

**RECONSIDERING THE OAK PARK STRATEGY:
THE CONUNDRUMS OF INTEGRATION**

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by

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ABSTRACT

The civil rights movement succeeded in making great strides in the workplace and opening up educational opportunities, but failed when it came to housing. A glance at the 2000 census reveals that while the United States is becoming increasingly diverse, it remains as segregated as ever. Most attempts to constructively and deliberately integrate resulted in resegregation. This article critically examines an exception – the Chicago suburb of Oak Park. Thirty years ago the community made a conscious decision to welcome African Americans into a place that was virtually one hundred percent white. Thought time they developed policies, programs, and institutions designed to maintain integration so that blacks would feel welcome and white would not flee. Data generated by long term research by a political scientist and an ethnographer are employed to explore two questions: hoe does the “Oak Park strategy” work and could other communities use these tactics?

INTRODUCTION

The United States and most of its major metropolitan areas are becoming ever more diverse, in the sense of containing populations that include people of various racial and ethnic groups. However, diversity is not synonymous with integration. Residential racial segregation continues to be the norm, particularly in northeastern cities. The Chicago area is one of the most segregated in the nation despite being highly diverse.

There is a body of social science theory that holds such segregation is in some sense natural or inevitable. This school of thought also argues that stable integrated communities are highly unusual because of predictable dynamics that cause one group to leave when another begins to move in. This body of theory speaks of “succession” and “tipping points.” A community that rapidly changes its racial composition from one majority group to another—typically from nearly all white to nearly all black—is said to have “resegregate,” or gone from one form of segregation to another.

But a small number of communities have experimented with policy interventions designed to produce or maintain residential integration, and to resist the pressures that cause resegregation. Oak Park, Illinois, is one of these communities. It is both diverse and integrated despite its location on Chicago’s border and despite being surrounded by communities substantially displaying the region’s characteristic segregation. Oak Park’s exceptionalism is attributable at least in part to a set of local public policies that are designed to promote residential integration by various means. The most important programs regulate the racial composition of apartment buildings. This paper explains how these policies work and offers an assessment of their effectiveness. The paper is based on interviews with public officials, extensive ethnographic observations, review of Census data, examination of public documents, and use of a data set maintained by the Village of Oak Park that has never before been made public. The data show that Oak Park’s apartment sector is relatively diverse and integrated, when measured using dissimilarity and isolation indices. The policies appear to be successful at influencing the behaviors of both apartment owners and rental clients. In 1979 Carole Goodwin

reviewed and critiqued what she called “the Oak Park Strategy.” While there have been numerous studies and journalistic reports since, no scholars have systematically examined this complex of policies and agencies since. This paper is our attempt to revisit the “Oak Park Strategy” a quarter of a century later.

THEORIES OF RESIDENTIAL RACIAL INTEGRATION AND SEGREGATION

A survey of the social science theories of residential racial segregation suggest they can be divided into those that regard segregation as a natural and inevitable social process, known generally as “succession theory,” and those that view segregation as a creation or artifact of institutional practices that is subject to influence by public policy.

Succession Theory

The belief that neighborhood racial segregation is normal or natural is derived from work done in the 1920s by nationally-recognized scholars in the Sociology Department of the University of Chicago who founded the “human ecology” perspective on cities. These “Chicago school” theorists viewed the city as a natural habitat in which various social groups struggled for niches to survive and perpetuate themselves, much like plant and animal species in a field or forest.

The theory of human ecology was set forth in the classic sociology text published in 1925, entitled *The City*. One of the authors of that study, Ernest W. Burgess, followed it with an article that applied human ecology theory in an effort to explain the residential segregation of black people in Chicago and, by inference, elsewhere. The article, entitled “Residential Segregation in American Cities” (Burgess 1928), laid out the basic tenets of succession theory. Burgess concluded that the residential isolation of blacks was not caused by racial prejudice, but was fully explainable by the theory of human ecology. Racial segregation was simply “the result of the interplay of factors in urban growth which determine the location and movement of all groups, institutions, and individuals.”

Based on his observations of Chicago “but, wherever feasible, checked with the facts in other cities,” Burgess observed that the city could be divided into neighborhoods, “each of which is or tends to be predominantly inhabited by some one racial and immigrant group, or economic and social class.” He conceived of the city as consisting of five concentric circles or zones. From the center outward, they were “the loop,” or central business district, the “zone in transition,” the “zone of workingmen’s homes,” the “residential zone,” and “the commuter’s zone.” Burgess then argued that there were two forces operating to move people outward from one zone to another. One was the “push” of business interests that sought to expand from the center, in the process encroaching upon residential areas. The other was the “pull” toward the outside exerted by attractive residential areas.

These two forces, along with an implicit desire of every group to stay together that he called “local community,” set in motion a natural migration from the center to the periphery. Any new social group entering the city would typically find it easiest to settle in the zone of transition, because it would be near sources of employment and offer

“notoriously slight resistance to the intrusion of a new group.” He then identified a “principle of radial extension” at work that caused each ethnic or racial group to extend outward from the center along distinct corridors, as the “push” and “pull” forces caused them to move toward the periphery. Germans and Scandinavians “migrated” northward along Clark Street; the Poles “marched” northwest along Milwaukee Avenue; the Irish launched a “southside movement” down Halsted Street, and so for each major Chicago social group. Burgess identified in 1928 the contours of Chicago’s south side and west side ghettos, diagramming both the “Negro southward invasion” along State Street, and the “Negro westward extension” down Lake St.

As these “successive waves of invasion” enter new territory, they encountered the existing inhabitants. Thus began the process of “succession,” which had four stages:

- (1) invasion, beginning often as an unnoticed or gradual penetration, followed by
- (2) reaction, or the resistance mild or violent of the inhabitants of the community, ultimately resulting in
- (3) the influx of newcomers and the rapid abandonment of the area by its old-time residents, and
- (4) climax or the achievement of a new equilibrium of communal stability. (Burgess 1928,)

Seen in the light of urban ecology, Burgess argued, the segregation of black people was not unusual, as some argued, but quite natural:

The movement of Negro population into new residential areas is often considered as different in kind from that of other racial, immigrant, or economic groups. When studied, however, from the standpoint of human ecology, it appears to vary little, if at all, from those of other groups. ()

From this perspective, the 1919 Chicago race riots and other violence directed at blacks were simply a particularly intense example of the “reaction” stage, which was a normal response pattern exhibited by “every residential community” upon “intrusion of a new group of imputed inferior status.” However, over time the older group, being generally of higher status, would be pulled to nicer quarters on the periphery, leaving the neighborhood to the new arrivals.

Perhaps the most significant thing about Burgess’ model is what it does not include. The model does not allow for the existence of integrated communities. The new “equilibrium of communal stability” means simply that the old group has abandoned the neighborhood and the new one has fully occupied it. A neighborhood which houses two groups at the same time is, by definition, in transition from the old, higher status group to the new, lower status one.

Burgess was one of the most influential social scientists in America, and the explanation for residential segregation set forth in this article, including human ecology, the city as a set of concentric zones, radial extension, and succession theory, were dominant perspectives in American sociology for decades.

Empirical confirmation for this general perspective came in the form of major national studies based on census tract level data (Duncan and Duncan 1955; Taeuber and Taeuber 1965). These studies tended to confirm the notion that the notion of stable racial integration was very nearly an oxymoron.

The most refined theoretical formulation of this perspective was Schelling's "tipping point" model, which posited that the preferences of whites and blacks might be structured so that once a relatively small number of blacks moved into a neighborhood it was only a matter of time before all the whites moved out (Schelling 1978).

However, a more recent analysis by Ellen (2000) finds more evidence of stable racial integration than these previous treatments would predict and offers a subtler interpretation of the dynamics of neighborhood racial transition. Ellen's study argues that a process of "neighborhood racial stereotyping" is at work, meaning that potential incoming residents are put off not by diversity itself, but by the perception that rapid racial transition is underway. Potential residents, Ellen argues, fear deterioration in schools, public safety, property values, and other assets, all of which they associate with rapid change. Seen in this light, the critical variable is not the absolute percentages of racial groups, but the degree and rapidity of change in the preceding decade. Racial segregation is not explained by racial prejudice *per se*, but by a set of stereotypical beliefs about integrated neighborhoods.

Integration Maintenance Theory and Practice

Integration maintenance theory must be seen as both an intellectual product and a pragmatic political project, both a theory and a movement. As a theory, it offers a social scientific explanation of a particular aspect of human behavior. In its political incarnation, where it also became known as the "neighborhood stabilization movement" (Saltman 1990) or the quest for "managed integration" (Molotch), it amounts to an effort to manipulate some of the most intractable conditions of urban and suburban life.

The theory of integration maintenance acknowledges the foundational assumptions of succession theory, such as the prevalence of segregation, the reluctance of whites to move to or remain in integrating neighborhoods, and the deterioration of living conditions that has occurred in many such neighborhoods. But proponents of integration maintenance contend that there is an intervening variable in these situations that succession theory fails to consider. That variable is the actions of local institutions at the critical moment when the process of neighborhood change begins. Public and private institutions, they argue, typically act in ways that accelerate the pace of racial transition, but they have the option of doing things that prevent or at least slow the process. For advocates of integration maintenance policies, resegregation is not a natural process but instead the result of people's actions, and ultimately a self-fulfilling prophecy that does not need to come true.

In practice, the neighborhood stabilization movement began as "an offshoot of the general civil rights movement" (Saltman 1990:22). One important aspect of the 1960s struggle for civil rights was a body of federal and state fair housing law and many local community fair housing organizations that made it harder for whites to keep black residents out of their neighborhoods. This was an important victory over segregation, but often a temporary one. Once a community was opened up to minority entry through fair housing efforts, white flight was a distinct possibility. Too often, it seemed, the outcome of fair housing policies was creation of yet another all-minority neighborhood. Neighborhood stabilization advocates used integration maintenance theory to intervene in this process and continue the progress toward integration that was begun by fair housing

policies and activism. The fair housing movement aims at desegregating all-white communities, and the neighborhood stabilization movement focuses on preventing integrated communities from resegregating and becoming all-black communities.

As we describe more fully below, Oak Park's experience followed this pattern, in that its experience with the dynamics of racial transition began with a fair housing ordinance in 1968 that was aimed at opening up what at that time was a nearly all white community. The community's experiment with integration maintenance measures came later, beginning in 1972 with the founding of the Oak Park Housing Center.

