

Preserving Ocracoke Island's Waterfront Heritage

November 10, 2013

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Land Conservation Loan Program assists in purchase of historic Community Square

Ocracoke, N.C. — Today the **Ocracoke Foundation** announced the acquisition of the Community Square, a 0.5-acre waterfront property in the heart of the Ocracoke Island historic district. The Foundation was able to purchase the property with generous financial support from Foundation partners and The Conservation Fund's **Land Conservation Loan Program**.



Ocracoke Island Community Square. Photo courtesy Ocracoke Foundation.

Located along the shores of Silver Lake, the Community Square has served as a hub for commerce and social activity for decades. Many early island [photographs](#) depict daily life centered around the Square's iconic Community Store, the Will Willis Fish House, the Ice Plant and the island's first generator plant.

Since 2008, the Ocracoke Foundation (OFI) has been working with the Senseney Family to develop a conservation strategy that would revitalize the historic site. With the support of The Conservation Fund's **Resourceful Communities Program**, OFI engaged community members in ensuring that the natural, cultural, historic and human assets of Ocracoke Island are protected and promoted. This purchase is the first step of OFI's Community Square Revitalization Project. The Foundation will be working to preserve the cultural and historical resources on the property, where people of all ages can gather to access the harbor, connect with the heritage of the fishing community and visit at the Community Store once again.

"Our primary goal is preserving and protecting the Community Square," said Scott Bradley, OFI Board President. "From there we can accomplish so much: long term working waterfront access, open availability for public use, environmental improvements, public restrooms, value-added local foods production, a space for social gatherings and a source of dedicated funding for community needs. We are fortunate that David Senseney and his family are in full support of these goals."

The vision for the Community Square is to recapture the very reason people have always been drawn to this un-bridged barrier island: to leave the clutter of urban life behind, become engrossed in the pristine natural environment and become part of the traditional fishing village atmosphere. "Rejuvenating this distinctive identity and doing our part to preserve this is essential; it is a core value of this community and the key to its economic success," said Robin Payne, OFI Executive Director.

"Step one of the restoration process is reconnecting with the history of the buildings, landscape, docks and daily activities," added Payne. "To fulfill this goal we will be relying on native families to be part of the redesign process."

"OFI's multi-faceted approach to the preservation of special places like Community Square serves as a sustainable model for other rural communities, where the potential is great but the funding is limited," said Reggie Hall, Director of the Conservation Fund's LCLP. "We're honored to provide quick financial assistance for the purchase and revitalization of this beloved community hub and excited to see its transformation."

About The Conservation Fund

At The Conservation Fund, we combine a passion for conservation with an entrepreneurial spirit to protect your favorite places before they become just a memory. A hallmark of our work is our deep, unwavering understanding that for conservation solutions to last, they need to make economic sense. Top-ranked, we have protected more than 7 million acres across America.

Press Release Contacts

Ann Simonelli | The Conservation Fund | 703-908-5809 | asimonelli@conservationfund.org

Robin Payne | Ocracoke Foundation | (252)

921-0365 | robinpayne@ocracokefoundation.org | www.ocracokefoundation.org

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CONTACT



Ann Simonelli

Arlington, VA
 (703) 908-5809
asimonelli@conservationfund.org

For general media inquiries or for more information about a press release, please call or [email Ann](mailto:Ann).



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