



## **Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA) Responds to Glendale Protest and Testimony before City Council – Committee of the Whole**

On March 30, 2016, a number of MPHA Glendale Townhome residents, neighbors and community activists testified before the Minneapolis City Council – Committee of the Whole and then proceeded to march from City Hall to the Minnesota State Offices of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). During testimony and in interviews certain claims were made about MPHA’s intentions for Glendale, the management practices of the Agency and MPHA’s commitment to its residents.

### **Background:**

Glendale Townhomes is a property that is owned by the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA). It is located in the Prospect Park neighborhood in Southeast Minneapolis on a 14.5 acre site, with an average density of 13 units per acre. It was developed in 1952 with 184 family residential units in 28 buildings.

Glendale Townhomes has served as home and a welcoming community to thousands of low-income families and, in recent history, as a new home for many Southeast Asian and East African refugee families who have immigrated to the United States and Minnesota. It is a community that is specifically made available to families with dependent children.

Glendale faces significant challenges which are exacerbated by severe cuts which the U. S. Congress has made over the years to public housing operations and capital dollars. HUD has required housing authorities to conduct an independent Physical Needs Assessment (PNA) on all public housing properties. The recently completed PNA for Glendale identified over \$15 million in unmet capital needs.

This level of need coupled with the shortfall of funds from HUD requires MPHA to engage in a strategy for responding to the needs and preserving affordable housing in Glendale.

### **Testimony before the Committee of the Whole:**

- Defend Glendale Leader claims City Council has been “absent” in discussions about Glendale.
  - Council Member Gordon has played an active role in the Glendale process. He has met with MPHA and Defend Glendale on numerous occasions, attended Resident and Community meetings, engaged with MPHA staff to initiate a more comprehensive and open approach to Glendale. This action resulted in a decision by the City to cancel the Public Hearing scheduled for July 14, 2015 and withdraw of the Housing Development Project Plan and by MPHA to take the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) option off the table. He is also working with MPHA and Defend Glendale to facilitate meetings that will move discussions about the current and future needs of Glendale.

- There are no established plans for Glendale, no developer selection process and no funding secured. These actions are part of the process that would require the City Council to play an active role in consideration of options for Glendale.
- Glendale Resident comments that Glendale has been a good place for residents to live, easy access to jobs, education and services.
  - MPHA has played a significant role in assisting Glendale families. Throughout its history MPHA has been – and will continue to be – a champion and advocate of cultural diversity and strong communities. MPHA established the PICA Head Start facility in Glendale, supported Luxton Park, worked with Eastside Neighborhood Services to implement supportive services programs for resident families, helped preserve Pratt School, created a on-site Food Shelf and has been a good partner with Prospect Park. MPHA seeks to not only sustain those achievements but to enhance them as we work with residents and the community to create a vision for Glendale. MPHA’s goal is to ensure the preservation of Glendale as a place where very low-income families can make their homes.
- Resident alleges MPHA is racist, acts in a racist manner toward immigrants and residents don’t call in work-orders because they don’t get done.
  - MPHA categorically denies allegations of racism and discrimination against immigrants. MPHA is among the most diverse work places in the Metro Area MPHA currently has 281 employees, of these 109 are African American, 15 Asian, 9 multi racial 6 Hispanic and 3 Native American. These groups comprise 51% of MPHA’s workforce.
  - MPHA’s family resident population is even more diverse with over 90% families of color and over 47% non-native born.
  - The Agency has been recognized by the National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC) seven times over the last ten years for its success in working with minority contractors.
  - MPHA tracks all work-orders and can demonstrate that work orders have been and are completed in a timely manner. On a monthly basis, MPHA provides reports to the Board of Commissioners on its work-order numbers and completion time. This includes work-orders for Glendale.
- Resident doesn’t want to move. Resident also expressed concerns about Section 8 and how the resident feels safe at Glendale.
  - MPHA has consistently stated and put in writing in its communications with residents and the Prospect Park Community, that if relocation is needed for a rehabilitation or redevelopment option for Glendale, MPHA will work with each individual family and find a place for them to live prior to any work being done.
  - MPHA is bound by the United States Code 42 USC 4636 of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act which prohibits requiring a family to move from their dwelling unit because of any program or project undertaken by a Federal agency or with Federal financial assistance, unless the head of the displacing agency is satisfied that comparable replacement housing is available to such person.
  - HUD also requires that if residents are relocated, families be provided relocation counseling and financial assistance. Each family would receive one-on-one counseling and assistance to help in finding suitable temporary housing during the rehabilitation or remodeling process.