OAK PARK'S STRUCTURE AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Oak Park is a small Chicago suburb (around 52,000 people living in 4.7 square miles), founded in the 1850s. [See **Figure One**]. The majority of its housing stock was built prior to World War II, which means its single family homes appeal mainly to people who wish to live in older expensive houses (the median house value is well over \$300,000). One of the most affluent of the Cook County suburbs with a highly educated population (median family income is over \$82,000 with around 50 percent of the population employed in managerial and professional jobs), it is located on Chicago's eastern border, just eight miles west of the Loop. However, because about half the housing units are in multi-family buildings, a substantial portion of the village's population is apartment residents who have lower incomes.

Fodor depicts Oak Park as "...a living museum of American architectural trends and philosophies. It has the world's largest collection of buildings from the Prairie School, an architectural style created by resident Frank Lloyd Wright..." In addition to Wright, a number of famous people were born or lived in the Village – novelist Ernest Hemingway, dancer Doris Humphrey, the founder of McDonalds, Ray Kroc and Pulitzer Prize novelist, Carol Shields. In the 1970s when Oak Park was beginning to "change," sociologist Carole Goodwin described it as "a well-established, affluent, white Anglo-Saxon Protestant community (that) remained remarkably durable despite some contrary demographic trends. What is important here is that the image of community held by Oak Parkers and promoted through the local media rested far more on such things as its expensive homes, architectural landmarks, quality stores, favorite sons, and a few affluent citizens than it did on any average measures or objective criteria of housing and population characteristics" (Goodwin 1979:34-35).

The Village of Oak Park (VOP), Oak Park Township (OPT), and an elementary school district (District 97) all share the same boundaries. The Village provides "hard" services, such as police, fire, public works, water and sewer, streets, code enforcement, and a Community Relations Department that is at the center of the integration maintenance policies. **RECENTLY THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS DEPARTMENT HAVE BEEN RE-ORGANIZED AND RENAMED COMMUNITY SERVICES. WE TAKE THE CHANGE TO BE SYMBOLICALLY IMPORTANT.. COMMUNITY RELATIONS ORGANIZATIONS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH THE**

ENFORCEMENT FOR FAIR HOUSING LAWS AND ATTEMPTS TO INTEGRATE A COMMUNITY. IN OAK PARK THAT WAS CERTAINLY THE PURPOSE OF THE DEPARTMENT. RECENTLY THERE HAS BEEN A MOVE AWAY FROM THESE GOALS AS CAN BE SEEN IN THE REMOVAL OF THE WORD “INTEGRATION” FROM THE VILLAGE’S DIVERSITY STATEMENT.

The Township provides “soft” services to seniors, youth, and people in need of mental health treatment.

A reform/progressive-style political organization, called the Village Manager Association (VMA), has been dominant in Oak Park politics since the 1950s, when Oak Park adopted the city manager form of government. The VMA selects candidates for village office through a series of meetings open to all Oak Park residents. During the 28-year period studied here, no VMA nominee for village president was defeated, and only four VMA nominees for village trustee lost.

Because Oak Park has relatively high taxes, controls its own services and its own elementary schools (as well as parks and libraries), and because of centralized political power in the VMA, it was and is possible for Oak Park to make relatively rapid and comprehensive changes in local public policy. Because of VMA dominance, it is possible for Oak Park to pursue a consistent policy course for as long as the VMA supports such a course. The integration maintenance policies discussed in this paper have consistently been supported by nearly all VMA candidates for the Village Board of Trustees.

These policies have changed over time, as discussed below. But as evidence that Oak Park’s policies in general have worked, supporters often point to the village’s population makeup, which has never exhibited the rapid turnover and dramatic neighborhood segregation seen in Austin and elsewhere. **[See Figure Two]** The black population of Oak Park grew gradually, from less than 1% in 1970, to 11 % in 1980, 19% in 1990, and 22% in 2000. Within the village, as late as 2000 there were no resegregated census tracts, with tracts ranging from 7% black to 36% black. **[See Figure Three]** (Chicago Fact Book Consortium 1995; U.S. Census 2000 P.L. 94-171 Summary File) And this was not because the pattern of rapid westward resegregation had run its course, because events in neighboring suburbs showed that segregation trends were still operating. Instead, the pattern in a sense leaped over Oak Park to other suburbs farther west, including Bellwood and Maywood, which resegregated in a relatively short time. **[See Figure Four]**

One of the most salient facts about Oak Park’s objective situation is its proximity to Chicago. Oak Park’s eastern border stretches for four miles along the western Chicago city limit, so that the village is literally across the street from the Chicago West Side neighborhood of Austin. Austin was a white, middle class, Irish and Jewish bastion until the 1960s, when the westward expansion of Chicago’s highly segregated black population spread to parts of Austin. This extension of the west side ghetto had begun decades earlier but accelerated rapidly in the years following World War Two. (Spears)

Existing Austin residents resisted the influx for some time, but that resistance collapsed and massive white flight ensued. Austin was virtually all-white in 1960 but by 1970 it was about one-third black, and at this point it was apparent to that Austin was facing rapid racial transition, a realization which accelerated the pace of change. The 1970s witnessed classic block-by-block resegregation in Austin, an event that had enormous psychological impact on Oak Parkers (Goodwin 1970). By 1980, Austin was three-fourths black, and from Oak Park's perspective, across the street lay a newly created ghetto. Austin as a whole was nearly 90% black in 1990, over 90% black in 2000, and the tracts that lay on Oak Park's eastern edge were as high as 99% black. (United States Census, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000) Austin became a negative example for many Oak Parkers, who were determined to chart a different course. Oak Park, they said, would welcome black residents rather than resist them, and Oak Park would avoid resegregation by remaining attractive to existing and potential white residents.

Other demographic shifts have changed the policy climate in Oak Park. Between 1968 and 2000, the community made a decided ideological shift from being a moderate Republican stronghold to being solidly on the political left. [See **Figure Five**] In 1968, Oak Park's preferred presidential candidate was Richard Nixon, who received 61% of the vote, with Hubert Humphrey polling only 33% and segregationist George Wallace receiving about 6%. But by 1992, and again in 1996, the Republican candidate received only about 25% of the presidential vote. In the 2000 election, Al Gore outpolled George W. Bush by 72% to 23%, with Ralph Nader receiving 4% of the vote. Bush did not receive a majority in any of Oak Park's 70 precincts. (Oak Park Village Clerk 2000) With Republicans making up less than one-quarter of the voters in Oak Park, the realistic policy options on any issue are limited to those considered acceptable to the left. Chicago Tribune columnist John Kass routinely refers to the village as "the People's Republic of Oak Park." This reputation is manifested in the high degree of volunteerism, the large number of citizen advisory commissions and the tendency to organize temporary groups to lobby for or against almost any public issue. The local newspapers are filled with public debate about matters perceived to effect the quality of life in this community.

In addition, the rapid growth of the gay and lesbian population in Oak Park in the 1990s has reconfigured the community's grass roots and brought a new set of policy issues to the fore. While no reliable figures are available to quantify this demographic change, in the year 2000 the website PlanetOut identified Oak Park as one of the leading "gay-friendly" communities in America, and the village was known in the Chicago area and nationally for its generally accepting attitude toward gays and lesbians. The Oak Park Area Lesbian and Gay Organization (OPALGA), which was formed in 1989, is widely regarded as one of the most influential grass roots organization in the community. However, issues pertaining to gays and lesbians continue to generate controversy in the press as seen in a prolonged discussion in the local papers about the funding of the Boy Scouts.

Two more demographic changes appeared in the 1990s in the housing market of the village. One was a wave of condominium conversions which reduced the available rental

stock from almost half the housing units in the village to just over one-third. The second was a rapid escalation in property values affecting both rental housing and, most significantly, single family homes. The village has two Chicago Transit Authority elevated train lines and an expressway running through it, an attractive and architecturally diverse housing stock, a growing upscale commercial district, and other amenities. Increased demand for single family homes and apartments (and a wave of condominium conversions that reduced the supply of rental units) contributed to a steady rise of property values. One survey showed that in a single year the median purchase price of housing in Oak Park rose from \$165,000 to \$218,000. (Chicago Tribune 2001) These increased property values threatened to gentrify or, some would say, “yuppify” the community, reducing the village’s supply of housing for those of low income and even making the housing too expensive for the university professors, community activists, and others not motivated primarily by economic gain who had been moving to Oak Park for the preceding quarter century.

REFLEXIVE INTERLUDE

This article is the first attempt to publish the findings from two long term research projects. McKenzie presented a preliminary version of this article at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association Chicago, Illinois, April 25-28, 2002. Ruby wrote a preliminary version and circulated it on his web site – <http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/opp/> in May, 2001.

McKenzie’s research on Oak Park began in 1996 as a study of an innovative and successful youth gang intervention program coordinated by the Oak Park Township Youth Services Department. As that project progressed, it became clear to McKenzie that both the gang problem and the unusual intervention program were in some sense outgrowths of the community’s diversity, and could not be understood, much less replicated elsewhere, without grasping that broader context. Consequently, the gang project began to grow into a full-scale study of Oak Park’s thirty five year experiment in diversity and integration. McKenzie is a specialist in urban politics and policy, and his study focuses on the use of the community’s institutions to pursue diversity and integration in changing social, political, and economic conditions. He is studying how policies in the areas of housing, crime and delinquency, schools, and municipal finance have been used to promote diversity and integration, and how the community’s politics influence and are shaped by those policies. McKenzie has lived in Oak Park since 1995, in the southeast part of the Village near the Chicago border. His three children are enrolled in Oak Park public schools. He has participated as an activist at times in some local matters pertaining to crime and delinquency, schools, and housing. He served on the Township Youth Services Committee for six years including three years as committee chair, and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Oak Park Regional Housing Center. He has spoken at many community events in Oak Park and written opinion articles

for an Oak Park newspaper on local issues. This participant-observer role has been difficult to manage at times, but it has enriched and deepened McKenzie's perspective.

