



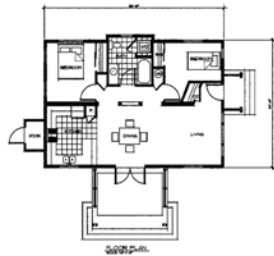
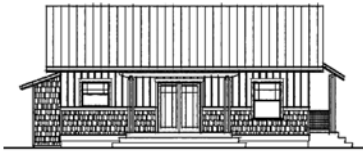
SUMMER 2007

# OPAL NEWSLETTER

HOUSING ISLAND PEOPLE, HELPING TO MAINTAIN ISLAND CHARACTER

## MT. BAKER ROAD UPDATE

The Mt. Baker Road neighborhood is taking shape! Since our last report, OPAL has submitted the site plan to the county for land use review, selected the modular building company that will build the homes, hired a new architect to finish design work, selected a local general contractor to oversee all work on the site, and continued working with the more than 80 households interested in purchasing a home (see page 3). Twenty of the households in the applicant pool have earned a place on the waiting list, meaning that they are now qualified to purchase and have begun meeting regularly to provide input on plans and to write the Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CC&Rs) for their new neighborhood.



Mt. Baker elevation and floor plans—still under development. This is a one-story house, 864 square feet. Designed to maximize passive solar gain and encourage “aging in place” with three-foot wide door openings and an ADA-friendly bathroom.

OPAL selected the modular construction company Transform through a competitive process. This new company is located near the Skagit airport and was founded on the conviction that “by making fundamental improvements in the residential design and construction process we can—and should—create quality, more affordable homes.” The company is committed to “green” construction—buying quality materials in bulk and offering certification through LEED, Built Green, Energy Star and Green Communities.

In addition to the quality assurance and cost-savings offered by Transform, OPAL is pleased that it will limit its carbon footprint by using a regional builder and regional materials from a nearby mill. The cost savings will allow OPAL (and Transform) to maximize green, energy-efficient features and materials on the homes, extending their affordability for homeowners into the future through greater energy and maintenance savings.

Sharon Robinson of Zervas Group Architects in Bellingham has been hired to complete the architectural and site design elements started by Craig Webster (see page 6). Sharon was a founding board member of the Kulshan Community Land Trust in Bellingham and is currently designing their first affordable-home-ownership demonstration project. OPAL’s trustees and prospective homebuyers will review the plans during the month of August and construction level drawings should be ready in the early fall.

Justin Paulsen of Terra Firma will be the general contractor for the project. Through another competitive process, Terra Firma demonstrated to the OPAL building committee and board of trustees that the company has the right mix of skills and capacity for this project. Terra Firma built the most recent OPAL homes on Madrona Street, and also was the general contractor for the Lahari Ridge neighborhood in Deer Harbor and the Reddick Farmhouse offices and apartments.

Site work is expected to begin this winter and the first phase of 10 homes is slated to be ready for occupancy by midsummer 2008.

You are invited to OPAL’s end of summer celebration Saturday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Please see back page for more . . .

OPAL COMMUNITY LAND TRUST: OPAL COMMONS • BONNIE BRAE • OBERON WOOD • SCATTERED SITE HOMES • REDDICK FARMHOUSE OFFICES AND APARTMENTS • LAHARI RIDGE • MADRONA STREET • *Mt. Baker Road* • *ORCAS VILLAGE*

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: LISA BYERS



OPAL's next three years of work on the ground are clear: complete a new neighborhood of 32 homes on Mt. Baker Road and start building up to 12 more homes on our newest property in Orcas Village. Both are complex projects, requiring attention to detail on many levels, as well as fundraising. Mt. Baker Road will cost \$8.7 million. We are 92% of the way there, but still have to close a \$690,000 gap (see pie chart). We've been awarded grants, will broker mortgages and have raised funds from supporters like you. To close the final gap we are again asking for help from individual donors (see page 7).

For the OPAL staff and board of trustees the next three years will also be a time to lay seeds for OPAL's future. This fall, the OPAL Board will launch a new strategic planning process. It will be a time to discuss broader questions and to think beyond the current demand for our services.

There is a parable that goes something like this: a person is walking along a beach and sees thousands of sea stars stranded. They are dying. A child is picking up sea stars, one by one, and throwing them back into the ocean. The first person asks: "Why bother? There are so many that you'll never save them all." The child says, "Because it does matter to the ones I do save." Likewise, we know that OPAL has made a difference by helping individual households. So far we've built 65 houses on the island, and 91 households have lived in them. For some, OPAL provided a way station; for others we've provided a way to imagine living on the island for the rest of their lives.