- No family will be left homeless by any action taken by MPHA at Glendale.
  - In response to the fears shared by residents regarding the challenges relocation could cause for them and their families, MPHA has also developed a strategy that if a comprehensive rehabilitation or redevelopment of Glendale is to occur, the project would be phased in such a manner that families can remain in the Glendale community while any work is conducted.
- Older Resident shared: – Government resettled us here, we have no wealth, have lived here 11 years. Glendale is safe, has good transportation. “We are not a piece on a Monopoly Board.”
- MPHA is proud of the fact that it’s been the first home for many immigrants as they become settled in this country. MPHA agrees that Glendale is safe and in a good location, we want to insure that it remains so for future generations.
  - MPHA also recognizes that there is an acute shortage of affordable housing and that as Glendale residents age and their children move away, they may be required to move due to HUD’s requirements which set occupancy standards.
  - MPHA is interested in exploring the possibility of developing additional affordable housing at Glendale including a senior housing development. This would create homes for others in the community who need affordable homes and a place where aging Glendale residents could move and remain in the community once their children are no longer in the home.
- Glendale resident – People with kids love it here, don’t want to be forced out. MPHA will sell the land and we will have to move far away. We support each other. It took 2 days for MPHA to fix my stove.
- MPHA agrees that Glendale is a great place for families with children. This is why we are committed to preserve and possibly expand affordable housing opportunities for low-income families in Glendale. Every option being considered for Glendale has a firm commitment to preserve the 184 units of deeply subsidized housing for very low-income families. MPHA has committed to explore options that would allow families to remain on site during rehabilitation or redevelopment. None of the options being considered by MPHA includes selling the land.
  - Depending on the availability of parts, taking two days to fix a stove, while a temporary hardship for the family, is well within typical property management standards.
- Community Activist – There is a nation-wide attack on public and affordable housing, if residents pushed out there will be no place for them to live.
- MPHA is very aware that the Federal Government and Congress have made deep cuts in both subsidy and capital funding that have threatened public housing program across the nation and MPHA is no exception; that’s why MPHA is insistent on looking for options to preserve Glendale.
  - MPHA has no intention of pushing residents out.
- Student – Invest in human resources and people, not gentrification.
- MPHA agrees. MPHA in every option considered and to be considered is committed to preserving the 184 units of family subsidized housing in Glendale. MPHA is open to the possibility of creating additional affordable housing.

- South Minneapolis resident – Rents are too high in the City, Glendale residents can't afford to live anywhere else. The people who serve the rich can't afford to live in the City.
  - This is why MPHA wants to preserve Glendale for low income families now and in the future and why we are interested in exploring the possibility of creating additional affordable housing.
  
- Resident – People are moving out of Glendale and MPHA is not renting units and telling people looking at units you don't want to move here because we are demolishing the units in 5 years.
  - This allegation is simply not true. On April 1, 2016 MPHA had 4 vacancies with one move in date scheduled and the three remaining units soon to be leased to families from our waiting list. MPHA will continue to prepare vacant units for re-rental as a routine part of its property management responsibilities. Frankly it would be irresponsible for MPHA to leave units vacant while thousands of families remain on the waiting list.

**MPHA Executive Director /CEO Statement:**

As Executive Director of MPHA, it is my responsibility to position the Agency so that it can ensure the long term viability of affordable housing in Minneapolis. We have had families in Glendale since 1952 and it is my goal and the MPHA Board's mission to ensure safe, affordable, decent and quality housing will be there for future generations.

I appreciate and understand the concerns that Glendale residents have expressed and those protesting in support of the residents. I look forward to working with all stakeholders to meet the challenges facing Glendale.