomes — like good enough is okay. We’re thankful that OPDC and our entire**

**team have never thought that way because uphill battles are worth it. Home should be a sanctuary, and an uplifting place, period.” — Peter Kreuthmeier, Principal Architect, Loysen + Kreuthmeier Architects.**

The Professional Affordable Housing Management Association (PAHM) awarded OPDC with its 2019 “Platinum Award for Interior Design,” and the American Institute of Architects – Pittsburgh Chapter (AIA) presented the OAL development with the “Social Equity in Design” award.

**“Designing for a socio-economic group — low income — cuts across gender, race, ethnicity, age, and ability, and addresses a core human right: shelter. We appreciated the approach of stakeholder engagement and well-realized people-centered design.” — AIA jury comments.**

OPDC goes beyond just renting apartments. We encourage residents to participate in programs through our Financial Opportunity Center. They can take financial wellness classes, learn more about budgeting and saving, or seek help with a career change or build a resume. The FOC offers both group and one-on-one programs, customized to the individual and their needs.

*Continued on page 17 —*

**BELOW:** Wadsworth units include spacious and modern kitchens, and balconies located off of the living rooms.







**LEFT:** Rahsheena Jordan applied to OPDC's rent relief program after falling behind on rent during the pandemic.

## COVID-19 COVID Rent Relief

When the pandemic hit last spring and caused businesses to close and furlough or lay off employees, many people didn't know how they'd pay their bills, including rent.

To assist residents of our apartment buildings whose incomes were affected by COVID, OPDC implemented a short term "COVID Rent Relief Program" to waive unpaid rent balances for April through June. At the time, local and national rent assistance programs like the CARES act didn't exist yet, and many people were distressed.

Six households took advantage of our rent relief, and we waived nearly \$9,000. Our financial coaching staff helped

recipients create budgets, search for jobs, and apply for additional rent assistance from other sources.

Rahsheena Jordan is one of these awardees. Rahsheena has lived at Oakland Affordable Living for over a year. She enjoys a peaceful environment and can walk to Western Psychiatric, where she works as a pharmacy technician. She applied to OPDC's rent relief program after falling behind on rent during the pandemic.

Like all residents receiving this assistance, Rahsheena is now participating in finance classes to learn how to budget, manage spending habits, and save. "This course came right in time because I'm pregnant and need to be better with my money before I have my child," Rahsheena said.

In addition to finance classes, OPDC's Financial Opportunity Center staff is working one-on-one with Rahsheena, above, to help her achieve her personal goals to pursue further education and a teacher certification.

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## COVID-19

**At the start of the pandemic, OPDC established sanitation protocol and safe operating procedures for our properties.**

**Our property management team performed essential services for our residents, holding safety as the priority.**

Charlie Zepp is the Maintenance Technician for all of OPDC's properties. As a staff member for almost four years now, Charlie keeps the buildings operating and ensures our residents have safe and secure places. At the start of the pandemic, Charlie worked with OPDC's Property Manager, Jodi Lincoln, to devise a safe maintenance protocol. When working in an apartment, he ensures that both he and residents socially distance and use necessary protective equipment.

**"Being a maintenance tech is more than just doing maintenance," Zepp said. "it's about making sure that all of our facilities are conducive to a safe quality of life."**



Darryl Peterson, the Site Caretaker for Oakland Affordable Living, joined OPDC in the spring of 2019 to take care of all the janitorial and landscaping needs for the new development. Since March, he helped with disinfection of all common area door handles, railings, elevator buttons, entrance keypads, and other commonly touched surfaces.

Richard Hopkins, OPDC's Housekeeper for all the other properties, has been with OPDC for over two years and helps with sanitization measures and keeping properties up to safety standards. "I like making the spaces clean and presentable for the residents, especially since some of them are senior citizens, and having an accessible space is important for their health," Richard said.

**"I am always thankful for the work Charlie, Richard, and Darryl do," says Jodi Lincoln, Property Manager, "but during the pandemic, it's been incredible how much they stepped up to make sure our buildings were safe."**

Through regular sanitization, enforcement of mask-wearing in common rooms, and other safety procedures, OPDC has avoided any outbreaks of COVID-19 at our properties.

