

# Over-the-Rhine Community Housing

WHERE COMMUNITY COMES FIRST



Fall 2017 Newsletter

*“I remember when the people in the hood grew up so close they called each other cousin  
When my grandmother became everybody’s grandmother  
These are the kinds of people whose stories I tell  
People who have lived here for so long the breeze remembers their names  
And how they are beginning to vanish into thin air”*

This excerpt is from “Gentrification,” a poem by Dion Harrison and Kenny Carrol that describes the drastic changes occurring in communities located in Washington, D.C. Does this scene sound familiar to you? Similar poems could be written about historic neighborhoods all over the country. As wealthier residents flow back into these once low-income, often communities of color, longtime residents get priced out, seemingly vanishing into thin air.

Here in Cincinnati, we can’t deny that redevelopment efforts have made an incredible impact in Over-the-Rhine. However, the supply of affordable housing has dwindled rapidly, causing a significant gap as the neighborhood strives to become more equitable. Between 2002 and 2015, there was a loss of 73% of units in Over-the-Rhine affordable to individuals and families at the 0-30% of area median income level (\$15,000).

We value the residents who have lived in this neighborhood for generations, helping us weave the fabric of support that makes our community so extraordinary. We need your help to keep their rents affordable so our community members don’t vanish into thin air. You can help us ensure that existing, low-income residents continue to have a place here in Over-



As part of the Keep Our Courts Campaign, kids, families, and community advocates worked to raise awareness so their public basketball court could be preserved.



Linda and Maria are pictured at one of the many block parties OTRCH hosts to celebrate the beauty and friendship that is ever-present in our community.

the-Rhine. Join us in making Over-the-Rhine a welcoming and inclusive place where all residents benefit from the neighborhood revitalization efforts equally.

Please remember us as you make your charitable giving decisions this holiday season. You can send your gift in the enclosed return envelope, or visit [www.otrch.org](http://www.otrch.org) to make a secure donation. Thank you

— your support makes a profound difference in the lives of our residents and helps us build a healthy, diverse community.

— Katie Cunningham, Fund Development Director



Georgia Keith, Vice President of OTRCH’s Board of Trustees, has lived in this neighborhood for more than 50 years.

# 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CELEBRATING OUR BELOVED COMMUNITY

“Being at Recovery Hotel gives me a sound and secure chance at real housing in a safe environment surrounded by recovery, 12-step meetings, on site counseling, and most of all – LOVE.”

This affirmation highlighted Dionna Flowers’ speech at our 10th annual fundraising and awards dinner, *Celebrating Our Beloved Community*, held on October 19, 2017, at the newly renovated Music Hall Ballroom. We gathered with over 300 of our dearest friends and supporters, and everyone had the chance to be surrounded by the feelings of love that Dionna was talking about.

Each year we present the “Building Our Beloved Community” award to an organization and an individual that have played a significant role in helping us achieve our vision of quality, stable housing for all in a socially, racially, and economically inclusive community. The awards were presented to our dedicated partner organization, Finance Fund, and longtime OTR resident, Earl Hunt.

A well-known OTR resident, Earl Hunt, has touched the lives of many who live in and/or have visited Over-the-Rhine and downtown. OTRCH volunteer Cathleen Fagan states, “We call him the Mayor of OTR. He has lived here since 1964, and greets everyone from his front stoop. Imagine the book he could write!” Earl has lived in many apartments throughout OTR, and insists his favorite is the OTRCH apartment at 14th and Race...the one with the front stoop.

In order to illustrate our organization’s longevity in the community and celebrate the successes of our projects and

programs, OTRCH residents and staff shared personal testimonies. Andy Hutzel, our Director of Housing Services, took the stage with current and former Recovery Hotel residents Dionna Flowers, Betty Kelow, and Thomas Fields. Together, they discussed the history behind Recovery Hotel and what it took to get the project off the ground. They also discussed how it continues to be a vital piece of our community of recovery, and the community in Over-the-Rhine as a whole.

Amy Silver, our Resident Services Coordinator, discussed the concept of “community based social work” that is unique to our organization. She shared the history behind one of our resident services programs, Children’s Creative Corner, to illustrate our holistic approach to supporting our residents and families.

At OTRCH we provide much more than housing. We provide hope, stability, and a trajectory for a healthy future. We look forward to next year’s *Celebrating Our Beloved Community* so we can celebrate our beloved community with our friends and partners who make this work possible.