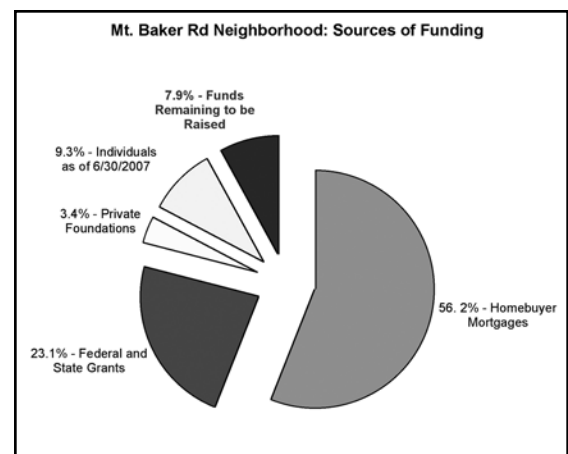
But there are other ways to measure success. To what degree have OPAL's homes and activities made a difference in the social fabric of the island? That is, have we added significantly to the health of the community? What about the future? How far up the income scale will OPAL need to go with its housing and how will those homes be financed? Are there ways that OPAL's mission could help to address other needs on the island? What is the full range of services that could assure affordable living on the island? Does OPAL have a role in providing elder care? space for businesses? healthcare? shared transportation?

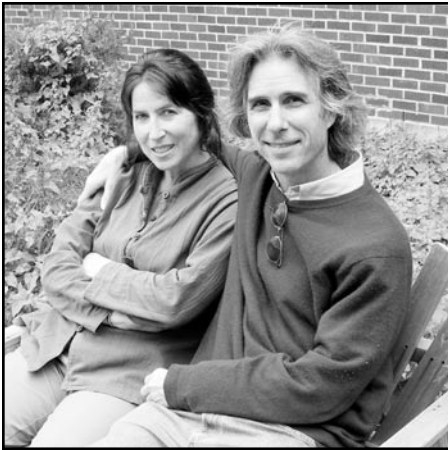
OPAL's new strategic plan will respond to changes on the island, and also consider the relevance of changes happening around the country. As president of the National Community Land Trust (CLT) Network, I am learning about trends and questions raised by many different communities. For example, historically black communities in the South are working to preserve their culture in the face of fast-paced gentrification. On Orcas, I ask: what are the important cultural elements of Orcas Island and what role could OPAL play in sustaining that culture?

Large cities like Chicago and Irvine, Calif., have established citywide CLTs to maintain affordability in all neighborhoods and stem the tide of long-distance commuting between jobs and less-expensive housing located hours away from downtown. On Orcas the question might be: how much of our economy can be locally based, and how can we help reduce our carbon footprint by growing a locally-based, healthy island economy?

I look forward to talking about these questions, and others, as OPAL considers its role on Orcas Island for the next 20, 50 and even 100 years. Do you have ideas to share? I encourage you to email me at [opalclt@opalclt.org](mailto:opalclt@opalclt.org).

*Lisa Byers*





The number of community roles played by John and Vicki Clancy is impressive.

**John:**

Orcas Net, Documentation Writer  
Substitute Teacher  
Washington State Artist in Residence  
Odd Fellow  
Funhouse instructor (past prog. director)  
Theatre Director, Producer, Writer, Actor  
Improv Troupes:

Transformance Theater  
NATO (National Theater of Orcas)  
Clancy and Cowdery  
Improvismo (which acts as a meeting tool for corporate and educational clients)

Auctioneer for many local nonprofits  
Emcee, OIPP's Orcas Idol

**Vicki:**

High School Math Teacher  
HS Ecology Club Advisor  
HS Class Advisor  
Choreographer, Annual Teachers' Lip-Synch Performance  
Math Tutor  
Dancer  
Floral Designer

### JOHN & VICKI CLANCY

John and Vicki Clancy moved to Orcas Island in 1986 after the birth of their first child, Kimmy. They wanted to raise their children in a community that was a good fit and scale for their sense of selves and family. When the publishing job that John had been offered on Orcas fell through, they made the leap anyway. John found work as a dishwasher and baker; they landed an affordable (albeit uninsulated) rental and settled in. After Willie was born in 1989, John co-founded Weehaa Theatre, living from grant to grant as an artist in residence. Vicki started a floral business, Blossoms & Branches, and tutored students in math. Their lives were always arranged to give them both plenty of time with their kids. Kimmy and Willie graduated from Orcas High School, both with about a 3.98 grade-point average, four years of varsity sports under their caps and academic scholarships to UW and WWU.