**LEFT:** Charlie Zepp, OPDC Maintenance Technician.

**BELOW:** Jodi Lincoln, Property Manager, and Richard Hopkins, OPDC Housekeeper.



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**OPDC’s Financial Opportunity Center is committed to improving financial literacy for all Oakland community members.**

**We customize our service to meet each client’s individual needs.**

Esther Hicks has been working with the FOC’s services for five years now. Before COVID-19, she often came to the Career Center four to five days a week to be in a space that she knew would motivate her to find better employment. She has worked with us on resume development, interview skills, savings techniques, and job placement.

**“I like the fact that the Financial Opportunity Center is not one-dimensional and doesn’t just focus on job placement and employment,” Esther said.**

Esther participated in our Financial Wellness Cohort this spring. In addition to individual financial advising, participants create a community and share accountability in pursuing their financial goals. Although COVID-19 interrupted the cohort’s in-person meetings, the group reconvened via zoom. OPDC staff continues to work one-on-one with members as they progress toward their financial goals.

This year, cohort participants wanted to focus on savings techniques; they learned about several savings tools and how to choose what works best for their individual needs. Participants

shared with the group goals toward which they are working. One of Esther’s goals is to save enough money to go on vacation. Other participants had goals like moving out on their own or buying a house. “We often start with short term goal-saving,” Financial Coach Camille Dixon said. “Once you realize that you can save in the short term, then you make it a habit that translates into long term savings.”

In terms of long-term goals, Esther is developing a payment plan to pay off her student loans ahead of schedule and then plans to learn how to drive and finance a car.

**“I’m always trying to think two or three moves ahead, weighing the pros and cons of a decision and seeing what’s feasible for me,” Esther said. “The way I think about it, it’s all about resiliency. And what I’m doing with OPDC is learning how to be more resilient.”**



LEFT: Financial Coach Camille Dixon

BELOW: OPDC’s Jarret Crowell and Esther Hicks







# COVID-19

**For generations, South Oakland residents have used Frazier Fieldhouse as a community center.**

When COVID-19 brought hardship to the neighborhood, OPDC partnered with Pittsburgh organizations to create a Food and Essential Items Distribution run out of the fieldhouse. Since April, residents have been able to receive hot meals, fresh produce, pantry items, and personal protective equipment from the twice-weekly service.

The distribution came out of self-organized community meetings at the start of the pandemic. “We all collectively identified a need within South Oakland during COVID to try to tackle food insecurity as it exists in our neighborhood,” South Oakland Neighborhood Group President and Trap Panther Party representative Teireik Williams said. After recognizing this need, OPDC’s Community Organizer Jarrett Crowell connected with the Hill District Consensus Group and Feed the Hood, who were running a similar food distribution service in the Hill District. The three organizations worked together to expand the program into South Oakland.

Feed the Hood provides the twice-weekly hot meals. While the organization has been around since 2016, Feed the Hood’s hot meals service took off in March, when a group of chefs coalesced around the challenge of feeding their communities during the pandemic. “We obtain food from local pantries that give us the excess that they can’t store or give away in an adequate amount of time,” Carlos Thomas, Chef and Director of Feed the Hood said. “It’s one community feeding



LEFT: Carlos Thomas, Chef and Director of Feed the Hood.

BELOW: Volunteers dish out hot meals and connect residents with fresh produce at the twice-weekly Frazier Fieldhouse Food and Essential Items Distributions.

another community with the skills and abilities that they have.”

Resident input is central to shaping the distribution’s evolution. When residents were adapting to COVID-19 safety practices at the beginning of the pandemic, we supplied face masks and hand sanitizer. In July, 412 Food Rescue joined our partnership by providing fresh produce and pantry staples. “Seeing people two to three times a week is an opportunity to be outside of our houses and remember that we live in a community and share space with neighbors. I think that fact has allowed us as a site of mutual aid to be a lot nimbler in responding to the feedback that we’ve been getting,” Jarrett said.

In addition to the biweekly distribution site, volunteers deliver hot meals and produce to Oakland residents who cannot leave their houses. Robert Holliday, a Pitt student and volunteer that helps with deliveries, exemplifies the distribution’s collaborative, responsive ethos. “I live in the neighborhood and saw the food distribution as I was driving by one day. I walked over and asked if I could join, and I’ve been here since.”







# Community Programs Serving the Diverse Needs of Our Neighborhoods

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### OPDC is Here for You

This year, we worked to advance our existing programs and innovate in response to the challenges of aiding neighbors during a pandemic. Our programs serve the diverse needs of our continually evolving community.