In 1999 Ruby began a long term ethnographic research project designed to explore the social costs of maintaining diversity in Oak Park. Ruby will produce a series of multimedia "works" that examines the impact of "the Oak Park Strategy" on the lives of three families; a white family who has lived in the village for several generations, a lesbian couple with children, and a recently arrived middle-class black family. In addition, another "work" will focus on the Oak Park Regional Housing Center as an essential part of the complex of the village's experiment in managed integration. Ruby maintains a web site where his research is discussed in some detail – <http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/opp>. In addition, Ruby's work explores the benefits and limitations of "autoethnography" as he was born and raised in Oak Park. While he is a native in the sense that he was born in the village, he has not lived there for almost 50 years. Like many teenagers raised in a suburb, Ruby left with negative feelings about the WASPish conservative nature of the community only to discover its transformation into an interesting liberal haven. This newly acquired admiration of Ruby's hometown was a partial motivation for his research.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: FAIR HOUSING IN OAK PARK

Two incidents set the stage for Oak Park's formal response to the civil rights movement and the development of its integration policies. In 1950 an African-American research chemist, Percy Julian, purchased a home in north Oak Park. Julian's family had been living in Maywood and were already members of the First Congregationalist Church in Oak Park. In late November 1950, prior to the Julians moving in, someone firebombed their house. It was attempted a second time the following year. While some Oak Parkers were morally outraged and wrote letters to the local newspaper, the effort to make the Julians feel welcome was not community-wide. The family persevered and eventually Julian became known as one of Oak Park's most illustrious citizens, with a middle school named after him. The arsonists were never caught but the embarrassment of this public prejudice had a profound impact on many Oak Parkers. It made some realize that the world around them was changing. This was, by and large, a personal, moral and religious response to a particular situation. Few Oak Parkers involved in civil rights had political motivations or were interested in exploring the more profound societal issues that could be seen as causal.

A few years later some Oak Parkers began to meet to discuss how they could respond to and correct the segregation that had characterized the Village since its inception (Virginia Cassin and Lee Brooke, personal communication, 2001). In an informal manner they started to see if they could locate blacks living in Chicago who wanted to move to Oak Park and then, in turn, find homes for them to purchase or apartments to rent. The attempt to deliberately and constructively integrate Oak Park began. A decade after the Julian bombing, another manifestation of racism became the precipitant for an organized civil rights movement. In February, 1963, Carol Anderson, a black violinist, was fired by Marie Palmer, the chairman of the board of the Oak Park Symphony, when Anderson

appeared for her first rehearsal. According to a statement Palmer made to the Chicago Daily News - "Nothing is integrated in Oak Park as yet." The conductor, Milton Preves, and 25 of the 83 musicians resigned. Leading Oak Parkers wrote letters of outrage to Chicago and Oak Park newspapers. On February 10, 1963, one letter of protest was signed by 32 residents. The Village board adopted a "statement of concern."

In less than a year (April 16, 1964), a full-page ad appeared signed by over 1000 Oak Parkers declaring "The Right of all people to live where they choose." First Congregational, First Presbyterian and St. Edmunds took the lead in creating social-action committees. By the summer the Oak Park River Forest Citizens Committee for Human Rights was formed. It is interesting that, at this time, only twenty-five black families lived in Oak Park and none in River Forest. There was no immediate threat of resegregation. Even North Austin was still predominately white.

The mission of the committee was to lobby for a local fair housing ordinance and to pressure realtors to show houses to anyone qualified regardless of the color of their skin. They employed the tactics of regular protest marches, demonstrations in front of realtors' offices and "testing." The group consisted of a variety of people - some were progressive Catholics and Protestants, a few political radicals and still others were simply people who viewed residential segregation as morally wrong. Eventually they were joined by people who had a self-interest in keeping the property values up. They viewed the potential resegregation of Oak Park as possibly destroying the economic value of their greatest investment - their home.

The story of the success of this committee to get Oak Park to pass a Fair Housing Ordinance before the passage of a national one and the creation of a Community Relations department to enforce the ordinance and their success in "convincing" realtors to show properties to all qualified buyers regardless of their ethnicity has been told in detail by several people - Lee Brooke (1996), Carole Goodwin (1979) and Roberta Raymond (1972). By the early 1970s, the committee was sufficiently convinced of its success to disband, but only after it had helped to found the Oak Park Housing Center on May 1, 1972 to deal with the serious problem of the resegregating apartment buildings.

OAK PARK'S INTEGRATION MAINTENANCE POLICIES

After taking this high-minded stance in support of fair housing in the 1960s, Oak Park encountered a different set of concerns in the 1970s. By the early 1970s, the resegregation of Austin was well under way, and the black population of Oak Park began to increase rapidly. A number of whites left Oak Park, and many people in the village became genuinely concerned that Oak Park would follow the path of Austin.

In response to the threat of resegregation, Oak Park developed, a complex of ordinances, practices, departments, programs as well as private non-profit agencies designed to maintain a particular vision of diversity in which different ethnic groups are dispersed

throughout the community (see Appendix 1 for a timeline of events). In doing so they distinguished themselves from other "integrated" communities like Evanston, IL, or Shaker Heights, Ohio, where the black population is more concentrated in one area. While there is a general effort to welcome all ethnicities, sexual orientations, people of varying economic statuses and religions as well those with handicaps, the major concern has been the ability of whites and Blacks to live together. Some Oak Parkers have criticized this emphasis on black/white relations and suggest that the community is so diverse today with dozens of different ethnic groups represented that to only discuss black/white issues is out of touch with contemporary realities. The national picture suggests it is an emphasis required by the world we live in. In their seminal book, American Apartheid, Massey and Denton argue that "...black segregation is not comparable to the limited and transient segregation experienced by other racial and ethnic groups, now or in the past. No group in the history of the United States has ever experienced the sustained high level of residential segregation that has been imposed on blacks in large American cities for the past fifty years" (1993:2).

The goal, as defined by the Village government, has been for Oak Park to strive to have a population that comes close to reflecting the general population of the greater Chicago area in terms of the number of black and white citizens. Moreover, the intention was to strive to have the Village geographically diverse, that is, to avoid creating neighborhoods that are predominately or exclusively one ethnic group. As of the 2000 census 81 percent of the blocks in Oak Park have at least one black family. It is an achievement that few communities have realized. It has been an expensive and a complicated decision. The position we take in this paper is that the entire "program" has become so complicated that few Oak Parkers fully understand it. Consequently it is very difficult to have an informed opinion. As some of these policies and programs are approaching 30 years of practice, a thorough re-examination of them seems in order but is hampered by their interlocking complexity. The result is that some criticism seems based upon a less than adequate knowledge of the situation and is in actuality, an ideological position that does not require specific knowledge of any program. Some people are opposed to all forms of managed integration. We hope to partially unpack the complex package to better understand how Oak Park tries to maintain its policies of integration and diversity. One conclusion we draw is that there is a profound irony to be observed. As Oak Park succeeds in these efforts, the truly difficult questions about how black and white Americans can live together emerge. The more they succeed, the more problems surface.

OVERVIEW OF THE OAK PARK STRATEGY

The most celebrated aspects of Oak Park's integration maintenance policies are those dealing with single family housing, most notably the Equity Assurance Program that insures against loss in property values, and the ban on "for sale" signs. However, these programs, while highly visible and probably important in reducing white flight in the 1970s, are less significant now in maintaining integration in Oak Park than the conventional wisdom would allow. For example, there has never been a claim made under the Equity Assurance Program, and the ban on signs is undoubtedly

unconstitutional but has never been challenged in court by realtors. These policies are not controversial because they are race-neutral.

The most significant policies, and by far the more controversial and least well understood, are the race-conscious policies focusing on managing the racial makeup of individual apartment buildings. Apartment buildings are more susceptible to rapid racial transition than single family homes, and Oak Park's policy makers have always considered apartment resegregation to be the major threat to the Village's diversity. In the 1970s, before condominium conversion became an issue, half the housing units in the Village were in apartments and it was understood that if the apartments resegregated the single family housing would not be far behind. Oak Park's policies are designed to combat this threat while remaining within the bounds of the law and political acceptability.

The apartment-related policies are ultimately run by the Village of Oak Park, but this fact is not well understood in the community, because the Village works through a complex set of relationships involving two government agencies, two non-profit corporations, and several citizens' advisory boards. **[See Figure Six]** The partnership between governmental and non-governmental agencies has both a legal and a political function. It allows for greater use of race-conscious measures than if the government acted alone. The actions of the Village are governed by the strict standards of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which subjects race-based classifications to strict scrutiny. But the non-profits are regulated under the looser statutory standards of the Fair Housing Act. The complex partnership arrangement also allows the Village to avoid taking full political responsibility for the policies.

The Village of Oak Park coordinates the overall strategy through its governing body, the Village Board of Trustees, which maintains a Housing Policy Advisory Committee (HPAC) that links the various organizations together. The overall effect of the policy network is to induce apartment owners in areas most susceptible to resegregation to get their tenants from the Oak Park Regional Housing Center (OPRHC), which engages in race-conscious "affirmative marketing," rather than through the unregulated market for rental housing.

The Village acquires information on the racial makeup of apartment buildings from each building owner as a condition of issuing an annual business license. The information is kept a closely guarded secret. The Village's Community Services Division uses this information to determine which city blocks are to be considered "counseling locations," i.e., places with predominantly black apartment buildings, especially along Austin Boulevard at the border between Chicago and Oak Park.

The Village's building code enforcement officers require high levels of building maintenance and are quick to cite owners who are suspected of reducing maintenance levels and catering to a low-income black tenant pool. Code enforcement, by forcing owners to make expensive building repairs on aging apartment buildings, often provides

a financial incentive for owners to join the Village’s Diversity Assurance Program (DAP). While there have been variations over time in the intensity of this form of control, in general it has been higher than in Austin or other nearby communities.

DAP offers low-interest loans and other financial benefits to building owners which enables them to upgrade building systems, and asks only that the owner agree to receive tenants from the Oak Park Regional Housing Center for a five year period. The Housing Center is committed to “affirmative marketing,” which means that it will refer white clients to predominantly black areas and black clients to predominantly white areas. The Village has a contract with the Housing Center to act as the marketing agent for all DAP units. DAP also pays the owner rent for leaving apartments empty until a tenant of the proper race can be found—i.e., a white tenant for a predominantly black building, or a black tenant for one that is predominantly white.

