



St. Charles  
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## **PORTLAND HOUSING BUREAU**

**Dan Saltzman, Commissioner**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 7, 2016

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## **Oak Leaf Mobile Home Park purchased by non-profit partnership with funding from Portland Housing Bureau**

### **Preservation of affordable housing in Cully neighborhood ends threat of eviction and homelessness for residents who organized to save their homes**

NE KILLINGSWORTH ST, PORTLAND – Residents of the Oak Leaf Mobile Home Park in Northeast Portland’s Cully neighborhood are breathing a sigh of relief after the park was purchased last week by a coalition of non-profit organizations, using funds loaned by the Portland Housing Bureau (PHB). The acquisition of the Oak Leaf ends a nearly year-long threat that the park would be closed down and 25 low-income families evicted.

The purchase of the Oak Leaf was finalized Nov. 30. Living Cully, a coalition of community development non-profits, secured the loan from PHB to complete the \$1.25 million acquisition, preserving the homes of low-income families, older adults, veterans, and people living with disabilities.

“This is personal for me because I’ve lived in and around the Cully neighborhood for my entire life,” said Oak Leaf resident Victor Johanson. “Now that I’m getting older and living month-to-month on a disability check, I can’t afford to live anywhere else. On behalf of my neighbors here at the park, thank you to Commissioner Saltzman and the Housing Bureau for responding to our advocacy and helping us save our community.

“Housing is a human right. We are proud that we’ve protected that right for ourselves, and for all the people who will live here in the future,” Johanson stated.

The Oak Leaf is one of 62 mobile home parks in Portland, and the first to be owned by a non-profit organization dedicated to affordable housing. As property values continue to rise, advocates and policymakers worry that other parks will be targeted for closure and redevelopment.

“As the City’s first mobile home park preservation effort, this is a huge milestone,” said Portland City Commissioner Dan Saltzman, who oversees the Portland Housing Bureau. “There are still many steps ahead to ensure the park is upgraded, but I’m proud that we were able to navigate this new and unfamiliar territory to save the Oak Leaf for all the families that call it home.”

Having assumed ownership of the Oak Leaf, Living Cully immediately contracted with St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County (SVDP) to begin operating the park. Meanwhile, SVDP is working with PHB to apply for federal funds that could be used in 2017 to purchase the Oak Leaf from Living Cully and repay PHB’s loan.

SVDP would then serve as long-term owner and operator of the park -- a role it has played at five manufactured housing communities elsewhere in the Willamette Valley. In each of those cases, SVDP has made improvements to the park and its homes, enhanced the quality of life for residents, and maintained affordable rents for people who might otherwise face homelessness.

“Affordable housing is a scarce resource everywhere in this state, especially in Portland,” said SVDP Executive Director Terry McDonald. “We need to take advantage of any opportunity to protect and preserve mobile home parks, which are a vitally important source of affordable housing.

“It’s important to remember that there are real living, breathing human beings in these parks,” McDonald added. “Finding ways to protect parks like Oak Leaf will create more opportunities to prevent homelessness in the future.”

Oak Leaf residents began the fight to save their homes in January 2016, when they learned that the owner planned to sell the park to a developer who would close down the Oak Leaf and redevelop the land with higher-rent housing. With support from Living Cully, nearby St. Charles Catholic Church, and Legal Aid Services of Oregon, residents successfully pressured the owner to instead sell the park to them. After entering into a purchase agreement in June, the residents rallied hundreds of supporters at City Council hearings and gained the commitment of Commissioner Saltzman to use PHB funds to preserve the park.

After an arduous, months-long process of securing the funding and partnerships needed to acquire and operate the park, residents worked with Living Cully, SVDP and PHB over the last two months to complete the purchase before the sales contract expired at the end of November.

“Preserving the Oak Leaf is a victory for the current residents, who have fought for nearly a year to save their homes. Many faced the prospect of homelessness if the Oak Leaf had closed down,” said Cameron Herrington, Coordinator of Living Cully’s Anti-Displacement Program. “Bringing the Oak Leaf under community control is also a victory for the Cully neighborhood, and for generations of future residents who will have access to affordable housing here.”

SVDP, Living Cully and St. Charles Church will now work with residents to begin rehabilitating the Oak Leaf's infrastructure and repairing the residents' homes; a long backlog of critical repairs and maintenance issues was left behind by the previous, out-of-state owner.

"The Cully neighborhood, including our churches, has stepped up to support our neighbors at the Oak Leaf throughout this campaign," said Gabe Triplett, Pastoral Associate at St. Charles Church. "For years, our faith community has been supporting people living at the trailer parks in the neighborhood with daily needs such as food, clothing, and utility assistance. The fight against displacement is an extension of our parish's effort to live out our faith through works of mercy and justice. St. Charles is proud to work with Living Cully and our other partners to secure as much low-income housing for the neighborhood as we can."

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