### OAKLAND TOGETHER

With COVID-19 limiting our social spheres, OPDC created Oakland Together, a newsletter for Oakland's older residents. Mailed monthly, Oakland Together connects older residents with community resources and neighborhood news.

Josephine Pelmon, an Oakland resident of 25 years, likes that Oakland Together provides phone numbers to call with her questions. Josephine called OPDC staff, who then told her about housing renovation resources, dropped off face masks, and arranged for food deliveries from the South Oakland Food Distribution. "I think it's nice that we as senior citizens know that we can get someone to help us," Josephine said.

**"If I get to a place where I can't find anybody, I know that I can call someone at OPDC, and they will help me try to find somewhere to get this necessary help that I need. And it's right in my neighborhood — I know that I won't have a problem making that connection."**

Before Oakland Together, Josephine had never interacted with OPDC's programming. "I didn't have a need, and I guess you don't look for anything until you need it. This year I've had a

need, and I've been very satisfied with what I've received." She looks forward to future issues of Oakland Together.

### Oakland Landlord Alliance

Through the Oakland Landlord Alliance, OPDC communicates policy changes and community needs with Oakland landlords and works alongside them to improve Oakland's rental market. "It is about getting landlords the information they need, and their relaying information to us about their concerns," OPDC Neighborhood Quality Consultant Liz Gray said. Patrick Altdorfer, a landlord in Oakland, appreciates the Landlord Alliance's open communication. "It gives us a chance to exchange views and iron out misunderstandings before they get out of hand," Patrick said. The Landlord Alliance met quarterly this year and has moved to Zoom meetings since the pandemic.

*Continued on page 25*

ABOVE: 74 people volunteered with OPDC during this year's Garbage Olympics, collecting 85 bags of trash.

BELOW: University of Pittsburgh students volunteered at OAL.



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## CLUTTER FOR A CAUSE, ADOPT-A-BLOCK, AND GARBAGE OLYMPICS

Keeping Oakland clean takes a collective effort. OPDC engages volunteers to pick up litter, sort and donate unwanted household items, and improve the accessibility of our public spaces.

“Adopt-a-Block,” Oakland’s volunteer litter collection program, engaged 162 unique volunteers this year. Volunteers, many of whom were students, collected 182 bags of trash over nine scheduled “Adopt-a-Block” events throughout Oakland.

**“It’s a pretty well-known stereotype that college students are messy and leave trash behind, but I think ‘Adopt-a-Block’ aims to shine a better light on college students. They want a quality neighborhood that looks good and is healthy, and this program aims to highlight that to build bonds for a more sustained relationship,”**

— *Eric Macadangang, Pitt student*

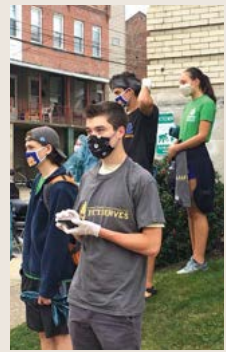
Oakland residents also mobilized for the city-wide Garbage Olympics. This year we had 74 volunteers collect 85 bags of trash.

In partnership with the University of Pittsburgh, OPDC organized the annual **“Clutter for a Cause”** event. “Clutter for a Cause” mitigates the stress of student move-out on Oakland’s community and Pittsburgh’s waste services by collecting and repurposing unwanted items. Zachary Delaney, Pitt student and

member of the Student Office of Sustainability, speaks to the need for “Clutter for a Cause.”

**“Waste generated during move-out is inherently a problem for the people who live in Oakland — people who have low mobility and need to navigate around the sidewalks cluttered with these objects, people who are trying to move in, garbage workers and people in sanitation. As well as the simple fact that all of this clutter creates a massive landfill problem in the area,” Delaney said.**

“Clutter for a Cause” volunteers collect, sort, and donate or sell unwanted items to keep them off the sidewalks and out of the landfills.



ABOVE and LEFT: Many thanks to student volunteers from the University of Pittsburgh for spending time helping to clean up and beautify Oakland this year.

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## Happy Anniversary, Wanda!

Wanda Wilson, our Executive Director, celebrated her tenth anniversary with Oakland Planning and Development late last year. Wanda oversees all personnel and programs, fundraising, and planning initiatives and is a visionary leader in our growth.

