* **To MPHA: What Vacant Units? What “informed discussion”?**

In his response to the Daily Planet article, MPHA Communications Manager Jeff Horowich is irate that Defend Glendale & Public Housing Coalition is concerned that tenants may be given a voucher and forced to move. He indignantly asserts that tenants will (but of course!) have the option to be transferred to vacancies within the site. He states:

MPHA/Horowich: “This [the Daily Planet article] leaves out **an essential fact that should inform the discussion** that follows: **residents would always have a choice of these options."**

[Note: “these options” refers to 1) moving tenants into other vacancies in the building, 2) offer other housing within MPHA’s portfolio or 3) offer Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV).” ]

The paragraphs after this assert that families would be forced to take a voucher and move. This is not true, and suggesting so is irresponsible.

**First,** In what document legally binding on the MPHA and enforceable against the MPHA by public housing tenants are these options, along with Horowich’s assertion that “residents would always have a choice of these options”, stated? Answer: None

**Secondly, w**here are the vacant units assumed to exist at Glendale or “other housing within MPHA’s portfolio?” Answer: MPHA has a long wait list and no vacant units.

Horwich’s talking points came from a plan drawn up by private developer Sherman Associates which has now become the blueprint MPHA wants to use to displace residents. IIn 2015 and 2016, George Sherman a private developer and owner of Sherman Associates - one of the largest private developers in Minneapolis - wrote a report for MPHA of how he wants to purchase and subsequently demolish Glendale Townhomes. It was published in the City Pages in July 2016 that the current chairman of MPHA F.C. Tyler, has a law firm that lobbies for Sherman Associates at the state and city levels. It was clear to residents and to public housing allies at that time Sherman wanted to take Glendale and build condos. His report was called the Sherman Plans. Defend Glendale wrote a response called The Defend Glendale Option: A Response to Sherman [**http://tinyurl.com/DGC-Response-to-Sherman-Report**](http://tinyurl.com/DGC-Response-to-Sherman-Report).

It was clear to non-public housing residents that developers wanted to take over public housing. Now residents and citizens of Minneapolis are fighting the same battle again, in 2017. Now, it is not just Glendale, but all of Minneapolis Public Housing. There are 17,000 people currently on a waiting list to be placed in Minneapolis Public Housing. The waiting list has been closed since 2008, and Minneapolis has no more properties to place residents. We are curious, as residents move out of Glendale or other public housing, and the 17,000 people on the waiting list still wait to be placed: will MPHA hold these units vacant units for demolition, denying low income people on the waiting units that are available? This is the only conceivable way for there to be the so-called vacant units Jeff Horowich and Gregory Russ have promised.

Using Sherman plan again as a talking points, and Horowich assuming vacancies in MPHA’s family public housing (and in Glendale in particular) fly in the face of housing reality, high occupancy retention, and the MPHA’s extensive waiting list. The monthly usage reports prepared for all MPHA properties (including Glendale) and presented to the MPHA Board at every Board Meeting shows a near 100% occupancy level every month at every MPHA property including Glendale. Again, there are 17,000 people on a wait list from high rises to family housing. So where are these vacant units that MPHA Communications Chief assume to exist? The only way MPHA can possibly have vacant units in their properties is to block folks on the waiting list from accessing housing. Is MPHA trying to keep people from getting housing on their waiting list living in shelters, or on the street, in order to move forward with their partnerships with private developers?

When push comes to shove and Glendale or other public housing does not have the number of vacancies required to demolish as described in for Sherman report,” or other similar plans, is it not likely that the MPHA will say *“Oops! Well, we can still give them a voucher and send them on their way.”* And the resident’s “choice of options” so blithely assured by the MPHA’s Communications Manager (but not legally binding on the MPHA, of course) will go up in smoke. *“Too bad. Well, we meant well.”* No, this was premeditated. This is all to destroy public housing and silence or bully anyone who speaks truth to power. Extensive research has been done at how similar MPHA plans are to similar plans that destroyed public housing in other cities. This is a well researched and documented published facts about the destruction of public housing, displacements of poor families and the role of MPHA. For more information, check out the links below.

So: you be the judge - - - Are Glendale and other growing public housing residents out of line raising this concern? And is the Daily Planet irresponsible (as MPHA’s Horowich charges) for reporting that concern? Or, is it the MPHA’s PR machine that is irresponsible for trying to slap down legitimate community concerns and accurate reporting and well researched issue?

Beyond these incredibly troubling lacks of proof of any of the statements Horwich and MPHA are making about residents’ guarantee of housing, it is frankly disturbing to see that the response of a government entity to concerns being raised by low-income communities about something as fundamental as the security of their housing is one of glibness bordering on hostility, rather than *legitimate engagement* with the communities raising these concerns. Housing is a human right.

It is disturbing to watch MPHA and Horwich fall all over themselves trying to prove that low-income residents and people of color are nothing but a bunch of crazies who don’t have their facts straight, rather than finding themselves concerned that their plans, which they say will supposedly benefits public housing residents, does not benefit public housing residents. Their plans destroys public housing, privatizes public housing and displaces public housing residents. They are misleading MPHA residents and Minneapolis citizens and when they are exposed instead of owning it and try to rectify and be transparent. MPHA has a huge PR machine led by Jeff Horwich to spread their misleading and misinformation.

This makes clear to me the *fact* that these plans are not at all about protecting and promoting housing for vulnerable communities, but instead intend to promote ugly gentrification that MPHA desperately wants to cover up with vague and misleading language. I have witnessed the hostility of MPHA towards organizers and residents raising concerns about these plans for months now, and their latest attacks on the Daily Planet’s reporting indicate just how far they are willing to go to preserve the web of lies they are building.

Sincerely,

Natalie Goodwin

Deeply concerned citizen of Minneapolis and public housing ally

[1] Sherman’s study entitled “Glendale Townhomes: A Rehabilitation

And Redevelopment Study (a presentation to the MPHA Board of Directors George E. Sherman January 27, 2016) states:

[**http://tinyurl.com/DGC-Response-to-Sherman-Report**](http://tinyurl.com/DGC-Response-to-Sherman-Report)

[**http://tinyurl.com/MPHA-Displacement-8-26-17**](http://tinyurl.com/MPHA-Displacement-8-26-17)

[**http://righttothecity.org/cause/we-call-these-projects-home/**](http://righttothecity.org/cause/we-call-these-projects-home/)

[**http://tinyurl.com/GAO-Audits-LIHTC**](http://tinyurl.com/GAO-Audits-LIHTC)

**https://popularresistance.org/how-a-federal-program-is-destroying-public-housing/**