

**January 2017**

Commentary from Defend Glendale Campaign: Gentrification plans of MPHA and Sherman Associates

Minneapolis is in a housing crisis. As condos go up, driving up rents, thousands in the city are homeless. Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA) is selling off housing that thousands rely on. New public-private partnerships to provide housing inevitably transfer funding and tax dollars for housing from the state to the pockets of landlords & private corporations. All the while, the city is becoming further gentrified, pushing people of color and the working poor out to white suburbs where they have no access to transportation or jobs, and feel unsafe amid the post-election racism.

For two years now, residents of the Glendale Townhomes have been fighting to protect their community from destruction. They are fighting the unscrupulous interests of developers and politicians to fill their pockets, and the rhetoric that threatens public housing.

Take for example the latest report Sherman Associates presented to the meeting of the MPHA on June 22, 2016 (<http://tinyurl.com/Sherman-Report-Glendale> (The Defend Glendale Campaign analyzed the report and discovered a bias towards redevelopment, which transforms a public good for the many into private profit for a few [**http://tinyurl.com/DGC-Response-to-Sherman-Report**](http://tinyurl.com/DGC-Response-to-Sherman-Report) .

Significantly, when comparing the number of key benefits and drawbacks for each option, the report directs readers towards perceiving Option 4 as the only feasible option. Redevelopment and gentrification are political choices about who we believe to be worthy of housing, transportation, healthcare, and education. The arbitrary number of benefits and drawback in the table shows who each Option values - the Glendale community or redevelopers. For example, despite the fact that residents rely on public transit to reach healthcare providers, schools, and jobs, the report states that Full Development will provide “More direct LRT access.” Redevelopment changes *who* gets to access to the Light Rail from low- income people to gentrifiers.

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| Option | Number of Benefits | Number of Drawbacks |
| Recommendation 1: “Significant Rehab of Existing Townhomes” | 3 | 8 |
| Recommendation 2: “Phased Hybrid Development” | 8 | 8 |
| Recommendation 3: “Phased Hybrid Development – All New Construction” | 9 | 5 |
| Recommendation 4: “Full Development – All New Construction” | 13 | 4 |

The report does not investigate Resident retention strategies. This is because tenant retention is never the goal. Research shows that the transformation of public housing into public-private partnership is done to remove an essential safety net from those that need it the most so that often only 1 out of 4 residents may come back. Gentrification displaces low -income families from Minneapolis and its amenities. None of the 113 million dollars Sherman is asking for to demolish Glendale comes from private investors, it is all tax dollars and government funds. Yet MPHA says they have no money to make basic rehab while they get funds from State Finance Agency yearly to make repairs/rehab in need properties and every year they skip Glendale and rehab others.

The report provides no timeline for its lauded full redevelopment option, nor a schedule for upkeep during the additional work needed to explore the Sherman Associate scenarios. This lack of interest in devising a timeline shows that MPHA is engaging in a process of “redevelopment by neglect” - refusing to upkeep while considering redevelopment plans with the hope that the homes will fall apart thereby enabling redevelopment. Although MPHA tabled this report, they refuse to provide funding for repairs placing the Glendale Townhomes under continuous threat. In December of 2016, City of Minneapolis voted to hire Mr. Gregory P. Russ to lead MPHA without community input or engagement. Mr. Russ is known for his national record of privatizing and selling off public housing to private corporations. This confirms MPHA still wants to privatize Glendale, other MPHA properties and gentrify Minneapolis as they over -see 20,0000 residents who are low-income , majority people of color, seniors and the disabled.

Minneapolis counts housing affordability based on a percentage of the overall median income. Considering the vast wealth gap, reproduced through race and ethnicity, affordability based on median income does not speak to low-income Minneapolis residents. There is a huge different between income based housing for low income residents that are public housing, and the term politicans use now that is “affordable housing”. “Affordable housing” is not for the poor nor is it for the working class. It is for the middle class. Therefore, the development of further public housing - where one pays a third of their income, no matter what that income is - the only way to increase actual housing affordability in Minneapolis.

The recent Center for Urban and Regional Affairs report on gentrification shows that Minneapolis is a tale of two cities: in one city, middle class whites live in a paradise of accessibility to jobs, entertainment, and quality of life; in the other city, working class folk and people of color struggle in substandard or unaffordable housing, are pushed out of the city altogether, or are made homeless. We need a city and a city government that implements strict rent control measures, increases its public housing arsenal, and repairs and protects the public housing it currently has in stock. For an equitable Minneapolis, we must recognizing housing as a human right and public housing as a public good.

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