For Wanda, joining OPDC’s staff was the next progression in a career of change-making in Oakland. Before coming on board as our Executive Director, she was a neighborhood planner and grant maker, frequently working with OPDC and Oakland’s community. “Joining OPDC was a great opportunity to put together the systems thinking and planning and development work that I did at my previous jobs,” Wanda said.

**“My passion is for increasing positive social change, helping people, and making a difference, which is what OPDC does every day on the very micro level.”**

OPDC has evolved a lot since Wanda took the helm as Executive Director. Under her leadership, we created the Community Land Trust, completed the Oakland 2025 Master Plan, added affordable housing units, expanded and renovated our facilities, and built our community organizing capacity. “I love the problem solving and strategy aspects of the work here at OPDC, and the ways that we can apply programs, resources, and strategies to address community needs. There’s always that element of creative problem solving,” Wanda says.

Wanda values the opportunity to work directly with Oakland residents and instigates creative approaches to community engagement, like



Oakland-wide dialogue circles, to ensure that community input is the bedrock of our work. “To be effective as a community development entity, we have to be in touch with the people in the neighborhood. We can’t rely on someone else to do that work for us,” she says. Our partnerships with institution partners, public agencies, and other stakeholders are equally valuable to the success of our work and she builds relationships with many partners.

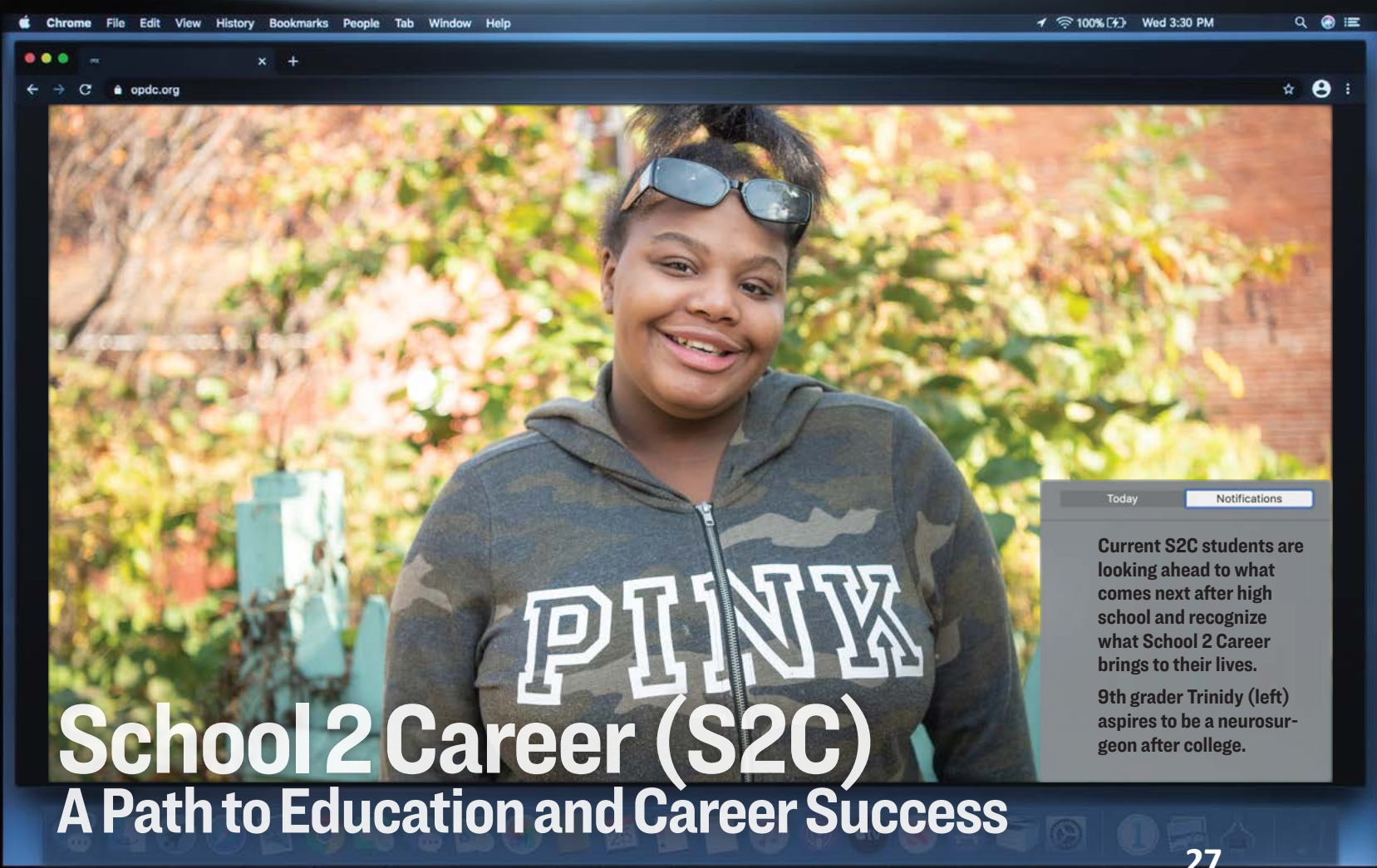
**“Wanda is diligent, hard-working, and essential to the growth and legacy of OPDC. Without her leadership, School 2 Career and Future Makers would not exist. Thank you, Wanda, for your vision, dedication, support, and leadership.” — Karla Stallworth, School 2 Career Program Director.**