For John, who is so “out there” in the community, and for Vicki, who gives so much of herself to her students, home is an important refuge. “Home is where I draw my energy and recharge,” reflects John. “Home is where the whole family can just hang out together—or play Scrabble in front of the woodstove on a winter night.” He is excited about the possibility of an OPAL home for the stability and peace it would bring.

John and Vicki are looking forward to living in a neighborhood of familiar faces where they can walk to work and play in the Village—and a place their kids can come home to. “It fits right into my village ideal,” says John. “I love the way OPAL works. We could pass the house down to our kids—and I appreciate the chance to relate to land in a nonspeculative way. I believe land is not something to be leveraged as much as appreciated as an opportunity to live deeply as community members.”

Thinking of the future as a homeowner, John said. “Vicki is so active, and she only gets more active and involved as the years go by. I can't imagine all the additional ways she'll be contributing once we have the stability of an affordable house within Eastsound. And that can only mean good things for the school and the community. As for me, I can't begin to say how good this island and its people have been to me. It has given me birth on many levels—and it can bury me right here.”

### A SNAPSHOT OF POTENTIAL HOMEOWNER HOUSEHOLDS

The group of 20 qualified homebuyers currently on the waiting list includes eight families with children—14 children altogether. Four of those families are single-parent households. Four additional prospective homebuyers are of or nearing retirement age. Sixteen of the 20 households qualify with income below 80% of the area median and two qualified families are middle-income households. Within the group are a small-business owner, two teachers and a school janitor, three medical professionals, a technical writer, four construction workers, a heavy equipment operator, a truck driver, a boat builder, a minister, an insurance professional, a seamstress, three retail workers, a blacksmith, a housecleaner, and a ferry worker. Another 64 households are applicants for housing—working to earn their place on the waiting list.

## MEET THE TRUSTEES

### ALLEN SMITH, BOARD PRESIDENT

Allen and his wife, Sara, bought property on Orcas 10 years ago and finally moved up to the island full-time three years ago after their youngest daughter went off to college. A retired CEO from Southern California, Allen's business and community experience is a good fit for OPAL. "The company I helped found was in the business of envisioning and implementing futures for organizations that were enabled by advanced technology," relayed Allen. "We called it Advanced Concept Engineering. I enjoy helping OPAL with planning and future vision and will happily continue doing so until shushed."



Sara and Allen Smith

Allen joined the board in 2006 and was elected board president in May. When asked what inspired him to get involved, Allen said he had become aware of the need for affordable housing through the Orcas Research Group and the campaign for the Real Estate Excise Tax, and then confessed that his reasons for supporting OPAL are largely selfish.

"First, I like the cultural and economic diversity of Orcas. I like that our electrician is also a published poet, and that one neighbor is an accomplished artist while another is a philosopher/writer. I like exploring life's mysteries with our plumber, or discussing surfing with our handyman. I like spending winter afternoons in Darvill's listening to Scott (an OPAL resident) moderate an impromptu jazz seminar. It's not that the affluent can't be interesting or that those of lesser means are inherently fascinating. It's more that cultural contribution is not a function of family income.

"My second reason for supporting OPAL, equally selfish, is that it helps keep people on the island who make my life here easier and even possible. I'm talking about the people who build and maintain our houses. About those who teach our children. And about those who guarantee our health and safety. Last year, on a cold winter night, my wife was walking outside in the dark, stepped in a hole, and collapsed with a badly injured ankle. Being handicapped myself, I was not able to get her into the warm house, so I called 911. In minutes a swarm of friendly and helpful volunteer EMTs was there. These volunteers were all longtime island residents who had bought their houses back when houses were more affordable. None could afford to move here today. A number of OPAL homeowners volunteer for the fire department.