The other government agency involved in this network is the Oak Park Housing Authority, which administers the Section 8 voucher program for the community. The Housing Authority has a close relationship with another agency called the Oak Park Residence Corporation (Rescorp). The two organizations have at least some overlapping membership on their respective boards of directors, have the same executive director, and share the same office space. Their coordinated activities allow a substantial number of Section 8 tenants (currently 425 families) to live in the village, but prevent them from becoming concentrated in a small number of buildings or a single neighborhood.

Rescorp purchases, rehabilitates, owns, and manages apartment buildings that are in danger of becoming resegregated slums. All its units are listed with the Housing Center. The Housing Authority refers all its Section 8 clients to Rescorp. These tenants are free to take their vouchers to any landlord, but the Housing Center encourages them to consider Rescorp buildings, which are physically attractive and professionally managed, and also racially and economically diverse. They constitute, for all practical purposes, Oak Park’s own stock of quasi-public housing.

The net effects of all these relationships among the four key agencies are to maintain a high quality of apartment housing, and to funnel a substantial number of prospective tenants through the Housing Center instead of the unregulated market, thereby promoting racial integration in apartment housing stock.

THE POLICIES AND AGENCIES IN DETAIL

This section offers a more detailed picture of the policies and agencies described briefly above.

The policies used in Oak Park to maintain integration consist of two kinds of interventions in the workings of the housing market. First is a commitment to preventing discrimination in the sale and rental of housing. Oak Park has had its own fair housing ordinance since 1968. But the village goes far beyond opposing discrimination. Village government is also the center of a policy web that exerts direct and indirect control over the demographic composition of Oak Park’s neighborhoods and even individual

apartment buildings. It is these latter interventions that constitute the core of the integration maintenance policy apparatus.

The Diversity Statement

Oak Park's unusual policies are grounded in a "Diversity Statement" that was first adopted by the Village Board of Trustees 1973 and was ratified in nearly identical form by every subsequent village board of trustees until 1999, when it was completely rewritten (see Appendix 2 for text of both statements). The statement affirms the Village's commitment to diversity, and it underlies the policies described in this paper. It is important to note that the term "integration" has been removed from the latest statement and replaced by the term "diversity." As we noted above a community can be diverse and still segregated. Some suggest the change in terms is symbolic of a change in the village board's attitude.

Integrating the Single Family Housing Market

It has been our observation that today the single family housing market in Oak Park is driven by the marketplace and little else. That is, if you have the funds and other qualifications, you can purchase a home in Oak Park regardless of who you are. Oak Park realtors are compliant with the spirit and the letter of the Fair Housing laws. From 1980 to 1990, home ownership among black Oak Parkers increased by 120 percent.

From the earliest days of the civil rights movement, many of the blacks seeking to purchase homes were solidly middle-class with a secure financial history. In short, they shared many of the same values as native white Oak Parkers. They were seeking a place with good schools, safety, and all the comforts associated with suburban living. Once Oak Parkers got over their "racial" preconceptions, they discovered that their new home-owning neighbors were a lot like them.

Since the early days of the Committee on Human Rights, Oak Park has continued to create a complex of innovative programs to insure the housing market will remain open to all and especially attractive to minorities. While these various incentives have taken over twenty years to evolve, they form a package unique in the U.S.

Among the earliest attempts to stop the tactics of realtors who profited from Chicago's rapid resegregation was a ban on for-sale signs which makes it hard to tell when people are selling their homes and moving out of the community. This is intended to prevent waves of panic selling done in a rush not to be the last ones out before property values collapse, something that happened in Austin and other Chicago neighborhoods. This ban is clearly unconstitutional under the United States Supreme Court ruling in *Linmark Associates, Inc., v. Willingboro Twp.*, 431 US 85 (1977), which declared a similar ordinance with the same purpose to be in violation of the First Amendment. However, the ban has never been challenged by Oak Park realtors which is some indication of the level of cooperation between the village and realtors. In addition, the village has an anti-

solicitation ordinance. Home owners who do not wish to be contacted by realtors may register with the village. In communities experiencing rapid resegregation, realtors would hound home owners with mailings, phone calls and personal visits in the hope that they could be sufficiently panicked to sell their home below market value.

In 1973, a group of concerned women formed themselves into "First Tuesday." They met to discuss how they could aid in the Village's efforts to integrate, as they are aware of the widely held assumption that property values decline when blacks move into a predominately white community. Their solution to this anxiety was ingenious. After some study, they convinced the Village to create an "Equity Assurance Program" - an insurance arrangement whereby the home investment would be protected should the market value drop below the original purchase price - a way of preventing white flight that was based upon fear of having the value of your house decline because of integration.

The plan operates as follows: a homeowner enrolls in the program, paying a onetime fee for the appraisal of the home (currently \$90). The appraisal is performed by one of a panel of appraisers approved by the Equity Assurance Commission using an appraisal report form devised by the Commission. The appraiser is to determine the current "market value" of the home with neighborhood conditions, zoning and all other factors operating that are routinely included in an appraiser's report.

Since neighborhood stability is the goal, there is a five-year waiting period before the insurance option can be activated. Any person participating in the program may sell his/her home in less than five years from enrollment. However, should the home sell at less than the original appraised valuation, the loss would not be covered.

At any time after the five-year waiting period, if the highest offer for purchase is less than the initial appraised valuation, the Commission will have the home reappraised to determine if the apparent loss in value is attributed to the homeowner's neglect to perform routine maintenance on the home. If the home is essentially the same or better, the member would be reimbursed 80 percent of the difference between the current sale price and the original appraised valuation determined at the time of entry into the program. Should it appear the decline in value is attributable to the homeowner's failure to adequately maintain the property, the amount of coverage would be reduced proportionately, corresponding to the decline in value.

"The Equity Assurance Program, the first in the nation, began in September, 1978. For four months 99 households enrolled out of a total of 158 who ever enrolled. Then interest waned and few people enrolled. No claims have been made and only 10 renewals made - 9 once and 1 household twice. 78 of the 158 still live in Oak Park as of 1999. Most of the 158 were households living on all white blocks. Most reported that there was no or only a small increase (less than 10 percent) in black residents. Those who did not renew did so because of an increase in the value of their house. 67 percent think the program should continue." (From an undated (1999) and unauthored fact sheet from the Village.)

In addition to striving to maintain the resale value of houses, Oak Park has two related problems: the housing stock is old and in constant need of costly maintenance; and developers place constant pressure on the community to change its appearance to a more contemporary suburban "look" causing Oak Park to lose its unique character and to become another suburb that looks like every other suburb. Both forces, if not controlled, could cause the community to become unstable and vulnerable to disinvestment and then ultimately resegregation. The Village has dealt with these problems directly and indirectly.

Oak Park is the home of a number of internationally renown buildings in addition to the well-known home and studio of Frank Lloyd Wright. This is the birthplace of Prairie style architecture as well as a place with many impressive Victorians, Chicago- and California-style bungalows as well as more modest but equally important foursquare homes. Realizing the historical importance of these houses, Oak Park applied to the federal government for Historic District status for a large part of the Village. The Frank Lloyd Wright and Ridgeland/Lake districts are a source of community pride and tourist dollars. A third application for the Gunderson homes in South Oak Park is in process. The citizens' Historic Preservation Commission has the right to examine all building permits and prevent the demolition of buildings within the districts (Oak Park has 25 citizens' advisory commissions that offer organized and regular advice to the Village board). While the commission does not have the power to turn down a building permit, they can invoke "peer pressure" to see that the owners maintain the historical integrity of the exterior of their homes. Many of the houses in the districts are expensive and are likely to be purchased by people with a strong sense of their significance and a desire to maintain them. All this strengthens the reputation of the Village as a good place to live and attracts community-minded people. It also ensures that the traditional "look" of the Village is preserved. If one assumes that there are cultural and class differences in housing preferences then preserving the look of a place also aids in a kind of pre-selection about who is likely to want to buy a home in Oak Park. It is an indirect way of preserving Oak Park's traditional lifestyle and pre-selecting its new citizens.

Oak Park has thus far escaped the massive alteration that has plagued other older suburbs in which single-family houses were acquired, torn down and replaced by multi-family town houses or condos and entire blocks leveled to make way for mini-strip malls. In addition, some of the recent multifamily buildings attempt to emulate a "Prairie style" and thus fit into the "look" of the village. At the writing of this article, there are numerous examples of plans for such changes but so far the community has been able to resist a transformation into the look of "just another suburb" and retain its somewhat unique character. How long it can continue is unclear and what impact it might have on who lives in Oak Park is uncertain.

The Village also created a series of Single-Family Rehabilitation Loans designed to assist owners in making essential repairs and restoring houses that were deteriorating. Some are for low-income owners. Payments for some loans can be deferred until the house is sold. This program has two intentions: to encourage owners to maintain their investment; and

to give support to the more marginally income owner. The latter is one of several attempts by the Village to encourage economic and ethnic diversity.

Finally, there is a series of programs designed to assist first-time buyers with a marginal income. These programs are designed to implicitly encourage minorities. The Assist Program provides down payment assistance for first-time home owners. The maximum house price is around \$150,000 and income limits are \$64,000 for one or two family members and \$74,000 for three or more. It is a conventional fixed-rate mortgage of a full 4.25 percent gift back to use for down payment and closing costs. There is the Mortgage Credit Certificate for middle-income first-time buyers - with the same limits as Assist. You get an annual \$2000 federal tax credit for the life of the mortgage. Looked at together, these programs offer incentives for new owners to move into condos or small homes and for owners of older homes to keep them up.

In recent years there has been a move to convert apartment buildings into condominiums thus reducing the number of apartments from 50 percent of the market to less than 37 percent. In 2000, the Village staff listed 182 Condo buildings containing 2,958 units - an increase of 25 per cent since 1990. In 1990 about 26 percent of condo units were occupied by renters. A recent survey covering about one-third of the condos reported that 22 percent were occupied by Oak Parkers who are black. This movement to condo conversions has caused the larger apartments - 3 or more bedrooms - to disappear. As the move toward condoization continues the ability of large families to rent in Oak Park diminishes and thus inhibits the ability of some Hispanic and black families who tend to be larger than those from other ethnic groups to move to Oak Park. Because the average price of a condo is \$150,000, they are attractive to more modestly income families and have become the primary focus of the loan programs discussed above. Because condos are outside the scrutiny of the Community Relations division, it is possible for a condo building to resegregate or to become rental units unregulated by the Village. It is a growing concern of those Oak Parkers interested in maintaining integration in their Village.

