**Minnesota House of Representatives**



October 8, 2015

Dear City Council Colleagues:

We are writing to strongly encourage you to respond positively to the strong grassroots message we are hearing from the residents of Glendale Townhomes.

We have both been invited to attend meetings of the residents and heard many moving testimonials about their concerns as a community, most notably:

1. Their strong desire to maintain the integrity of the community that has grown there with strong neighborly ties that unite a culturally diverse community--including the fact that most children attend the nearby Pratt School; families use the Luxton Community Center where multi-lingual resources are available; community gardening abounds in the back and side-yards where residents are sharing various traditional cultural farming skills that provide access to healthy food; families have built bonds with each other; there is a sense of safety from crime that plagues other neighborhoods; strong social networks are a source of stability to the many refugee, immigrant and low-income families who live there; access to light rail is an important job-related and livability asset; a mixed income community already exists around the Townhomes and those neighborhood residents are clearly demonstrating their support for the continuation of the Glendale Townhomes as public housing, especially as they become more aware of the city's potential plans for replacing it. (Drive or walk around the neighborhood and note all the lawns signs of support)

2. The threat of displacement of the current Glendale Public Housing residents is creating great stress and disruption in the daily lives of the residents. Individuals, including children, are sleepless, have anxiety and express bewilderment and fear about their future for a place to live. Fear of homelessness and displacement from community are major themes expressed by the residents, especially those who have already experienced being refugees without a home.

3. Rehabilitation and even regular maintenance of the existing housing has apparently been discontinued. That concern was reported in an Oct. 6 meeting. We understand that repeated calls for such basics as plumbing repair have gone unanswered for extended periods of time. The question arises: is this housing being allowed to become run-down and worthy of being demolished and replaced?

4. Information about how the Glendale Townhomes are being considered part of an Innovative Project that has not included the residents input has created great fear about displacement and gentrification.

5. Glendale Townhomes residents want their homes rehabilitated so that they can continue to be a healthy, viable, and diverse community. They are willing to go through a process that allows rehabilitation to happen in an orderly and community-preserving way.

6. Residents are observing major renovation of the Glendale Townhome's administrative offices and wonder how this is being financed. Priorities are in question since they have been told that there is a shortage of funds for their homes to receive basic maintenance.

We have a few other questions and concerns based on our role as state legislators:

1. It would be helpful to have a specific accounting of the use of the state bonding MPHA received for rehab purposes in the 2014 legislative session. It was won through strong lobbying by the City, by legislators like us who recognize that public housing like this can never be replaced at affordable public cost if allowed to deteriorate and/or be discontinued or privatized.

2. Is it true that basic maintenance is not being done at Glendale Townhomes for lack of funds?

3. What current or potential state resources might be targeted to assist the preservation of this important public housing resource for its residents?

4. Is it true that a plan for privatization is underway for this public housing? Is that being proposed for other public housing in Minneapolis?

5. What is the current waiting list for Section 8 vouchers? How many are slated for Minneapolis? (We are told by residents that such vouches have been promised, and will likely only provide possible residence in the suburbs).

Since we represent these and/or many other public housing residents in Minneapolis, we are concerned about the lack of involvement and consultation with residents and their representatives that is apparently underway. Please consider these resident's concerns. It is clear to us that this is not just a few disgruntled residents raising these significant issues, but a whole community that needs to be met with positive involvement. We are particularly concerned about this because one of us (Rep. Karen Clark) is the lead DFL Rep on Housing and the other (Rep. Phyllis Kahn) is the state rep for this area and lived for many years quite near Glendale with close friends of all members of our family from that community.

Please respond at your earliest convenience. We are aware that there is a public meeting Thursday evening, October 8, and also a City Council meeting on Friday, October 9. If we can be of assistance in resolving these concerns, we stand ready to do so.

Sincerely,

Karen Clark, State Representative Phyllis Kahn, State Representative

651.296.0294/612.237.7156 651.296.4257

Rep.Karen.Clark@House.MN Rep.Phyllis.Kahn@House.MN