This diligence and commitment characterize Wanda’s approach to OPDC’s next decade of operations. Looking forward, she is excited to expand our existing programs, increase representation and participation of BIPOC members of our community, and create new opportunities for Oaklanders to co-own their community. “A lot of our initiatives are aimed at an equity agenda. That’s really why our organization is here. I think there’s a ton of opportunity for leveraging new development in a way that there can be some sharing of investment to benefit the community,” she says. What this community ownership will look like, and how it will build on Oakland’s existing resources, will depend on what Oakland wants to see. In the meantime, Wanda and OPDC continue to work on Oakland’s evolution one day at a time.

LEFT: Through the years — Wanda with staff and colleagues on a tour of The Porch’s green roof, with former OPDC Executive Director, Susan Golumb.

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**S2C is a year-round out-of-school-time program that provides high school students from underserved neighborhoods a path to education and career success.**

S2C staff, Karla Stallworth and Jeremy Blache-Schwartz, work with interns and volunteer tutors as part of an organized, caring team who inspire their students to achieve ambitious goals.

S2C partnered with the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Computing and Information to offer data analysis training for Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). Students learned data entry and analysis skills through a social justice lens.

With our partner XRConnectED, we added a Virtual and Augmented Reality Club. CEOs met weekly to master new VR/AR technology and equipment. A new partner, M-Powerhouse, led an FAA Drone Certification pilot project. A small group of primarily female students met weekly with expert drone pilot and instructor, Dr. Lori Paluti.

A key component of S2C is career exploration and preparation. Students research potential careers, attend job-readiness orientations, learn how to write resumes, and practice interviewing. Then we place students into paid, mentored opportunities with partners such as ACH Clear Pathways, Assemble, Carnegie Science Center Fab Lab, Dress for Success, and UPMC.

**“School 2 Career teaches you how to dress appropriately, and prepares you for what you need to interview for professional jobs. We learned what we’d encounter during an interview — questions to expect like, ‘Where do you see**

**yourself in five years?’ I’ve written my resume; now I just have to update it now and again — I’ve done the hard part.”**  
*— Trinity Manison, a 9th grader at Pittsburgh Millionaires 6-12, University Preparatory high school.*

When COVID hit in March, Pittsburgh Public Schools closed as did students’ job placements. School 2 Career quickly pivoted its programming to 100% virtual. We utilized Google classrooms to post lessons, added weekly updates to keep students on track, and offered daily tutoring. Our staff are now experts in using Zoom for programs as well as informal check-ins with students each day.

By switching to virtual learning, we expanded the scope of our programming and included more students in various events. We are now able to welcome guests from other states and countries. S2C incorporated the Friday Speaker Series via

*Continued on page 29*

**BELOW:** Trinity is in her first year of School 2 Career.

Students learned how to make pasta during a session with Butterjoint.

“Biological Science” was one of our weekend Future Makers’ workshops.





Zoom in March to engage community youth who would typically attend our Future Makers Saturday programs. Every Friday, a guest from a local partner organization, national organization, S2C alumni, or government official engage participants in a presentation and conversation open to students and the public.

Rasul Somerville is in the 10th grade at Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy and in his second year with School 2 Career. Rasul's career interests include real estate, coding, and software design. He had a job placement with the Carnegie Science Center Fab Lab last year, helping kids with coding, and 3D and laser printing.

Rasul enjoys his experience and is a cheerleader for S2C, recently informing a PPS teacher about an upcoming coding workshop through S2C, encouraging her to recruit his classmates.

