

**After 14 Months of Resident Organizing, MPHA Begins to Weatherize Glendale Homes**

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On October 18, 2017, Jeff Horwich, the Communications Director of the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, posted an article on the MPHA website titled “MPHA, SRC, and CenterPoint Energy team up for extensive weatherization of Glendale Townhomes.” ₁

The article proudly announces the continuation of a pilot program in partnership with CenterPoint Energy and the  Sustainable Resources Center, a nonprofit that works to provide safe and warm homes at no cost to residents, to properly insulate and weatherize several homes in Glendale. It states that through this program, which began in June 2017, 10-12 more homes will be weatherized by the end of 2017, and all homes in Glendale will be fully weatherized “in 2018.”

It is a gross misrepresentation of reality for MPHA to tout this project as a result of its own efforts. In fact, MPHA has consistently put off engagement with this project since early 2016.  And, only at the tireless organizing efforts of residents of Glendale Townhomes, with the support of allied political representatives, has MPHA - a year and a half later - finally dragged its feet to accept this project.

In the winter of 2015-16, as in every winter since 2010 when MPHA took over the heat, residents of Glendale were feeling the dangerous effects of poor insulation in their homes.  Temperatures were regularly below 68 degrees. Heat wasn’t working in the bedrooms of homes. Residents’ requests to MPHA to fix their heat were being ignored. One resident with a sick child was callously told that there was nothing to be done about the heat, and that they should put blankets and socks on the child to keep him warm.

The Defend Glendale &  Public Housing Coalition first heard about the Sustainable Resources Center during the first week of February 2016 in a meeting with Council Member Kevin Reich, who was attempting to help residents find solutions to the lack of adequate heating in Glendale. Resident organizers were hopeful about SRC services and hoped that SRC would come in earlier to insulate the homes. Residents thought that this would mean their  homes would be safe and free of dangerous temperature conditions before the next winter came around.

However, nearly year passed, and though the project would have cost the Public Housing Authority nothing, no movement was made towards insulating or weatherizing any homes in Glendale because MPHA sat on the project.  Since MPHA took over the heat as the landlord, residents were not allowed  to seek outside services such as SRC or Centerpoint to  weatherize and insulate their homes.

On January 18, 2017, in the middle of another frigid winter, Defend Glendale & Public Housing Coalition wrote an email to all of their allies calling out MPHA for refusing to increase the heat in Glendale Townhomes, which was intentionally putting families and children at risk and committing acts of discrimination. ₂  At this point,  Council Member Cam Gordon  assured us that SRC would be coming into insulate the homes, but MPHA was not moving.

On January 19, 2017 Minnesota State Representative Karen Clark wrote a letter to then-MPHA Executive Director Cora McCorvey expressing deep concern and disappointment in MPHA’s lack of action to insulate Glendale or address the heat issue in any way, noting that “serious questions of unlawful discrimination towards this largely immigrant community under the Fair Housing Act and our state housing codes are being raised in this publicly funded housing residence.” ₃

Finally, on March 21, 2017, after 13  months and  a long winter waiting for SRC, MPHA released a statement announcing a pilot project in collaboration with SRC and CenterPoint Energy to weatherize several homes in Glendale. The pilot project began in May/June of  2017.

Residents are grateful to SRC, but MPHA should have allowed them to insulate the homes a year ago  which would have resulted in all the homes being insulated by now. We believe that MPHA waited because they wanted to figure out next plans to privatize, sell and demolish Glendale, and continue  dis-investmenting  and neglect until that goal is reached.

The success of this pilot project will now lead to all homes in Glendale being insulated  “in 2018.” This means that for many residents of Glendale, the winter of 2017-18 will be yet another struggle due to inadequate heating in their homes which MPHA could have avoided. Had MPHA engaged with Sustainable Resources Center a year ago,  rather than refusing to address the issue,  the homes would be fully insulated by now, and  the poor heating would be resolved.

Ultimately, despite its attempts to claim otherwise, MPHA was forced to accept the insulation and weatherization project because of the organizing efforts of Defend Glendale & Public Housing Coalition, elected officials and city allies. We thank SRC and Center Point for insulating our homes.  If residents did not speak up, MPHA would have easily allowed families to freeze for years to come, as they have done since 2010.

1. <http://mphaonline.org/mpha-src-and-centerpoint-energy-team-up-for-extensive-weatherization-of-glendale-townhomes/>

2. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ORzzz_stwnrVepPdSKgO2JRLvZrBjfEMWL1b9ma1t8I/edit?usp=sharing>

 3. <http://tinyurl.com/Rep-Clark-to-MPHA-Glendale>.

**Sincerely,**

**Defend Glendale Campaign & Public Housing Coalition**

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