Given the skyrocketing housing market in Oak Park - property values increased on the average of 25+ percent in 2000 - people desiring to own a home or condo in Oak Park have to display a financial stability that means that they are solidly middle class regardless of their ethnicity. Moreover, given the age of the housing stock and the lifestyle characteristics of Village life, a "natural" self-selection occurs that virtually guarantees the newcomers to be compatible to the sensibility that has dominated Oak Park for a long time. Apartments and the people they attract is another situation, one that requires a much different solution.

Maintaining Diversity within the Apartment Corridors in Oak Park

Apartments are the Achilles' heel of Oak Park's determination to be an integrated place. At one time they constituted 50 per cent of the housing market. According to the 2000 Village Survey, there are 476 apartment buildings (with four or more units) that contain

8,825 units (apartments). In addition, there are 938 two-flats (or 1876 units) and 114 three-flats (or 342 units) with a potential of 11,043 possible rentable units. Because some apartments are owner occupied that is a high figure. Even with the movement to convert buildings to condos, apartments still are 37 per cent of the housing market. Rentals are to be found in a variety of buildings. Two-flats and four-flats, often owner occupied, are outside the scrutiny of Community Relations. Owners are not required to provide information about the racial make-up of their buildings the way the owners of larger buildings are. Then there are the larger buildings. The so-called "vintage" apartments were built prior to 1920, often courtyard in design. They tend to be large - a one bedroom will have a full-sized dining room and sometimes a sun room with hardwood floors, sometimes with architectural features such as built-in bookcases but lack central air-conditioning. While the Village was initially resistant to the building of any multi-family units, these buildings, from an aesthetic point of view, now fit into the "look" of the Village, that is, a place with some age to it. They tend to appeal to the same sort of people who would like the older housing stock in Oak Park. In addition there are the so-called "modern" apartments built in the 1950s and 1960s. There are no apartment buildings built more recently. Contemporary commercial residential construction is devoted exclusively to townhouses and condos. There is more profit in them. Modern apartment units are smaller than the ones in vintage buildings but have wall-to-wall carpeting and central air conditioning and appeal to those renters who like creature comforts that newer places offer.

As stated, above the majority of the apartment buildings are concentrated in the eastern half of the Village with a high concentration along Austin Blvd. - the border between the all-black community of Austin and Oak Park. Many of the apartments were in the process of resegregating when the Village started to intervene in a systematic way. The first response was to create a private non-profit organization, the Oak Park Housing Center, that would induce white demand for the Austin Blvd apartments as well as other buildings located east of Ridgeland Ave and to encourage blacks to move to buildings in the western half of the Village. The Open Housing Committee first asked the Village to take on this task but were told that the Village would support their efforts if the Committee created its own organization. By the early 1970s many blacks living in Chicago knew Oak Park was a welcoming community and did not need to be encouraged to look for a place there. Whites, on the other hand, were leaving Oak Park because of their fear of living in an integrated place.

In addition, the Village needed to enlist the aid of the building owners to accept a variety of tenants and, most important, to maintain their buildings. Given the limited prospects in Chicago, blacks would often move into sub-standard buildings simply because of lack of choice. Whites, on the other hand, had more places to choose from and therefore would only accept an apartment that was in excellent condition. If Oak Park was going to maintain white demand in the apartments, they could not tolerate "slum landlords" who neglected their buildings, collected rents for as long as possible and then abandoned their property.

We will now examine how the Village induced building owners to comply and then look at how the units were affirmatively marketed. The earliest attempts to enlist the aid of owners in the Village's integration efforts were relatively simple. The Village employed inspectors to examine buildings on a regular basis for code violations. Those found in violation were fined and pressure was put upon the owners to repair the problems. Next, annually renewed business licenses were required for all multi-family buildings. Part of the requirement for renewal was for the owners to list the "racial" makeup of each tenant, thus providing the Community Relations department with some indication about which buildings were in danger of resegregating. The Community Relations Director uses the business license data to identify what are called "counseling locations," which means blocks where the racial composition is becoming unrepresentative of the community as a whole. The precise way this is done remains a secret. The data are also used to identify particular buildings that are becoming monoracial. While the data is only as good as the honesty of the owner, in the early days, it did provide a good indication that more aggressive actions were necessary. In 1973 the Village began to require written leases as a protection for the tenants.

The Village's Code Enforcement Program is extremely rigorous where apartments are concerned. The Village forces landlords to maintain high property maintenance standards. This prevents the creation of slums and also induces landlords to enter the Diversity Assurance Program (see below) to obtain low-interest loans needed to complete building improvements mandated by Code Enforcement. Some critics of code enforcement suggest that inspections are less frequent, not very thorough, and violations are increasingly tolerated. While this criticism is widely held, it is impossible to confirm or deny the complaints.

In 1984 a complex of measures was instituted, Diversity Assurance Programs (DAP), to induce private owners to maintain their property and affirmatively market their vacancies. The concept was sufficiently innovative that the New York Times ran a front section article about the program on November 11, 1984.

The Village offers Security Improvement Grants for buildings with two or more units. They are intended to prevent crime and make tenants feel secure. There are two plans: one in which the Village pays 20 percent of the cost and a second in which the Village police evaluate the security of the building and make specific recommendations. If followed, the Village pays 40 percent of the cost up to a specified amount. Making buildings more secure reduces crime and, in the long run, saves the Village money and certainly increases the desirability of the apartments among potential tenants. Security concerns are especially high along Austin Boulevard.

The Village runs a voluntary Building Evaluation Program in which the Community relations Department will pay half the cost for a professional architect or engineer to inspect the building and evaluate its condition. Any code violations discovered are not turned in. The program is designed to encourage owners to seek the means to correct the problems. Should the owners decide not to correct the violations, the next cycle of code inspections could result in a fine.

Building Improvement grants and loans or Incentives Program for multiple unit dwellings (4 or more units). Designed to encourage the rehabilitation of older buildings, the Village offers matching grants and low-interest loans up to a specified per-unit figure. The owner agrees to a five-year marketing services contract that allows the Oak Park Regional Housing Center to affirmatively market the buildings being remodeled with DAP funds. Originally the agreement was for the Housing Center to market all the owners' buildings, but one of the larger property owners was able to convince the Village to reduce it to only the buildings being rehabilitated. As this reduces the number of units that are affirmatively marketed, some people involved with the Housing Center are striving to change the regulation back to its original form. It is one of a number of conflicts between the Housing Center and some apartment owners.

Buildings in this program receive some of their potential tenants from the Oak Park Regional Housing Center (see below), which is the designated marketing agent for the program and which is dedicated to “affirmative marketing”—i.e., preventing resegregation. The owners can also market the units on their own. The Housing Center will escort white tenants to see units in these buildings if they are designated as an “Option “A” – that is, in need of affirmative marketing, and in some cases the village will pay 80% of the rent for a limited time while the unit is kept open until the OPRHC can find a white tenant.

In 1995 DAP was evaluated by the Housing sub-Committee of the Village board. The results seem to indicate that the intended result was realized. At the time of the study, 66 buildings were in the program with another 31 buildings with expired contracts for a total of 1824 housing units. There was an increase in diversity in 83 percent of the DAP buildings. In addition, Trustee Kuner, as chair of the Housing Committee of the Village board of trustees, examined the reported racial makeup of apartment buildings in Oak Park (four units or larger) and determined that those buildings owned by the Oak Park Residence Corporation or currently in the Village's DAP program are more diverse than the privately owned apartment buildings not currently in any DAP program. These "non-DAP" buildings tended to have larger concentrations of black tenants than the other buildings (Jim Shannon, private communication, January 18, 2001).

Not all owners get involved in DAP because they are critical of its operation. Cynthia Breunlin, the Village staff person in charge of DAP, prepared a memo on July 17, 2000, for the Housing Subcommittee of the Commitment to Diversity Task Force, articulating reasons owners do not participate. Some felt that the amount of paperwork and the requirement to disclose personal financial data was intrusive and unnecessary especially when banks offer loans at similar rates. Others thought that the Housing Center could not handle all of their vacancies and would cause the owners to have unacceptable vacancy rates. Finally, there was the feeling that the owners could keep their buildings diverse without using the Housing Center. Several owners in BOMA (Building Owners and Managers Association) who have large numbers of units, share these feelings about DAP and the Housing Center.

Between the Rescorp units and buildings involved in DAP, there are about 2500 apartments or approximately 22 percent of the total rental market in Oak Park affirmatively marketed by the Housing Center. In addition to these units, there are those landlords who voluntarily ask the Housing Center to market their vacancies. These tend to be the owners of smaller buildings - 6 flats or less. A generous estimate is that about 40 percent of the rental units are affirmatively marketed. If diversity is maintained in the other buildings it is accomplished privately by the owners outside the scrutiny of the Village who are restricted by anti-discrimination laws that prohibit landlords from refusing to rent to qualified tenants. In other words, if an owner was approached by a large number of qualified blacks who wanted to rent apartments, the owner would be obligated to do so and thus would be in danger of having those buildings resegregate. Voluntary compliance of a policy of managed integration seems unlikely to work and the staff of the Housing Center doubts the figures provided by these apartment owners as to the diversity of their buildings. In the past resident managers and owners were encouraged to send potential tenants to the Community Relations department for counseling if it was believed that the move into a building would be detrimental to the desired racial makeup of the building. In recent years, the type of counseling is less frequently employed.

PROFILES OF THE AGENCIES INVOLVED IN THE INTEGRATION MAINTENANCE STRATEGY

The agencies that work with the Village to make up the integration maintenance infrastructure work to some extent in cooperation with each other, under the overall guidance of the village board of trustees, through the Housing Policies Advisory Committee. Each has its own institutional history and independent identity, but over time all were drawn into Oak Park's pragmatic and evolving community purpose of maintaining diversity.

The Oak Park Residence Corporation

The Oak Park Residence Corporation, or Rescorp, is a nonprofit corporation formed in 1966 to find ways to deal with blighted single-family units. They worked in conjunction with the Village board and the Illinois State Housing Board. By 1973 Rescorp began to purchase and rehabilitate poorly maintained apartment buildings. Over an almost thirty-year period, Rescorp has evolved into one of the largest landlords in Oak Park. Since it came into existence, Rescorp has purchased 23 apartment buildings, some of which have been rehabilitated and resold into the private market. However, Rescorp still owns 15 of these buildings with a total of 388 rental units, over half of which are rented to low or moderate income tenants, and manages another 151 units.