**“School 2 Career has been helpful to me in so many ways. Some of the aspects I like the best are the professional things they teach, introducing me to stuff I didn’t know. School 2 Career teaches you, and then you get the experience. I’ve learned about post-high-school education options, how to write a resume, financial planning, and life success.”** — Rasul Somerville, 10th grader at Pittsburgh Science and Technology Academy

S2C achieved a 100% graduation rate this year — the 15th year in a row. All graduates received acceptance to multiple universities, qualified for the Pittsburgh Promise, and four received additional scholarships to institutions including CCAC, California

*Continued below—*

University of Pennsylvania, LaRoche University, and Ohio State University.

The current students are looking ahead to what comes next after high school and recognize what School 2 Career brings to their lives. 9th grader Trinity aspires to be a neurosurgeon after college and shared, “Some students lose interest in joining School 2 Career when they find out there is work involved, but they don’t understand it comes with priceless benefits.”

**School 2 Career 2019–2020 statistics:**

Average GPA (S2C goal of 2.5)	
1st quarter =	3.23
2nd quarter =	3.11
3rd quarter =	3.16
4th quarter =	3.34
Work/volunteer hours logged by CEOs	= 1,858
Training hours logged by CEOs	= 3,066
Number of events attended/held and speakers	= 73
School contact for grades and academic support	= 100%
Eligible CEOs assigned mentor/worksite	= 78%
CEOs participated in college preparation	= 100%
Annual attendance rate	= 85%

**THE ARTS, EQUITY, AND EDUCATION FUND** supported School 2 Career with \$28,000 in funding through their COVID-19 grant funding. OPDC provided 20 COVID assistance grants to the families of current S2C students and six scholarships to 2020 graduates who are now continuing their education through college or trade school.

**“This check was such a blessing to my household during this time of COVID. With the kids being home all day, every day, food and utilities are high. It was refreshing to pay some bills. Please let AE&E know how much I appreciated that gesture.**

**Thank you for your help!”**  
— Tiffani H., S2C parent

**CORPORATE AND FOUNDATION SUPPORTERS:** We are also grateful to our corporate supporters of S2C: American Eagle Outfitters Foundation, Dollar Bank, Huntington Bank, NexTier Bank, and PJ Dick/Trumbull Corporation.

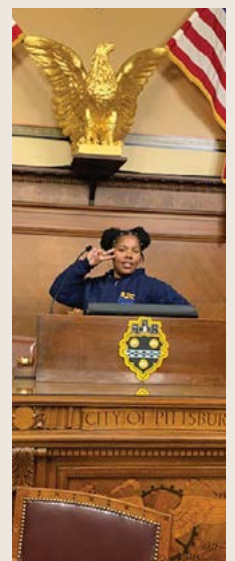
Founded in 2008, the **MCAULEY MINISTRIES FOUNDATION** is a strong supporter of health and wellness, community and economic development, and education in the Hill District, Uptown, and West Oakland. McAuley Ministries support of our work is invaluable. We are so grateful for their partnership and wish their Executive Director, Michele Cooper, best wishes in her retirement.



**LEFT:** Thanks to Citizen Science Lab for their partnership with S2C.



**BELOW:** Majestic Lane (middle, back), City of Pittsburgh Chief Equity Officer and Deputy Chief of Staff, graciously invited CEOs to a tour of the City-County Building.





# Financials 2019-2020

## Revenue

\$ 308,000	13%	Corporations
11,000	<1%	Individuals
280,000	12%	Other
397,000	17%	State and Local Contracts
436,000	19%	Foundations
358,000	15%	Earned Income
564,000	24%	Leasing
<b>\$ 2,354,000</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>

## Expenses

\$ 335,000	21%	Administrative
224,000	14%	Community Programs
173,000	11%	School 2 Career
495,000	32%	Property Management
187,000	12%	Community Partnerships
151,000	10%	Real Estate
<b>\$ 1,565,000</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>



## Assets

\$ 1,632,000	Cash and Cash Equivalents
58,000	Contributions and Accounts Receivable
20,000	Prepaid Items
1,139,000	Notes and Interest Receivable
1,529,000	Project Development
1,364,000	Property and Equipment, Net
<b>\$ 5,742,000</b>	<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>

## Liabilities

\$ 59,000	Accounts Payable
24,000	Current Portion of Long-Term Debt
30,000	Security Deposits Held
3,187,000	Long-Term Debt
75,000	Forgivable Debt
<b>\$ 3,375,000</b>	<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>
<b>\$ 2,367,000</b>	<b>NET ASSETS</b>

ABOVE:  
We missed celebrating together like at last year's annual holiday party. We hope to gather again in 2021!

