Ruthann Ovenshire, 201 Bedford St. SE

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When the Glendale site was a barren hill, I used to go there to dig in the gravel and clay. My brother and I, of German and English stock, were then the darkest kids at Sidney Pratt Elementary School. Now the Somali and Hmong children have enriched the school culture as their families have enriched Prospect Park. It is the Somali who have kept Sidney Pratt open. I delight in seeing kids of all hues when I go to the school for my exercise class.

Since the threat to Glendale, I have been attending Defend Glendale meetings and meetings with the MPHA staff. I am there to support the residents of Glendale.

Many of the current residents of Glendale are refugees. Glendale may be their first safe and secure housing. Please don’t deprive them of their family homes, their community support system and their neighborhood school, not even for a year or two.

The Glendale residents have been promised Section 8 vouchers. Landlords don’t have to accept Section 8 vouchers and don’t have to give their renters the same considerations and guarantees as public housing. I think Section 8 vouchers and privately run housing would be a disaster for the current Glendale residents.

I simply don’t accept that there is no alternative to tearing down Glendale. If the homes are past being renovated, it’s Minneapolis Public Housing Authority’s fault that they weren’t properly maintained. However, I understand that Glendale passes HUD inspections with flying colors. The town homes and green spaces of Glendale were an improvement over the formerly barren hill. They are good homes with play spaces and gardens for families with children. Apartment buildings would not be family-friendly.

The figures MPHA has given us as to the cost of renovation include things that residents don’t even need. There was a lot of money for air-conditioning of office space not used by the residents. New doors for every unit—I’ve heard residents say they feel safe behind their present steel doors and do not want them replaced. The cost of new appliances for every unit is included even though some appliances have recently been replaced. Apparently a few years ago other public housing units elsewhere got energy-saving insulation and windows, but not Glendale. At Glendale, the energy-saving measure was to set thermostats so that residents couldn’t turn them up to keep warm.

Privately held five-story apartment buildings with 550+ units would be detrimental to Prospect Park, a designated historic residential district. We bought our homes here to live in a quiet, residential neighborhood. We already have new apartment buildings on the east, new apartment buildings on the west, new apartment buildings on the south side of University Avenue with more to come, including even a hotel, north of University. Enough!

Thank you.