



## Greg Russ of MPHA is Using Opportunity Atlas Mapping to Displace Public Housing & Section 8 Residents & Gentrify Minneapolis

### I. Introduction

Since his arrival as MPHA Executive Director in 2017, Greg Russ has engaged in an extensive PR campaign designed to convince the public that MPHA has no intentions to displace residents. This campaign has coincided with a misleading and dishonest campaign to justify the privatization of public housing through RAD conversion and Section 18 Demolition and Disposition. RAD conversion transfers ownership of public housing buildings to private ownership. The private investors/owners receive tax credits for taking over the buildings. The private investors use these funds to remodel and renovate the buildings to increase the marketability and attract higher income non-public housing residents. RAD advocates claim that contracts between the new owners and HUD will ensure that the buildings remain affordable for years to come, but RAD contracts can be terminated, for example, if the building goes into foreclosure. As a result, the rents go up and public housing residents are displaced. Section 18 Demolition and Disposition is the process public housing agencies use to sell or demolish public housing that they can no longer afford to maintain. MPHA is pursuing these programs in spite of the fact that MPHA's buildings are in good condition - for example, the Elliot Twins (under the "Cedars" category in the spreadsheet below) received a [physical inspection score](#) of 95 out of 100 from HUD inspectors in 2015. In addition, [MPHA has sufficient funding](#), as well as a surplus of \$23 million, to maintain public housing as a public good.

NORTHEAST	1815 Central Ave NE	Minneapolis	PHA in and for the City of Minneapolis	98	2/2/2015
HORN	3110 Blaisdell Ave	Minneapolis	PHA in and for the City of Minneapolis	90	1/26/2015
HIAWATHA	1707 3rd Ave S	Minneapolis	PHA in and for the City of Minneapolis	96	1/28/2015
GLENDAL	44 Saint Marys Ave SE	Minneapolis	PHA in and for the City of Minneapolis	97	2/11/2015
NORTH	314 Hennepin Ave	Minneapolis	PHA in and for the City of Minneapolis	95	2/9/2015
CEGAR	630 Cedar Ave S	Minneapolis	PHA in and for the City of Minneapolis	95	2/4/2015
SCATTERED SITES	907 8th Ave N	Minneapolis	PHA in and for the City of Minneapolis	82	1/25/2016
HERITAGE PARK	725 Aldrich Ave N	Minneapolis	PHA in and for the City of Minneapolis	70	1/8/2018

Following the City Council's unanimous passage of a [resolution endorsing MPHA's privatization and displacement plans](#) Greg Russ abruptly changed tactics, stating openly for the first time his intention to use something called the Opportunity Atlas to push families out of their neighborhoods.

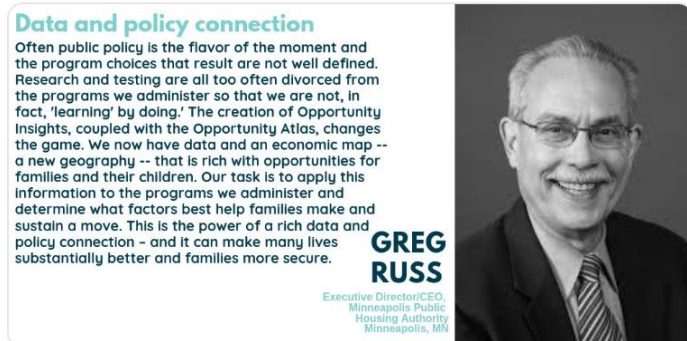
Designed by researchers from Brown University, Harvard, and the US Census Bureau, the Opportunity Atlas is, according to [Brown's website](#), "an interactive, map-based tool that can trace the root of outcomes, such as poverty and incarceration, back to the neighborhoods in which children grew up." It was launched on October 1, 2018, along with a research and policy institute called Opportunity Insights, whose goal is to translate the Atlas' findings into "policy solutions". The institute's [opening announcement](#) on its website quotes Greg Russ, in a statement, they also posted to Twitter. In the below statement, Greg Russ says "We now have data and an economic map - new geography - that is rich with opportunities for families and their children. **Our task is to apply this information to the programs we administer and determine what factors best help families make and sustain a move.**"