ALL NUMBERS ARE UNAUDITED

## This year OPDC said farewell to Elly Fisher after 12 years of service as our Assistant Director. We are grateful for her substantial contributions to OPDC.

Elly has been working to build a better Oakland since she was a student at the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA). "She learned community engagement scholarship, then put it into practice as a community-engaged professional," says Sabina Deitrick, GSPIA faculty member.

During her tenure at OPDC, Elly took on instrumental roles in our continual evolution. She spearheaded OPDC's transition to in-house property management, led a major revamp of our finance system, and was the driving force behind the \$16 million, five-year-long Oakland Affordable Living project. "Elly did all of the heavy lifting on the Oakland Affordable Living project," OPDC Executive Director Wanda Wilson said. "To do a low-income housing tax credit development is a big deal for an organization of our size. It's a huge accomplishment, both for OPDC and for her professionally."

Elly's work at OPDC made such a big impact on Oakland and our organization that it is difficult to detail it all. But it is without a doubt that she exemplified OPDC's mission to serve the Oakland community. She held equity and representation as the bedrock of community development and built relationships that engendered trust, collaboration, and investment between OPDC and community partners. Working for a better Oakland, to her, is all about "finding projects and initiatives that bring people together in a mutually beneficial way."

This dedication to finding and meeting community needs was central to her work at OPDC. "From the day she was hired, Elly saw clearly



how important it is to build and cultivate relationships with community partners, elected officials, residents — and internally among OPDC staff," Community Services Director Andrea Boykowycz says.

**"It hasn't always been possible to achieve consensus or to realize the community's vision, but without Elly's talents for bringing people together and making complicated challenges easier for everyone to understand, much of what we've accomplished over the last 12 years would have been straight-up impossible."**

— Andrea Boykowycz, Community Services Director

As for her relationship with the place she put so much time and energy into, she says, "I love Oakland dearly. I think there's so much potential and energy, and I think that OPDC is in a really strong position now in the way their programming and property management is set up."

Elly, it has been an absolute pleasure working, learning, and laughing with you. We look forward to seeing the problems you tackle next, and wish you all the best in your forthcoming feats.



# HELLO AND GOODBYE

## Thank you, OPDC staff!

We welcomed several new faces and said goodbye to some valued co-workers this year. Hannah Green, Gregg Higgins, Jarrett Crowell, and Annemarie Malbon have all moved on to new chapters.

Hannah came to OPDC through the PULSE fellowship program in 2017, then assumed the Communications Manager role. Gregg served as Employment and Supportive Services Case Manager, helping to run the Financial Wellness program before moving out of state last spring. Initially serving as Community Planning and Outreach Coordinator while with us for a year of service as a PULSE fellow, Jarrett Crowell stayed on as full-time staff with OPDC for another year. If you've received a food delivery or a phone call from OPDC, the chances are good that Jarrett was assisting you.

We'd also like to say thank you and best of luck to Annemarie Malbon.

She originally joined the staff in 2017 as Program Specialist and Assistant to the Executive Director. Moving up to Community Land Trust Manager, Annemarie helped countless people through our home repair programs and the Oakland CLT. Congratulations to Annemarie and her husband, who recently welcomed a baby boy into their family. We wish them all the best!

We extended a warm welcome to our newest staff members — Kathleen Radock, Communications and Development Manager; Alethia Bush, Case Manager; Maura McCampbell, Marketing and Community Programs Coordinator/PULSE fellow; and Nic Binfield, Community Engagement and Outreach Coordinator/AmeriCorps VISTA member.

We look forward to another year of working alongside the community to build a better Oakland, especially during these trying times. If you ever need assistance and don't know where to start, please contact us at [questions@opdc.org](mailto:questions@opdc.org) or 412.621.7863 x17.



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Wanda Wilson and Patrick Hughes

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Kimberly Cadney, in honor of R'omni Sargent

Anna Hilliard, in memory of Anna M. Hilliard

David Serafini, in memory of Sandy Phillips

Jonathan Socha, in memory of Andy Warhola



**OPDC**

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