"I also value OPAL for the example it sets. OPAL's mission is to provide housing that is of high quality, that fits the unique character of island living, and that is responsible to the environment. OPAL is pioneering the creation of houses that have charm without being too big, that are energy-efficient and healthy, and that preserve our dwindling natural resources. By its example it is teaching others—including me. When we first acquired property on Orcas our plan was to build a sprawling Southern California house here on the island. Through the years, and in large part because of our exposure to OPAL, our plans got smaller, simpler, and more responsive to things like energy efficiency, environmental health, and the use of recycled materials.

"There are many reasons for supporting OPAL that aren't selfish. Reasons like: payback for being given the gift of living here in Paradise. Or because it is The Right Thing to Do. All of these reasons are valid, but for me, anyway, they are not necessary. I support OPAL because OPAL makes my life on Orcas better."

#### 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.

## CHANGING NEEDS REFINE AND RESHAPE OPAL'S EFFORTS

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While Orcas Island's need for affordable housing is well documented, the nature of that need is anything but static. One important aspect of OPAL's success is the ability of our board and staff to recognize changing needs and then be thoughtful and nimble in addressing them.

Several emerging trends have been confirmed by a new housing survey, conducted by OPAL in March of this year. This information will guide discussions as the board and staff lead strategic planning sessions this fall. Some of the concerns are already being addressed.

There is a growing need among moderate- and middle-income households. While the majority (73%) of surveyed renters who are currently seeking or plan to seek new housing within the next five years have incomes that are very low and low, a substantial number (27%) have moderate and middle incomes. Yet they cannot afford to buy even the lowest-priced house on Orcas, and little or no public money is available to help them. Six to eight homes in the new OPAL neighborhood on Mt. Baker Road are being planned to help answer this need—meeting this need requires more significant donations from individuals, since government grants will not support these higher-income households.

Almost half (49%) of all renters in need of housing are singles. Others seeking housing by household type: two adults with one or more children—23%, two adults—19%, single parents—7%. Of the 32 homes planned for Mt. Baker Road, a number may be just 672 square feet to accommodate very-low- and low-income singles.

A substantial number of island renters surveyed (42%) are discouraged and say home ownership of any type is simply beyond their reach. As a group, these respondents have lived here the longest (11 years average) and have the lowest incomes (\$30,700 average in 2006). Their average age is 46. A third of them need to move because current housing costs are too high. They seek “affordable, decent rentals (\$350 + utilities).” Are there ways OPAL can help these islanders? What's the cost to our community of having such a large segment of the population with little hope of finding stable, affordable housing? As the OPAL board and staff think creatively about how to meet this need, your input is encouraged. Email your thoughts to [opalclt@opalclt.org](mailto:opalclt@opalclt.org).

## CORE GROUP OF RENTERS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT OPAL HOMES

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Among survey respondents, there was strong agreement (4.3 average score out of a possible 5.0) that community land trust housing is a good thing for Orcas. And yet we know an OPAL home is not “right” for everyone. Many people (“Individualists”—27%) prefer more privacy and lower densities. Some (“Skeptics”—6%) want full market appreciation when they sell. And many (“Discourageds”—42%) think any type of ownership is out of reach.

Even so, 26% of the renters surveyed were termed “Enthusiasts.” They are the most enthusiastic about OPAL housing meeting their needs. They value the sense of community offered by OPAL neighborhoods and say they would feel welcome living there. They are comfortable with the proximity of clustered homes. They are prepared to give up market appreciation in return for stable, affordable housing. They are also the most in favor of mixing market-rate and subsidized homes.

This group has lived on the island an average of nine years and has the second-lowest income (\$39,000 average in 2006). Their average age is 50.

## CLT NEWS

### SAN JUAN COMMUNITY HOME TRUST UPDATE

The Home Trust is now developing a site plan for the Buck property, which borders the Town of Friday Harbor. The Friday Harbor Town Council voted June 21<sup>st</sup> to include the property in the Town's urban growth area (UGA), and the county is now conducting its review before final approval of the UGA expansion. The design team, including architect Jed Clark of Bellingham and landscape architect Tom Berger of Seattle, is working to develop a master site plan for the entire 45 acre parcel, including both the 30 acres the Buck family will continue to own, and the 15+ acres the Home Trust will develop.

### LOPEZ COMMUNITY LAND TRUST (LCLT) UPDATE

On the afternoon of June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 120 Lopezians gathered at the site of LCLT's fourth affordable housing neighborhood for an afternoon of music and celebration while attending the ground blessing. LCLT's *Sustainable Community Homes* project features passive solar design, rain water catchment, solar electricity, low-impact development practices and small house sizes. The project received an unexpected six-week delay when San Juan County officials notified LCLT that their state-certified water system did not meet some of the particulars spelled out in San Juan County code. This most unfortunate turn of events appears to be resolved as we go to press.