Mpls Public Housing Retweeted



**Opportunity Insights** @OppInsights · Dec 12

Find out why the [#OpportunityAtlas](#) "changes the game," according to [@MPLSPubHousing](#) CEO & Executive Director Greg Russ. [#AtlasInAction](#):



It is clear from Greg Russ's words that the Opportunity Atlas is designed to push out low-income residents out of their communities in the name of "opportunity." It is the latest race-based map that dictates where poor - especially Black and Brown - people should live according to the white establishment and institutions. One of the ways Greg Russ would use the Opportunity Atlas would be to move low-income BIPOC communities out of their stable communities and neighborhoods by privatizing public housing through RAD and Section 18, then moving residents out of the city by giving them Section 8 vouchers. This report will outline the methods Greg Russ will use this map to gentrify Minneapolis and end public housing for good which Mayor Jacob Frey and all of the city council members fully support.

## II. What is the Opportunity Atlas

Economist Raj Chetty, researchers from Harvard, Brown University, and the US Census Bureau developed the [Opportunity Atlas](#) with the stated aim of developing "local solutions to help more children rise out of poverty." How will it do this? *By labeling certain neighborhoods "good" and other neighborhoods "bad."* When you visit [their website](#), you are immediately greeted with a message asking you "Which neighborhoods in America offer children the best chance to rise out of poverty?" In other words, the Opportunity Atlas seeks to define certain neighborhoods as being good for children and other neighborhoods as being bad for children. The certain neighborhoods that are bad for children according to this map are majority Black and Brown communities and neighborhoods where a lot of minority businesses develop. The good neighborhoods are majority white neighborhoods. So once Black and Brown people are pushed out of their neighborhoods, there is an opportunity for developers to redevelop, reinvest in and gentrify the "bad neighborhoods" so wealthier majority white people can move in.

As a result, the "[Opportunity Atlas](#)" tries to rebrand displacement as being in the best interest of those who are displaced. This is a pro-gentrification public relation campaign which begins with the dishonest assertion that poverty is caused by geography. Disregarding the impacts of hundreds of years of systemic racism and classism, redlining, and discrimination in jobs and housing, the "Opportunity Atlas" implies that the solution to poverty is to take Black and Brown communities out of their neighborhoods and disperse them into the surrounding white suburbs. Rather than explicitly state their intention to break apart Black and Brown communities, the Opportunity Atlas uses vague and misleading language about "opportunity" in order to justify displacement as being in the best interest of low-income

households. This is the opposite of residents choosing where they want to live. This is a new method of gentrification, where residents are systematically pushed out of their neighborhoods using the false narrative of “neighborhood opportunity”.

Although many real estate investors are eager to capitalize on the gentrification of BIPOC low-income and working-class communities, they need assurances from the government that investing in these neighborhoods will bring healthy profits. This has led to the creation of a coordinated, national effort to subsidize investment in low-income communities. One form this takes is the federal government’s “Opportunity Zones” program. This program (which is separate from the Opportunity Atlas, despite a similar name) was passed as part of the 2017 tax plan. It provides tax breaks for investors who invest in designated zones (low-income census tracts). While it is touted as a way to benefit low-income communities, it is actually being used to [reward developers who are gentrifying these areas](#).

Other ways governments spur gentrification in cities are Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs), Tax Increment Financing (TIF), and other government grants and funding sources. The LIHTC program has been shown, [in a joint investigation by NPR and PBS](#), to be transferring more and more money to developers’ pockets as fewer affordable units are actually being built, thanks to a lack of government oversight.

