

Accession Nos. 1993.30, 1994.26

Shelf No. RC 30

The Oak Park Fair Housing Collection

Oak Park and River Forest Museum

March 20, 2020

Finding Aid Prepared by Elizabeth Nichols, Archivist

Extent: 1 box

Creator(s): Village of River Forest Government, 1880 – *present*

Village of River Forest Residents, 1836 – *present*

Oak Park Community Relations Commission (CRC), 1963 – *present*

Oak Park Public Schools

Oak Park-River Forest Citizens Committee for Human Rights, 1964 – *unknown*

Oak Park Housing Center, 1972 – *present*

Oak Park-River Forest League of Women Voters, 1924 – *present*

Oak Park Board of Realtors, 1917 – *present*

Oak Park Referendum Group, 1963/1964 – 1968

Oak Park and River Forest Religious Organizations

Fair Housing History: As early as 1963, citizen groups in Oak Park began lobbying for open housing legislation. At the same time, the Oak Park-River Forest Citizens Committee for Human Rights sponsored events to attract black residents. 1963 also saw the creation of the Village of Oak Park's Community Relations Commission. In 1966, the Village of Oak Park amended its Village Code, making it unlawful for any person or corporation to sell, rent, or purchase any property by making representations that the property will go down in value by reason of the race, color, or religion of persons who have or may move into the vicinity of the property involved. In 1968, Oak Park established a Community Relations Department, and passed its landmark Fair Housing Ordinance (ahead of the federal government). Groups in support of the Fair Housing Ordinance included the Oak Park-River Forest Citizens Committee for Human Rights, the Oak Park-River Forest League of Women Voters, and Oak Park and River Forest Religious Organizations like the Baha'i.

However, not everyone in Oak Park was in favor of passing a Fair Housing Ordinance. In particular, the Oak Park Board of Realtors was concerned that the terms of such an ordinance would be so general that compliance would be impossible, thereby harming the business of realtors. The Oak Park Board of Realtors also conducted a leafleting campaign in opposition to the fair housing movement, and ran an ad in the 1964 *Village Economist* which stated, “Let the voice of the people decide the issue of forced housing by referendum.”

Additionally, the Oak Park Referendum Group petitioned the Village of Oak Park to hold a referendum on the issue of fair housing, which the Group decried as ‘Forced Housing.’ The Referendum Group contended that all races already lived in Oak Park under the present federal laws, and as such a Village fair housing law was unnecessary. Moreover, the Oak Park Referendum Group maintained that the Oak Park Board of Trustees would unconstitutionally take away Oak Parkers’ property rights by enacting a fair housing law. The Referendum Group obtained 10,156 signatures on their petition, but ultimately the case was dismissed in the circuit court of Cook County and no referendum was held. Other Oak Parkers’ reactions to the prospect of a Fair Housing Ordinance ranged from racist, to fearful, to uncertain.

In 1971, the Village of Oak Park created the Community Relations Department. The Oak Park Housing Center, known today as the Oak Park Regional Housing Center, was established in 1972 to help prospective home owners move into Oak Park and to maintain and achieve racial diversity in the village. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Oak Park continued its work on integration and diversity, creating the Diversity Task Force in 1984. Today, Oak Park celebrates its history as an early adoptee of a Fair Housing Ordinance, and is known as a diverse community.

Scope and Content Note: The materials in the Oak Park Fair Housing Collection cover the fair housing movement in Oak Park from its inception to its passage as a village ordinance. Additionally, the collection contains materials created after the passage of the fair housing ordinance and to the present day. Materials related to the Oak Park Community Relations Commission, Oak Park Public Schools, Oak Park-River Forest Citizens Committee for Human Rights, Oak Park Housing Center, Oak Park-River Forest League of Women Voters, Oak Park Board of Realtors, Oak Park Referendum Group, and Oak Park and River Forest Religious Organizations are also included. The contents of the Oak Park Fair Housing Collection include organizational documents, ordinances, reports, meeting minutes, correspondence, newspaper articles, scholarly articles, and books.

Immediate Sources of Acquisition: The materials in the Oak Park Fair Housing Collection came in two separate donations from the Oak Park Chamber of Commerce in 1993 and long-time Oak Park resident Helen M. Stevens in 1994. The donations are under the respective accession numbers 1993.30 and 1994.26. Oak Park Fair Housing materials from each

donation have been combined here for ease of access and use by researchers. For more details on each respective donation, these accession numbers are individually accessible in the Past Perfect archival management system in OPRF Museum's research center. Related Oak Park Fair Housing materials from other donations may be added to this collection in the future at the discretion of the Director.

Conditions Governing Access: None

Physical Access: Papers and newspapers in The Village of River Forest History Collection are acidic in nature, and have degraded over time. This degradation includes yellowing and browning of paper, faded ink, and brittleness. These brittle papers and newspapers may only be copied by research center staff. Submit all copy requests at the research center.

Other documents may be copied at the researcher's request. Submit all requests at the research center.