Designed to serve as a model for other landlords, the Rescorp placed resident managers in each building - non-professionals who receive a reduction in their rent in exchange for some minor service and maintenance and to serve as a liaison between tenants and the Rescorp. Resident managers also attempt to create a community spirit among the tenants

with building newsletters, barbeques and other social events. The hope is that the tenants will feel more engaged in community life as a result. Given an average turnover rate of 38 percent, these efforts are particularly difficult. Since about 70 percent of blacks living in Oak Park are renters, engaging apartment dwellers is especially important. Some privately owned buildings also have resident managers. Some resident managers were or are employees of the Housing Center and thus fully conversant with the social agenda of the Village. RESCORP also serves as a sort of de facto public housing stock for Oak Park, accepting Section 8 vouchers in numbers that Oak Park's private sector landlords would not. The Oak Park Regional Housing Center is the marketing agent for these units, all of which are designated by the village as "counseling locations," (white demand needed), and all of which are authorized for escort service.

The funds Rescorp uses to purchase these building and rehabilitate them come from a variety of sources, including Community Development Block Grants, a Housing Bond Loan program established by the village, and market rate borrowing. Rescorp has come under criticism recently for not selling its buildings back into the private market as its CDBG funding requires, and instead, some have alleged, holding onto them and managing them permanently. Rescorp advocates argue that the organization is an important contributor to maintaining economic diversity in the community, as well as safeguarding against run-down buildings. Some feel that if buildings are sold, they will be converted to condominiums and the supply of affordable housing further reduced.

Federal regulations require that Rescorp maintain a 20% level of low income tenants in its buildings, as a condition of receiving the federal funds. Rescorp uses its relationship with the Housing Authority to fill that quota as needed. The 20% low income quota is filled with Section 8 voucher holders, and the remainder of the 80% of Rescorp units are listed with the Housing Center and subject to being filled using affirmative marketing principles. Given that they are all counseling locations, the Housing Center would likely refer white clients to these apartments, but this does not mean that the Center would necessarily fill all the vacancies. Rescorp maintains their own marketing person who works with the Housing Center and escorts some clients to their buildings..

The Rescorp has become also a model of how to maintain diversity in buildings. As many of the buildings the Rescorp purchased were resegregated at the time of purchase, the contemporary figures clearly indicate how successful these efforts are. In 2000, 345 or 63 percent of the tenants are white; 118 or 21 percent are black and 78 or 14 percent are other. The ethnic breakdowns mirror the percentages just released from the 2000 census for Oak Park. In other words, the Rescorp is succeeding in maintaining the diversity the Village desires. Rescorp buildings contain a number of handicap-accessible units. In an effort to assist the Village in their desire to be as economically diverse as possible, 14 percent of the units (77 apartments) are currently rented to families having H.U.D. Section 8 rent vouchers - this program will also be discussed below. In sum, the Rescorp is designed to be a model landlord with properly maintained buildings, resident managers, and diverse tenant population. Viewed from that perspective, it is a success.

However, the Rescorp is not without its critics. Some apartment owners think the policy of the corporation of purchasing poorly maintained buildings at market rates encourages unscrupulous landlords to not maintain their buildings, collect rents as long as possible, ignore summonses and fines and when they have milked the building for as much profit as possible, they know they can sell at market rate (some argue the Rescorp pays more than market rate) and walk away with a profit. Other critics argue that the Rescorp is not living up to its original intention by not selling the buildings they rehabilitate and are thus unfairly competing with the private sector. As the Rescorp is a "partner" organization with the Village, it is able to have the Village assist them in creating new parking spaces adjacent to a Rescorp building when private owners do not have this opportunity. As the lack of parking is a serious problem in Oak Park, such an advantage, if indeed it truly exists, is significant. Some of the most severe critics have suggested that the Rescorp is "cooking" their books in some manner. Even though the Rescorp receives large CDBG funds on an annual basis and collects rents on buildings they have owned for decades, the corporation is still, at times, short of operating capital. In 1995 they were "forced" to condoize their 23-unit building at 222 Washington because they needed the cash to pay for big ticket deferred maintenance needs. In 2000 the need arose again for 844 Washington. All of this criticism is made more believable with the mysterious and unceremonious firing of their director in the summer of 2000. However, none of these criticisms have resulted in any formal action against the Rescorp or the Village. So perhaps it is nothing more than groundless complaining that one finds within any small close-knit community.

The Oak Park Housing Authority

Oak Park is dedicated to being an inclusive and diverse community. This includes economic diversity. However, the attractiveness of the place and the limited number of apartments has caused the cost of a rental to dramatically increase. As of the writing of this paper, the average rental price for a two bedroom apartments was between \$900 and \$1500 per month, plus utilities and parking. Owners require a 1-1/2 month's security deposit and conduct a through credit and employment check. In other words, only "solid" citizens need apply. Senior citizens on fixed income, the disabled with special needs and low income families who wish to live in Oak Park have only one recourse, H.U.D.'s Section 8 rental vouchers administered by the Oak Park Housing Authority. The unfortunately named Section 8 program is an attempt to disperse the families throughout a community rather than concentrating them in certain buildings. Eligibility is based primarily on income and need. Families who get vouchers must pay 30 percent of their adjusted net income as rent. They are expected to locate a place on their own. The program in Oak Park is administered by the Oak Park Housing Authority.

The village does not directly control the Oak Park Housing Authority, which is a separately chartered government agency established in 1947 to help returning servicemen find housing during the post-war housing shortage. Today, the most significant aspect of Oak Park having its own Housing Authority to give Oak Park control over how many Section 8 vouchers it has at any given time, and also control to some extent over where

Section 8 families live. This allows the village to admit some low income tenants into the community, and also to prevent concentrations of poor families in particular neighborhoods.

Section 8 is a voluntary program. A local Housing Authority must petition H.U.D. for vouchers. It can be looked at as an index of a community's commitment to economic diversity, especially if that community is a middle-class suburb. Oak Park presently has 425 Section 8 vouchers authorized, although the recent increase in rental rates and concomitant low vacancy rates has left some of those slots unfilled because the voucher holders cannot find an available unit. Oak Park has far more Section 8 tenants than any nearby suburb. Some of the communities that border Oak Park, or are nearby, have Section 8 tenants in the following numbers: Berwyn, 77; Forest Park, 81; River Forest, 6; Elmwood Park, 24; Riverside, 7; North Riverside, 4, Maywood, 3; Melrose Park, 70; Northlake, 32. (Cook County Housing Authority, 2000). It appears that only Evanston and Oak Park are truly striving to maintain some economic diversity in their communities and some like Hinsdale, an almost all-white western suburb with no Section 8 contracts, are actively attempting to discourage the marginally income from living there; or perhaps it is merely another example of a community that wishes to remain monocultural.

So-called "traveling vouchers" issued by the Chicago Housing Authority are also being used in Oak Park, and these are outside the limits set by the Oak Park Housing Authority. Tenants with these vouchers are free to approach any landlord. As is the case in most Housing Authorities, Oak Park has a long waiting list. Vouchers can be moved from the community that issued them to another community, if the recipient can locate an apartment in the new community. The Chicago Housing Authority is planning to demolish over 17,000 public housing units over the new few years. It is unclear where they plan to house these displaced people. Undoubtedly some of these families will attempt to relocate in Oak Park. Some are already appearing at the Housing Center looking for "bargains" that don't exist.

A more detailed look at Oak Park's Section 8 program is warranted in that it is revealing of both the promise and the reality of the community's self-image as welcoming to everyone. Of the 427 vouchers allocated only 387 are currently in use. That means that about 40 voucher families are currently looking for buildings that will accept them. As some owners will not rent to Section 8 families (it is their legal right to do so.), some of these people may lose their voucher allowing other families on the long waiting list to be issued vouchers. 71 percent of the Section 8 recipients are black, 26 percent are white and 3 percent Hispanic. There are no Asians in the program. 12 percent are elderly or 46 recipients of which 40 are female. 36 percent are disabled or 138 recipients of which 103 are female. That means 47 percent are families - mainly with a female head of household (only 5 families have a male head of household) with an average size of less than three members. Taken as a group the recipients of Section 8 vouchers are less educated and poorer than most Oak Parkers. They are at the margins of the middle class and as such represent a cultural challenge for the solidly middle class and frequently liberal Oak Parkers who may hypothetically espouse the liberal sentiment of wanting an economic diverse community but bridle at the conflict in cultural values between themselves and

their poorer black neighbors who occupy different and often conflicting taste publics. To suggest a clichéd example, it is the conflict between rap music coming from an auto and Bach performed in a public park. As the majority of the Section 8 clients are black and poor, it is a place where issues of class and "race" become confused.

Oak Park faces a dilemma. On the one hand, it has been on record as a community that will strive to be economically diverse. It has acted on this principal by requesting an unusually large number of Section 8 vouchers. As the rents in Oak Park rise faster than H.U.D. can raise the ceiling on vouchers, fewer and fewer low-income people can find places to rent. As the larger apartments are increasingly condoized, there are fewer and fewer places for larger families. The rental world of Oak Park is designed for single people or small families with a good income. Oak Park will soon have to face the difficult decision of funding some sort of massive program of intervention in which some of the Rescorp units are remodeled into larger apartments and/or the Village offers rent subsidies in addition to those available from H.U.D. If they do not, then it is possible that Oak Park will have to admit that they can no longer strive to be economically diverse.

The Oak Park Regional Housing Center

This organization is the centerpiece of Oak Park's integration maintenance programs and is well-known as a model for other communities seeking to promote racial diversity. Established in 1972, the Oak Park Regional Housing Center (OPHC) is a nonprofit corporation that evolved from the Oak Park-River Forest Citizens' Committee for Human Rights, the group whose fair housing activism led to the passage of Oak Park's Open Housing Ordinance in 1968. By the early 1970s the Committee had accomplished its original goals of opening up the real estate market and was able to disband. Before it actually went away, a proposal was offered by Roberta Raymond, a committee member, for the next phase - the stabilization of the rental market. It was partially based on her 1972 Masters' thesis. The Committee disbanded and the Housing Center was born with Raymond who had been the chair of the Committee's Housing Committee, as its director. She remained in that position until she retired in 1996.