So the “[Opportunity Atlas](#)” justifies the displacement of families out of their communities in the name of raising children out of poverty, while other government programs simultaneously advocate for the public subsidy of new developments in these communities once Black and Brown low-income families have left. Taken together, these policies will have the effect of pushing out the lowest income (mainly BIPOC) residents in these neighborhoods while attracting more upwardly mobile white residents through new construction and development. This, in turn, will increase rents and property taxes in the surrounding area, driving out more low-income families to be replaced by wealthier white people who are able to afford the increased costs. So, the benefits of reinvestment won’t go to a neighborhood’s historic communities, but rather to incoming gentrifiers, as well as to the developers profiting off of government-subsidized displacement.

### **III. Impacts of Displacement**

Beyond missing out on the new investments in their neighborhoods, displacement has a devastating impact on residents from Black and Brown, low-income and working-class communities. Displacement disrupts the social fabric of communities, tearing apart the networks people have developed to provide support and a sense of identity, including minority businesses that depend on these communities. Residents of color from low-income urban communities that are encouraged to leave their homes for Opportunity Areas in the rich, white suburbs will be further from friends, family, social services, and public transportation - all of which are essential to survival. Breaking apart Black and Brown communities will also have the effect of dispersing and dismantling particular voting blocks, making it harder for low-income BIPOC communities to come together and organize in their collective self-interest.

Studies have also shown that displacement has a negative impact on the mental health of displaced individuals. A [2018 CityLab article](#) on a study on the impacts of gentrification in New York found that “hospitalization rates for mental illness—including schizophrenia and mood disorders—are two times as high in displaced people versus those who remain in their neighborhood.” Many refugee communities

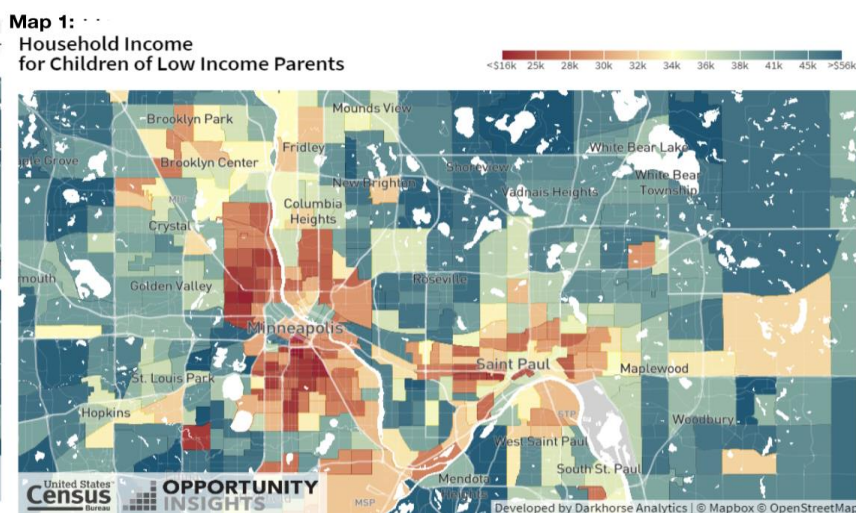
that faced displacement due to civil wars in their homelands will face PTSD from being displaced again by the Minneapolis City Council, Mayor Frey, MPHA and HUD. At the Elliot Twins public housing apartments in Minneapolis, since MPHA began pushing its RAD displacement plans in April 2017, vulnerable elders/seniors and many disabled residents began experiencing health issues such as higher blood pressure, diabetic attacks, heart issues, anxiety, and depression. Clearly, MPHA's redevelopment projects are not for the well-being of BIPOC, working class, people with disabilities, and other minority groups.

Just because a Black or Brown family moves into a white neighborhood does not guarantee that they will be out of poverty, because they are still facing systemic, chronic racism and classism. White neighborhoods actually fight to prevent low-income Black and Brown residents from moving into their neighborhood because they say it will bring down their property values. An example of this is the extreme discrimination that Section 8 voucher holders (the majority of whom are Black and Brown) face when they try to rent in majority white neighborhoods in Minneapolis. See Section VIII below for more information on this.