*In OTR, Finance Fund has supported our work by bridging our vision with capital, making possible some of our most successful and impactful projects. Finance Fund’s Anne Geggie, Vice President of Lending, accepts the Partner in Building Our Beloved Community Award from Mary Rivers.*

# A BOLD VISION: OTRCH'S FIRST CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

We are in the early stages of Over-the-Rhine Community Housing's *first ever* capital campaign. Our office's limited capacity and lack of accessibility negatively affect the number of residents we can serve, while the need for affordable housing is increasing. We must raise \$2 million in order to expand and renovate our service center (office), located at 114 W. 14th Street, so we can meet this need.

We have raised approximately \$250K, but we have a ways to go! As a grassroots organization through and through, we are looking to you – our closest friends and supporters – to help us make connections, share ideas, and, if you are able, contribute financially.

If you have any thoughts you'd like to share or if you have questions about the campaign, please reach out to Katie Cunningham, Fund Development Director, at [kcunningham@otrch.org](mailto:kcunningham@otrch.org) or 513-381-1171x117. Check out our website for more updates!

## KEN BORDWELL



It is with sadness that we share that Ken Bordwell passed away peacefully at his home on October 30.

We are very fond of Ken at Over-the-Rhine Community Housing. He joined our board 15 years ago, several years after he retired from the City of Cincinnati. He was such a genuine and

compassionate person, in all that he did.

Ken loved opera and was a member of the American Handel Society. He took up hiking 40 years ago, and on August 24, 2012 at 70 years of age he completed his goal of hiking the entire Appalachian Trail. He also enjoyed bicycling and had a number of remarkable rides in the United States and Ireland.

At board meetings Ken provided the occasional zinger, he was always positive, and he appreciated the smart humor of our group. He was someone we could always count on to be present and supportive. Ken really appreciated the work that

## OTRCH'S NEW ROLE AT ANNA LOUISE INN

The Anna Louise Inn has been providing safe and affordable housing for single women since 1909. It is a safe harbor, offering a community of women a sense of home. In 2010 Over-the-Rhine Community Housing was invited to participate in the redevelopment and preservation of the Anna Louise Inn (ALI). We served as co-developer of ALI's new home at the corner of Reading Road and Kinsey Street in Mt. Auburn (across the street from the United Way building). Construction was completed in summer 2015.

In recent months, the management team at ALI, which includes OTRCH, Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services (GCB), and Brickstone, has been discussing ways that we could strengthen our collective approach to the property's management. As a result, OTRCH is taking a more significant role in the day-to-day operations of ALI.

ALI provides 85 units of affordable housing with support services. GCB will continue to provide on-site resident support, such as medical and counseling services, and Brickstone will continue overseeing compliance. OTRCH will begin to serve as the point of contact for residents. We intend to leverage our experience of successfully providing supportive housing for the past 20 years. This will result in increased communication and engagement with residents. We are excited that we can continue to be a part of the ALI legacy to this day.

we do. We will miss Ken's compliments. He was supportive of each of our individual efforts as staff or Board members. We counted on his humor to provide a larger perspective to every issue the board addressed. We thank Ken for the tangible experience of Quaker serenity.

He is going to be missed at our Board meetings and as a part of our broader OTRCH support network.

We are reminded that we don't know when this journey will end and to be kind and share what we have while we can.

# TOM DUTTON'S MEMORIAL AT MIAMI UNIVERSITY

## OCTOBER 7, 2017



I met Tom 36 years ago when he drove down to our neighborhood of Over-the-Rhine from Miami's campus in Oxford, Ohio. We were in the midst of our first comprehensive plan trying to protect and preserve 5,520 occupied units of affordable housing. We were a little suspicious of his interest, but it didn't take long for us to realize

Tom saw something in our people, our places, and our daily struggles that he wanted to be a part of. He was truly a peoples' architect. I believe our Over-the-Rhine Peoples' Movement grounded Tom, gave feet to his academic work. What stands out most in his approach to service is that Tom respected the right of our neighborhood to lead in our own way to liberation. Many academics have come and gone, having "done their thing" in their many studies on Over-the-Rhine." Tom and the many students who have by now come through the program take time to walk beside us, building trust and lasting relationships, digging in and doing the grunt work needed to move things forward in our many community-based organizations. A main pillar of the Residency Program, the Urban Cohort, and the Summer Immersion Program is that the community and the students have to benefit mutually. He did not want us to deplete our energy. In this mutual sharing, he wanted our work to advance; he wanted our people to feel that we have something of value and beauty to offer. Tom trusted in our lived experiences and gave us credit for our knowledge, even though many of us have no formal credentials behind our names. Tom understood that Miami students could learn something from our mentorship. In the bodies, hearts and spirits of our people lives a moral wisdom that Tom learned and listened to. It's a wisdom we all need to listen to. In one of his many articles Tom wrote, "True change comes from the margins, because it is where the social imaginary we need right now is lived and nurtured." He truly believed this.