The Center has an annual budget of just under \$800,000, three-fourths of which comes from the village of Oak Park in the form of Community Development Block Grant funds and the marketing contract for the Diversity Assurance Program. The DAP program accounts for approximately 50 percent of the Housing Center's annual budget. It pays all of the costs of marketing with the Block grant funds underwriting counseling and escorting.

In addition to standing for open housing principles, the group promotes racial integration in Oak Park's apartment stock, and more recently has begun to work with 45 other suburbs as part of a regional strategy to diversify other communities besides Oak Park. The Center's main initiatives are as follows:

- a. Promoting an image of Oak Park as a racially diverse community through an advertising campaign.
- b. Being active with other fair housing organizations, including the Exchange Congress, a group of organizations from communities with policies like those of Oak Park.
- c. Serving over 5000 clients per year who are interested in Oak Park by providing them with listings of available apartments. All clients are encouraged to make moves that would increase diversity in Oak Park and the western suburbs. These are called “affirmative moves.” This means that white clients are encouraged to move to east Oak Park, some are escorted to see apartments there. Black clients are also often encouraged to consider apartments in other communities to the west, and are escorted to those locations if they are interested in them. This last program is called “Apartments West,” and it is the most controversial program run by the Housing Center. Critics argue that it is an effort to “steer” blacks out of Oak Park. Supporters say it is necessary because black clients often do not consider communities other than Oak Park unless the idea is suggested to them, even if other communities might be closer to work, have lower rents, and have a housing stock more in line with their needs. There is a real irony here. All of the studies undertaken by the Village since 1984 about diversity arrive at the same conclusion - that Oak Park must think regionally if it wishes to succeed with its own programs for maintaining diversity. The Center has put into action this suggestion and is then criticized for doing so.
- d. Acting as marketing agent for the Diversity Assurance Program apartment units. This currently includes 57 apartment buildings, and the Center’s clients made about 300 moves to those units in 2000. A total of 117 buildings, totaling 2277 units, have been in the program since it began.
- e. Acting as marketing agent for Rescorp units.

During 2001, the center assisted 6471 clients, of whom 47.6% were black, 32.6% were white, and 19.8% Hispanic, Asian, or other. Of these 6471 clients, 1234 were given information but did not register for the rental service. Of the remaining 5237 who did register (44.6% black, 40.4 % white, and 15% other), 1191 rented apartments in Oak Park. The Center does not claim credit for renting all of these units, but at least did provide listings to these clients, and the clients ended up renting in Oak Park. Of these 1191 successful rental clients, 769 (64.6%) were white, 194 (16.3%) were black, and 228 (19.1%) were Hispanic, Asian, or other. The Housing Center’s Apartments West program also counseled 2132 black clients, registered 891 as clients, and facilitated 58 moves to a variety of communities outside of Oak Park. (Oak Park Regional Housing Center, 2002). The typical Housing Center client in 2000 was white (67 percent), young (80 percent 40 or younger) and unmarried (80 percent).

These data illustrate several things. Black demand for apartment housing in Oak Park is higher than white demand. The Center is, however, more successful at placing white

clients than black clients. The Center's staff attributes this to a disproportionately large percentage of black clients being unable to afford the prevailing rental rates in Oak Park, at least for the type of housing they are seeking given occupancy limits. For example, a family of four may discover that they cannot afford anything more than a one bedroom apartment in Oak Park. Most landlords in Oak Park will neither allow four people in a one bedroom nor rent an apartment for which the tenant has an inadequate income. Moreover, many of the Housing Center's listings are village-designated "counseling locations," meaning places where white tenants are called for by affirmative marketing principles. Lacking sufficient Oak Park listings where black tenants are the affirmative marketing target group, the Center uses the Apartments West program to expand its options for black clients.

Ideally the Center should be able to induce blacks to move into the whitest part of Oak Park - the Mann school district (the northwest quadrant of the Village) but only 3 black clients did so in 2000. It is not an area with many apartment buildings. Some Center staff believe that their goal of increasing the number of blacks living in the western, particularly northwestern portion of the Village, is made more difficult because some owners of the buildings in that area refuse to give the Center their listings not because blacks do not wish to live there. We cannot confirm or deny that assumption or other potentially useful information about apartment owners because B.O.M.A. (Building Owners and Managers Association) refused to supply us with their membership list on the grounds that we might use it to solicit "business."

The Center acts as an agent for properties owned by the Oak Park Residence Corporation, those in DAP, as well as privately owned buildings where the owners voluntarily give the Center their listings. In addition, the Center's staff adds listings from newspaper want ads. While it is difficult to obtain reliable statistics, We estimate that the Center has listings for about 1/3 of the vacancies. It is difficult for the Housing Center to determine exactly how large a share of the Oak Park market the Center is responsible for, considering the varied routes by which a tenant the Center counseled may end up renting a unit, and the difficulties involved in finding out from the client, after the fact, where they obtained which listing. There are about 11,300 multifamily units in the village potentially subject to rental (including apartment and condominium buildings), of which an estimated 37%, or about 4200 units, "turn over," or are rented to new tenants, each year. Given that the Center had some involvement with 1191 tenants who rented one of these 4200 units, the maximum influence of the Center would be about 28% of the market. But the Center knows that many of these 1191 did not rent any of the units they were shown by the Center, and thus estimates its actual influence at perhaps half that share. If the Housing Center placed about 600 clients in apartments, then the 300 placements in DAP units amounted to half of the Housing Center's successful referrals. Others were referrals to Rescorp units, about 200 of which turn over every year. We have been unable to discover how many of these 200 were filled by the Housing Center. But it seems clear that village-related units—DAP and Rescorp—are the majority of the Center's successful placements.

These figures are important because they indicate that the Center does not control the rental market and that no one is forced to use its services. This is a commonly heard misconception. People can easily find an apartment on their own. It is also important to realize that the Center does not make any policies about how Oak Park is to be integrated, it merely follows the dictates of the Village. To implement a policy of balance, the Village's Community Relations division maintains records of tenants in apartment buildings. All owners must provide the Village with a detailed list of the "racial" makeup of their tenants when they apply for the annual renewal of their business license. The division is then able to determine which apartments can have an open listing (that is, available to all interested people) and which apartments are in danger of becoming "unbalanced" and are therefore a counseling location where white demand should be encouraged. This information is then conveyed to the Center so that they can determine which clients are given which listings. As the data collected from the owners by Community Relations is confidential, it is not possible to fully understand the logic of the decision. Moreover, Community Relations feels that the process they employ to determine which listing is open and which is a counseling location should not be available for public scrutiny. Some critics call this policy social engineering or even benign "racial" steering. Some even suggest that it is illegal. It is not. (See Appendix 3 for the legal basis of the Center's actions). Whether the process should be more open is subject to debate. The philosophy of the Center and of all agencies in Oak Park devoted to maintaining diversity is to maintain a "racial" balance. They believe their policies will prevent the resegregation of Oak Park. An examination of the activities of the Center and its impact on the Village strongly supports this contention. While the Center cannot force anyone to live anywhere, they strongly encourage clients to assist them in their efforts to keep Oak Park stable by having a diverse population live in all sections of the Village.

In the early days of the Center there was a need to promote Oak Park in general among whites as a good place to live. To oversimplify the situation slightly, Oak Park needed to replace the "white flighters" who would not or could not live in an integrated community with white liberals who would welcome a chance to act out their notions of social justice. To attract these kinds of people, advertisements were placed in a number of national magazines (e.g., *Ms.*, *Psychology Today* and the *Saturday Review*, Chicago-area publications and student-housing centers at the many Chicago-area universities, colleges and medical schools that are within easy access to Oak Park. The campaign worked. Many of today's leaders came to Oak Park during this time - university professors, for example, in '90 zip code 60302 was the favorite for University of Illinois, Chicago faculty - 139 lived there and another 55 in 60304 and 44 in River Forest, social workers and professionals in service industries. As Carole Goodwin has pointed out. "By 1970, significant inroads had been made by what was frequently called the 'new Oak Park'; younger, progressive, involved and issue-conscious. Oak Park's oldest leading families were found among the most avid backers of the 'new Oak Park' style" (1979:35). By 1984 the transformation of the Village from a WASP Republican enclave to a liberal community was evident when the Village voted Democratic in a national election for the first time.

Even so, the Center was more successful in convincing blacks that Oak Park was a welcoming community than reassuring whites that in spite of the moves toward integration that all parts of Oak Park were "safe" places for whites to rent - a sad but accurate appraisal of many whites' notions of the dangers of living with blacks. It therefore became apparent early on that increasing white demand for apartments on the east side of the Village was going to be the Housing Center's major focus. It remains so almost 30 years after the Center's founding. Some people incorrectly believe that the eastern part of the Village - the area closer to Austin - is less desirable because Austin is perceived to be a crime-ridden black ghetto. Repeated efforts to undo that impression have only partially succeeded. While volunteering as the receptionist at the Housing Center, Ruby discovered a number of white clients who knew almost nothing about Oak Park and yet arrived at the Center convinced they know where the "bad" places to live are located. Their attitudes are often confirmed by Oak Parkers who view the eastern part of their community with suspicion.

The Oak Park Regional Housing Center is a place much discussed and offered as one of the success stories about how to maintain diversity in a suburban community. It is now almost 30 years old. The sad thing is that the reason for its creation has not changed. White people are reluctant to rent in neighborhoods where there are a significant number of black tenants. They associate black neighborhoods with danger and high crime. If Oak Park is to continue to realize its goal of dispersed integration then the Center will have to continue to induce white demand in East Oak Park no matter how offensive those policies might be to some Oak Parkers.

ANALYSIS OF VILLAGE DATA

"Residential segregation has proven to be the most resistant to change of all realms perhaps because it is so critical to racial change in general" (Petigrew 1996:112-3).

"The number of entities involved in managing Oak Park's housing cause confusion but is perhaps natural due to the variation among issues and the limitations of government" (Oak Park Housing Needs Report 1993:11).