### NATIONAL CLT NETWORK UPDATE

The National CLT Network ([www.nationalclt.org](http://www.nationalclt.org)) has launched the CLT Academy, a joint venture with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy ([www.lincolnst.edu](http://www.lincolnst.edu)). The Academy will offer courses this year in Minnesota, South Carolina and Portland, Oregon, and next year in California, Florida and the Northeast. The CLT Network board has secured sufficient funding to cover one year of operating costs and is currently searching for its first executive director.

#### 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!*



Lisa Byers accepts a check for \$10,000 from the Orcas Island Community Foundation's Community Grants program. The funds, provided by Michael Brennan (left) and Martha Farish (right) and Joe Cohen (not pictured), will be used to build entrance path into the Mt. Baker Road neighborhood.

### REMEMBERING CRAIG WEBSTER

Craig Webster died on May 7, 2007, doing one of the things he loved most: flying his Cessna 210. The plane crashed in Utah during an emergency landing en route to Seattle from San Antonio. Craig, a part-time Deer Harbor resident who deeply loved the island, was the architect for OPAL's Bonnie Brae neighborhood and had led OPAL's design process almost to completion on the Mt. Baker Road project before he died. "Craig had a keen eye for how to make small buildings work," said Lisa Byers. "His major contributions to the Mt. Baker Road project include a strong aesthetic sense of rural charm in the midst of urban density—based on his fond recollections of his grandparents' farm buildings—and a commitment to green building practices. Craig's special touch remains on the new neighborhood and will be enjoyed and remembered by generations of OPAL homeowners on Mt. Baker Road."



## MEET THE MEMBERS

### MARILYN ANDERSON: MEMBER SINCE 1996

Marilyn Anderson became an OPAL member in 1996, and also joined the Board that year, serving a three-year term. A retired career Army physical therapist, she hails from Seattle. While in the Army she had a variety of assignments...among them San Francisco, Germany, San Antonio, and ending in Washington, DC, as the Army's chief physical therapist. With a long-held interest in the San Juans, she purchased property on Crane Island in 1960 and retired there in 1973.

One of the things that drew her to OPAL was the organization's commitment to environmental best practices, including the building of energy-efficient homes, which is one of her special interests: she and a friend participated in the building of a super-efficient home and farm on Crane Island that featured a sod roof, some photovoltaic power, and an electric car. Now they have a new home, on Orcas, also with a sod roof and some solar power.

As a music advocate in the community, and as an amateur musician (trumpet, bugle and violin), Marilyn supports the arts and arts education in the public school through her activities with the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival, Orcas Center, and the Music Advocacy Group.

Marilyn has watched OPAL from its beginnings and knows many OPAL homeowners. "I believe that most people aspire to owning a home," she said, "but fulfillment of that aspiration has not been possible for many in the community. Now, with OPAL providing the mechanism, home ownership is not only possible, it can actually lead to entry into the open market, thus serving as a transitional stepping stone for some." She also states that she believes OPAL is one of the best-run organizations on Orcas.

Of OPAL's current development of the Mt. Baker Road neighborhood she says, "I'm delighted to see that OPAL hasn't rested on its laurels, that it continues to find opportunities for land, adapting programs to each parcel and the needs of the community. I admire OPAL's flexibility in finding appropriate solutions and its wisdom in assessing needs and opportunities."



Marilyn Anderson

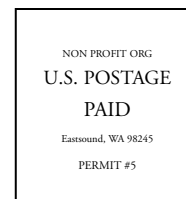
## HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT OPAL COMMUNITY LAND TRUST?

- 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: \_\_\_\_\_



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#### IN THIS ISSUE

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Layout and Photographs: Suzanne Olson  
Design: Tina Rose

## SAVE THE DATE: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007

Please join us for an End of Summer Celebration  
in the garden of Fred Whitridge's house in Deer Harbor  
Hors d'oeuvres and beverages served  
4:30 – 7:00 p.m.

This fundraising event, in support of OPAL's work on the Mt.  
Baker Road neighborhood, will take place *instead of*  
OPAL's annual soiree and auction this year.

Admission is by donation.