Tom's commitment to Over-the-Rhine was heartfelt and soul deep. He did his work always as a Professor of Architecture of Miami University. So what I'm saying is that Miami University has credibility in our community, too. Tom was never acting

alone. Neighborhood people have come to count on Miami to hang in there with us through the long haul. Tom's life and leadership gave us all something to work with and build on. What a beautiful legacy.

I dearly miss Tom. There is nothing sweeter than a friendship forged through struggle. Tom has been by our side through times of sun, storm and sorrow. There is a hole in my heart with his absence, but I hear Tom cheering us onward. He was always our Movement's cheerleader. His voice will never grow dim. Tom has left us a legacy of his words. And our neighborhood is marked with many projects where his spirit lives on in the collective work done by our neighborhood people and Miami students together.

We have the deepest gratitude for Tom, who gave us a big chunk of his life, to advance the struggle for justice in Over-the-Rhine. We will carry it on. Not just for me, not just for you, but for all of us, we will carry it on. Thank you.

— Bonnie Neumeier, OTRCH Board Member



Each year when the leaves begin to turn, we take Children's Creative Corner outdoors and celebrate fall with a bonfire! On October 26, young residents from CCC and Peaslee Neighborhood Center, their families, and some staff members got to enjoy roasting hotdogs and s'mores while taking in the beautiful fall scenery in our neighborhood.

# OPENING DOORS TO DIVERSITY IN HOUSING

Before I joined the OTRCH team, I had the pleasure of working at some of Cincinnati's finest cultural institutions. When it came to the arts, coming up with exciting ways for constituents to engage with our work was relatively simple. People were always eager to experience dress rehearsals, live performances, backstage tours, and more. In my early days of working at OTRCH, I struggled to come up with opportunities like these, where people could experience our work firsthand. Then, a light bulb flashed on in my head! We are literally surrounded by OTRCH buildings and residents...why not replicate the experience of living in this community for those who are curious to learn more? Thus, *Opening Doors to Diversity in Housing* was born!

We are grateful for the support of our neighbors, Mark Manley, M.D., and Annette Januzzi Wick, who helped us come up with the concept for this event. On September 6, we hosted the inaugural *Opening Doors to Diversity in Housing*, which consisted of a walking tour of OTRCH's properties and a reception at Mark and Annette's beautiful home located in the neighborhood. One of our tour participants, Lisa had this to say about *Opening Doors*:

"A friend and I decided to sign up for an OTRCH housing tour a few months ago to find out more about this organization and the work they do – I do not reside in the urban core, or even in Cincinnati proper (I live in NKY but volunteer in the area), but in traipsing around the OTR neighborhood with our guide (who happens to be the Executive Director of OTRCH) I saw OTR with fresh eyes, eyes that checked my biases and made me see the complexities and diversities of the neighborhood and the

challenges of affordable housing for everyone. The tour gave me the opportunity to see face-to-face the successes and challenges of maintaining and offering affordable housing and the hard work it takes in propelling this much-needed program forward – I am now an ardent supporter of providing sustainable, affordable and stable housing to all who have a right and need this hand up. This tour is a must-do if you believe in inclusive communities and seeing social justice up close!"

Even if you already feel like you're familiar with the neighborhood, participating in this tour can offer a new perspective. Another tour participant, Martha, had this to say:

"I have known about OTRCH for the past decade that I have lived in the neighborhood. What I did not realize until the tour is the depth and breadth of the commitment to both the residents and housing stock. OTRCH is about community and housing; providing stability, kindness, and love to the people; while helping to save our beautiful architecture. It is so rewarding to know that seniors, families, single people, and those with substance abuse challenges have a friend who looks out for them, cares about them, and makes sure they can afford to live safely in OTR."

We intend to host more *Opening Doors* tours in the future, for it offered a wonderful opportunity to meet residents, see the inside of some of our beautiful buildings, and learn more about affordable housing solutions.

– Katie Cunningham, Fund Development Director

On October 12, OTRCH residents and staff, and Peaslee's Agents of Change were excited to participate in the BLINK Parade. Lasers, lights, and interactive exhibits illuminated 20 blocks of Cincinnati's architecture during this incredible community experience!

Thanks to ArtWorks, Children's Creative Corner, and volunteers for helping us make our lanterns and lighted buildings so we could creatively represent the need for affordable housing as we marched down Vine Street.