These programs give the Village an unusual amount of influence over the apartment market in Oak Park, but nothing resembling total control or "gatekeeping" for the community. The net effect of the village's apartment-related integration maintenance policies can be assessed by considering the racial composition of the apartment units in the village. Census data offer one way to do this. However, the Village of Oak Park's data base, obtained from the data provided in business license applications, is in some ways a better measure of the success of their policies, because it is tabulated for apartment buildings only, excluding condominiums and other forms of multifamily housing, and because it can be presented in linear block form.

The data presented in this section were obtained from the Village of Oak Park after a demand made under the Freedom of Information Act, which led to some six months of

negotiation and eventually the production of considerable data. The data were aggregated at the linear block level, rather than the building level, in order to preserve the confidentiality the Village promises to building owners. The Village estimates the compliance rate at 80%, meaning that for 20% of the buildings the owner did not supply the racial data on the building license application. There was a time when the Village insisted on compliance with this requirement, but at present they are not enforcing it by threat of denying the business license. There is some sentiment among key Village employees to do this, but it seems that others disagree with the advisability of taking such drastic action.

Using linear numbered blocks, there are a total of 288 blocks in Oak Park (12 from east to west and 24 from north to south). Of these, there are data for 182 blocks. In other words, there are apartments on 182 blocks, or 63.2% of the blocks in the village, for which racial data were supplied.

There were 6749 apartment units in the 182 blocks, for an average of 37 units per block. One third of the Village's apartment units are on three streets: Austin Blvd., with 897 units; Washington, with 987, and Harrison, with 396.

Taken as a whole, the apartment tenants were identified as 3640 white, 2376 black, 186 latino, 481 asian, 5 American Indian, and 61 other. Percentage-wise this means a population that is 54% white, 35% black, 3% latino, and 7% asian. The low percentage of latino tenants is hard to explain, given that the neighboring community of Cicero is 80% latino. There were only six blocks, totaling 103 units, that were 90-100% black, but 34 blocks totaling 475 units that were 10% or less black.

Histograms of the white and black population distributions [**See Figure Seven**] illustrate that the policies do a better job of preventing blocks from becoming all black than breaking down remaining white blocks. The Village's DAP program and Rescorp draw resegregated units into the Housing Center's listings, but there is no mechanism at present for inducing reluctant landlords of nearly all-white buildings into the Center's listings. Consequently, the Housing Center's difficulties in securing voluntary listings from predominantly white buildings may be hindering their efforts to promote integration in some neighborhoods.

Austin Blvd. is the north-south border street about which the Village has always been most concerned because it is literally across the street from Chicago, and that side of Austin Blvd. is virtually all black. Austin's apartments in Oak Park are 39% white and 54% black. Washington, by contrast, which runs east and west across Oak Park, is 59% white and 31% black.

To understand the apartment data more systematically, we calculated the index of dissimilarity and the isolation index for the 182 apartment blocks. The dissimilarity index describes how any two groups are distributed relative to each other, and gives, in essence, the percentage of one group that would have to move in order to achieve identical percentages in all 182 blocks. A dissimilarity index of 0 is perfect integration,

an index of 1.0 is perfect segregation. For the blocks in Oak Park, the black-white dissimilarity index is 37, a sharp contrast to the index of 87.9 for the City of Chicago. The isolation index represents the average percentage of a given racial group to which each member of that group is exposed. In this case, it answers the question, what percentage black is the apartment housing in the block where the average black tenant lives? For blacks, the exposure index is 47.7, considering only the apartments and not the single family housing on the same blocks, which tends to have a higher percentage of whites. Given that the entire Chicago community area bordering Oak Park is over 90% black, Oak Park obviously offers the African-American population a much less isolated situation.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

These data support the argument that Oak Park's apartment integration policies do in fact tend to promote a more diverse and more integrated apartment housing stock than would exist if matters were simply left to the housing market. On balance the level of segregation is far below that of Chicago and other nearby suburbs. One could still raise moral or legal challenges to the policies, but it seems hard to argue that the policies do not achieve their stated purpose at least in a pragmatic way. However, it seems that the policies may need to be rethought in order to expand the housing opportunities of black tenants on the blocks where they are relatively underrepresented.

Consequently, this study supports the empirical foundations of the integration maintenance perspective rather than succession theory. It seems that public policy can intervene in market relationships and influence the decisions of apartment owners and renters and produce a higher level of integration than would otherwise exist. Although such programs are rare, description and analysis of the Oak Park strategy may serve to expand the perceived options open to other communities considering similar measures. This study confirms the notion that communities can intervene to affect their racial composition and maintain integration. That in turn raises larger questions of whether doing so is moral, legal, or democratic, and these are conversations that would likely ensue in communities considering emulating the Oak Park strategy.

The gradual transformation of Oak Park from overwhelmingly white to decidedly and obviously diverse has had major impact on policy discourse. For example, in the early 1970s racial policies were implemented when the community was nearly all-white. One issue at present is whether those policies are still acceptable in a community that is about one-quarter black, with black policy makers and influentials in all key governmental and social institutions.

There is also the intensely controversial question of whether there is a point at which the increasing percentage black in the community can cross some line that divides integration from resegregation. This is not a "tipping point" argument based on a fear of white flight. It is a question of whether the percentage of Oak Park's population that is black should be compared with the percentage black of some larger population—of the county,

the metropolitan area, the city of Chicago, or the metro area population able to afford housing in Oak Park. If the percentage black in Oak Park is higher than it is in that comparison population, some might say, then Oak Park has “done its share” to promote integration in the Chicago area. Any further black population increase in Oak Park constitute a step toward resegregation, not integration, and is therefore inconsistent with the community’s commitment to promoting diversity. People who agree with this view feel that Oak Park would be justified in contributing to area-wide efforts to open up other nearby communities that are still predominantly white. In addition to encouraging these communities to welcome black residents—something which is not controversial in itself because it is merely an extension of the logic of desegregation to other places—some believe Oak Park should encourage incoming potential black residents to consider these other communities.

For some in Oak Park, this argument comes perilously close to saying that there should be a quota for blacks in Oak Park, and a more inflammatory proposal can hardly be imagined. In the 1970s a quota was openly discussed among the village trustees and rejected. The implicit message of such a policy would be that black residents are no longer welcome in Oak Park, which is radically contrary to the village’s historic openness and racial liberalism. Suspicion that such a hidden policy exists is so high that practically any analysis of policy that involves keeping track of the community’s demographics is challenged as a covert effort to impose a quota. Recent efforts to discuss the need for desegregation in the elementary schools have been repeatedly challenged on that basis, even though desegregation has nothing to do with the overall percentage black in the district or the community, and relates only to the distribution of black students among the eight elementary schools.

This “quota” issue is in a sense a byproduct of the village’s policies that accomplished the twin goals of making race a subject of policy, and increasing the black population. Such a controversy could only occur in a place like Oak Park, where, indeed, the black population can fairly be said to have risen to some level capable of being compared with the city, the county, and the region, and where demographics are considered to be subject to governmental influence.

As stated at the beginning, Oak Park's complex of ordinances, regulations, programs and organizations designed to create and maintain a community that was diverse and integrated in a dispersed manner is unique. It evolved over time and is without a single author. The parts of this plan are pragmatic reactions to a particular situation rather than a grand scheme. It is overwhelmingly problem solving in intention and not ideologically based. This is an important distinction because some of the recent criticism is ideological. Because of the way in which the "plan" developed, it has become difficult for any one person to adequately understand the "big picture." We believe that even some of the citizens involved in the governance of some of the agencies do not fully comprehend the complexity of the strategy.

To some extent this is the result of generational changes in leadership. From the mid-1970s through the mid 1990s, there seems to have been an informal social network of

like-minded people who held formal positions of authority in the array of key governmental and non-profit groups. These people had actual memory of the resegregation of Austin and the sense of threat that pervaded Oak Park when that occurred. They understood the mission of their own organization, but they also understood that mission in the context of Oak Park's larger objective of maintaining its identity as an integrated community. For example, school board members were concerned about educational quality, but also about the need for an integrated school system, so that no neighborhood would have one-race schools, which could lead to one-race neighborhoods. However, in recent years many of these key people have retired and have been replaced by others who may have the skills to manage their own organization but not the commitment to the overall community vision that animated their predecessors. Moreover, these new organization heads do not appear to share the informal ties and group identity that linked the earlier generation of leaders.

A question that is reasonable to ask is, could other communities use what Oak Park has accomplished to assist in their efforts to create and maintain an integrated community? The answer we would give at this moment is no, at least not as a complete package. Oak Park's solution is a response to a situation unique to Oak Park - the proximity to a depressed urban neighborhood, aging housing stock, a high percentage of apartment buildings, and a small affluent, politically independent liberal community that has the means to be proactive. Elements of the plan could be utilized but not the entire thing.

We suggest that Oak Park's "plan" is in need of a thorough and self-critical examination as a plan and not simply the components. Given the high level of education and citizen involvement, the creation of a Task Force to examine all of Oak Park's policies, procedures, the entire operation of the Community Relations division, and the Village's relation to its partners - Rescorp, the Housing Authority and the Regional Housing Center - should be a task Oak Parkers would welcome. Instead of the random "potshots" that some critics now occasionally take at one particular activity, a systematic look at what each entity does and why and how it fits into the whole would be in order. It is time for Oak Park to explore its commitment to maintaining diversity by dispersing blacks and whites throughout the community to see if it wishes to continue to do so. It is our contention that without these organizations the community would have an almost all-black apartment corridor in the eastern portion of the Village and a scattering of blacks and whites in single family homes and condos. Perhaps that is a future Oak Parkers wish for themselves.

It should be clear by now that we regard residential integration as a most difficult idea to actualize. But more than that, the methods used for achieving integration are offensive to all concerned. The problem is that the alternative - segregation - is worse. Integration maintenance is offensive because it causes whites to have to confront the fact that, left to their own devices, many of them will not voluntarily live with blacks. Some sort of inducement must be employed such as those used by the Housing Center. For blacks, it means that they must accept their minority status. If an integrated community begins to have a significant increase in the number of blacks that move in, the community is highly likely to resegregate either because whites move out or they stop moving in. Oak Park

has a choice. It can continue to be offensive and remain integrated or it can stop offending and cease being one of the few places in the U.S. where blacks and whites strive to live together in neighborhoods where both groups successfully reside. It will be interesting to observe what the future holds for this community.