Language of the Material: English

Series and Container Lists:

Folder #	Description
Box 1	
Series I. General Fair Housing History	
Folder 1	General National and Local Fair Housing Documents
Series II. Village of Oak Park Government Fair Housing Documents	
Subseries I. Village of Oak Park Fair Housing Ordinances and Documents	
Folder 2	1966 Oak Park Amendment to the Village Code
Folder 3	1968 Oak Park Fair Housing Ordinance (Draft, Originals, Amendments)
Folder 4	1971, 1972, 1973 Village of Oak Park Board Meeting Minutes on Fair Housing, 'For Sale' Signs Ban
Folder 5	1973 "Maintaining Diversity in Oak Park" Policy Statement

Folder 6	1974 DELPHI Process for Racial Integration
Folder 7	1974 "Oak Park, Illinois: A Community Plan for Racial Integration" Presentation (Draft)
Folder 8	1980 "Racial Diversity in Oak Park: A Community Commitment" Statement
Folder 9	1983, 1984 Racial Diversity Task Force Documents
Shelf 12*	1984 <i>Report to the Board of Trustees Village of Oak Park</i> by the Racial Diversity Task Force (3) *Located in Research Center
Folder 9a	1984 Ordinance Providing Incentives to Discourage Unlawful Steering Practices (Incentives Ordinance)
Folder 10	1985 Urban Resources of the University of Cincinnati Report on Minorities and Justice Issues in Oak Park (Focused on business and Marion Street)

Subseries II. Oak Park Community Relations Commission (CRC)

Folder 11	CRC Organizational Documents
Folder 12	1963-1966, 1972, 1973, 1974 CRC Meeting Minutes
Folder 13	1960s-1970s CRC Fair Housing Reports
Folder 14	Undated, 1966, 1973 Oak Park Housing Complaints (Racial Discrimination)
Folder 15	1960s CRC Correspondence
Folder 16	1970s CRC Correspondence
Folder 17	March 24, 1968 CRC Fair Housing Public Hearing

Folder 18 1971 Oak Park-River Forest Human Relations Workshop

Folder 19 1972-1974 Oak Park Hundred (100) Club Documents

Subseries III. Oak Park Public Schools Integration and Diversity

Folder 19a 1972-1975 OP Public Schools Integration Documents

Folder 19b 1970s-2000s OP Public Schools Integration and Diversity Newspaper Articles

Shelf 12* 1974 *Final Report of the Committee for Tomorrow's Schools to the District No. 97 Board of Education Concerning Recommendations for Maintaining Racial Balance in Oak Park Elementary Schools (Volumes I & II)*

*Located in Research Center

Folder 19c 2004 "A Study of the Relationship between Schools and Housing in Ten Racially Diverse Communities"

Series III. Oak Park Fair Housing Community Responses

Folder 20 April 22, 1968 Oak Park Board Meeting Fair Housing Public Statements

Folder 21 Undated, 1964, 1966, 1968 Oak Park-River Forest Citizens Committee for Human Rights Fair Housing Documents

Folder 22 1972, 1973, 1986, 2000 Oak Park Housing Center Pamphlets, Documents, Photograph

Folder 23 1964, 1968, 1983 Oak Park-River Forest League of Women Voters Fair Housing Documents

Folder 24 1963, 1964, 1968 Oak Park Religious Organizations' Fair Housing Statements

Folder 25	1966, 1968 Oak Park Referendum Group (Forced Housing Question)
Folder 26	1995-1996 “Legends of Our Time” Video by Lee Brooke
Folder 27	2001 “Open Community” Speech by Harriette Gillem Robinet

Series IV. Oak Park Board of Realtors Fair Housing Documents

Folder 28	1966-1968 Oak Park Board of Realtors Fair Housing Correspondence
Folder 28a	1971-1978 Oak Park Board of Realtors Fair Housing Correspondence
Folder 28b	1980-1984 Oak Park Board of Realtors Fair Housing Correspondence
Folder 28c	1963-1967 Oak Park Board of Realtors Fair Housing Meeting Minutes
Folder 28d	Undated “Training Program for Sales Associates of Individual Member Firms on Implementation of the Affirmative Marketing Agreement”
Folder 29	1966 Baird & Warner Fair Housing Documents

Series V. Fair Housing Publications

Subseries I. Fair Housing Periodicals

Folder 30	1960s Chicago and Surrounding Suburbs Fair Housing and Integration Newspaper Articles
Folder 31	1970s Chicago and Surrounding Suburbs Fair Housing and Integration Newspaper Articles
Folder 31a	1980s Chicago and Surrounding Suburbs Fair Housing and Integration Newspaper Articles

Folder 32	1960s Oak Park Fair Housing and Integration Newspaper Articles
Folder 33	1970-1975 Oak Park Fair Housing and Integration Newspaper Articles
Folder 34	1976-1979 Oak Park Fair Housing and Integration Newspaper Articles
Folder 35	1980s Oak Park Fair Housing and Integration Newspaper Articles
Folder 36	1990s Oak Park Fair Housing and Integration Newspaper Articles
Folder 37	2000s Oak Park Fair Housing and Integration Newspaper Articles
Folder 38	Undated Oak Park Fair Housing and Integration Newspaper Articles

Subseries II. Fair Housing Scholarly Articles & Books

Shelf 12*	1972 <i>The Challenge to Oak Park: A Suburban Community Faces Racial Change</i> by Roberta L. Raymond (brown folder) *Located in Research Center
Shelf 12*	1979 <i>The Oak Park Strategy: Community Control of Racial Change</i> by Carole Goodwin (3) *Located in Research Center
Folder 39	1983 “The Legality and Efficacy of Homeowner’s Equity Assurance: A Study of Oak Park, Illinois” by Maureen A. McNamara
Shelf 12*	1988 <i>Government, Race, and Elementary Education in Oak Park, Illinois: A Case History of Decision Making</i> by Robert Wesley Giles (black binder) *Located in Research Center

Folder 40

2000/2001 *Reconsidering the Oak Park Strategy: The Conundrums of Integration* by Evan McKenzie and Jay Ruby

Shelf 12*

2009 *Suburban Promised Land: The Emerging Black Community in Oak Park, Illinois, 1880-1980* by S. West, P.T. Sinko, and F. Lipo

*Located in Research Center