The positive energy at the event was inspiring and the spirit of community was powerful!

Thanks to ArtWorks, the Haile Foundation, and AGAR for organizing an inspiring and inclusive community event.



# DAKENYA GUNN CELEBRATES 20 YEARS WITH OTRCH

20 years ago, Over-the-Rhine Housing Network hired DaKenya Gunn as its Property Manager. We feel fortunate to count DaKenya among our staff to this day! On October 12, OTRCH's team flocked to the OTR Rec Center to celebrate DaKenya with roller skating and barbeque from our friends at Eli's, and salad from Venice on Vine, and reminisce on her eventful career serving the community of Over-the-Rhine. DaKenya shared some of the insights she's gained through her role at OTRCH:

## 1. What are some things that you enjoy about working at OTRCH?

The residents. There is a sense of joy you get when the resident receives keys. Our organization offers so much to those that have little money or none at all.

## 2. How are our mission, vision, and values meaningful to you?

All people come together to support a variety of folks. No one is turned away. If OTRCH can't help we will give suggestions of places/people that may be able to aid them.

## 3. What kinds of lessons have you learned from working here?

All people deserve to be treated fairly and as an equal. Sometimes I think our organization should be called CHANCE after CHANCE (nice ring to it). Each one of us could be in any of our client's shoes. Can we walk in their shoes? Treat people the way you want to be treated.



## 4. What has been the most interesting change you've witnessed in the neighborhood?

The market rate housing alongside the low income housing that is offered in OTR. The beautification of the rehabbed buildings. Such a cozy place to be. The new jobs in the neighborhood employ so many from this area.

## 5. What is one of your proudest accomplishments so far?

Being here 20 years is a true accomplishment. I've seen people that were lawyers, bankers and people from all different trades that come in for housing. Feels good to be able to offer housing, strategies, services and a sense of hope.

## 6. When you first started working here, did you think you'd be here 20 years later? What makes you stick around?

Gosh, who really stays at a job for 20 years anymore? Everyone is chasing something. I happily, return each day in hopes of saving someone's life. Often, I forget to take time to evaluate my psyche, but you realize someone's issue is much greater than yours. The gratitude you have for your co-workers that care so deeply about the ones I/we serve is phenomenal.



# BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY IN THE WEST END

Our name might be *Over-the-Rhine* Community Housing, but that doesn't mean we can't help create affordable housing in other neighborhoods! Over-the-Rhine Community Housing is proud to partner with Tender Mercies, Inc. as co-developers of The 821 Flats, a permanent supportive housing project located at 821 Ezzard Charles Drive in the West End neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio.

An existing YMCA building had been vacant for many years and became bank-owned in 2015. The building was a non-historic structure with two large gym spaces, making adaptive re-use infeasible. Seeing the potential for this property, Tender Mercies purchased it in July of 2016 to develop a 57-unit, new construction, permanent supportive housing project. The new building will serve people with mental illness experiencing homelessness. Tender Mercies is rooted in the same justice-seeking activism that created OTRCH so it is especially rewarding to be joining forces to develop deeply needed affordable housing with dignity, security, and community.

Features of the new building include an elevator, a laundry room, common lounge/dining room, convenience kitchen for volunteer-prepared meals, a secured courtyard for residents, 24/7 front door staff, 2 case management offices, a conference room, and secured building entrances. On-site case management and health services will be provided by Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services and Tender Mercies, Inc. Since the building has been vacant, no one will be displaced for the development.

We are excited to announce that the project was selected through very competitive processes to receive Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, as well as HOME funding from both the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. The team hopes to close on financing in the spring of 2018 and start construction early summer of 2018. Construction would be complete by summer of 2019. Tender Mercies will be the owner and manager for the property.





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## JOIN US!

Over-the-Rhine Community Housing (OTRCH) is a non-profit community development organization that provides a wide spectrum of affordable and supportive housing options with life-changing programs to help low-income residents grow and flourish. For almost four decades, OTRCH has never wavered from our commitment to:

- build a sustainable, diverse neighborhood that values and benefits low-income residents
- create an inclusive community in this evolving historic district, and
- advocate on behalf of all our residents.

Please join us in making OTR a diverse, inclusive neighborhood:

- Visit [www.otrch.org](http://www.otrch.org) to learn more about us, sign up for emails and newsletters, or make a secure donation.
- Contact us to see how your skills and interests align with our mission, or set up a time to tour our properties.
- Register OTRCH as your charity of choice with Kroger Community Rewards and AmazonSmile.
- Like us on Facebook