Relocating Black and Brown families to white neighborhoods do not address the systemic racism at the root of income and wealth disparities between white and BIPOC communities. In fact, residents will be more exposed to racism in the wealthy, white Opportunity Areas than in their own communities. East Africans and African Americans make up over 80% of the public housing population. East African Muslim residents of public housing face more intense Islamophobia and xenophobia in the suburbs, in addition to the extreme racism which white residents subject to the entire Black and Brown population.

MPHA already has a history of telling Muslim residents that they should move to the suburbs where they are less safe. While MPHA was planning to privatize Glendale in 2016, [residents were sent letters](#) encouraging them to move to a development managed by a private non-profit corporation in Maple Grove. The misleading part of this letter is that MPHA makes it seem like the homes are public housing, but they are not. They are project-based Section 8. East African Muslim residents from Glendale were targeted by MPHA to push them to move to Maple Grove where they would be disconnected from their community in Minneapolis, schools, and mosques, as well as vulnerable to [Islamophobic hate acts](#).

#### IV. A Look at the Opportunity Atlas Map for Minneapolis

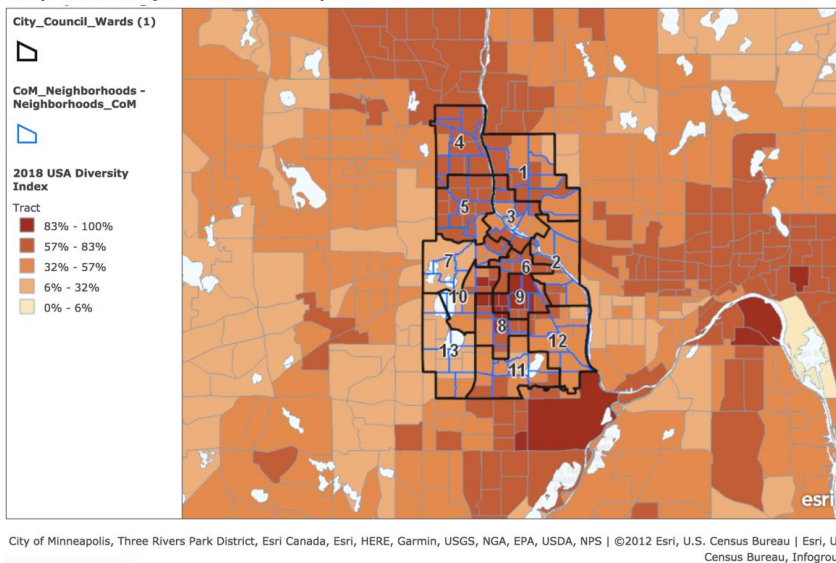




The Opportunity Atlas map above shows which neighborhoods are supposed to be good and bad for children born into low-income families. The red neighborhoods are “bad”, and the blue neighborhoods are “good”. Even though this map aims to help policy makers, government officials, and urban planners make decisions on development, it actually reduces the resident’s social identities to nothing more than data for a map. In fact, this map strips away the social complexities of an area since it does not contextualize how Minneapolis came to be due to racist and classist structural forces. This map is basically profiling BIPOC neighborhoods as a way to target them for gentrification and displacement. This is the map MPHA, with the approval of the City of Minneapolis, will use to push out tens of thousands of low-income Black, Black Muslim, seniors, families, and people with disabilities who live in public housing and long-time Section 8 voucher holders from North and South Minneapolis.

## V. Minneapolis Map by Diversity

Map 2: Diversity Index of Minneapolis



With closer inspection, the areas that the Opportunity Atlas labels as bad are also where Black and Brown communities live alongside a high population of immigrants. The darker the neighborhood, the more diverse it is. If you look at Map 2 above, you will see that the most diverse neighborhoods that have the most Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) living in them are the same neighborhoods that are labeled as “bad” in the Opportunity Atlas. If you look by wards, the neighborhoods and wards that are being targeted are Wards 4 and 5 in North Minneapolis which is majority African American and also has a large Hmong community, parts of Ward 1, which has large diverse working-class population, Ward 6 and 9 and parts of Ward 8, which are the most diverse areas in Minneapolis, with large populations of East African, African-American, Latino, and Indigenous communities.

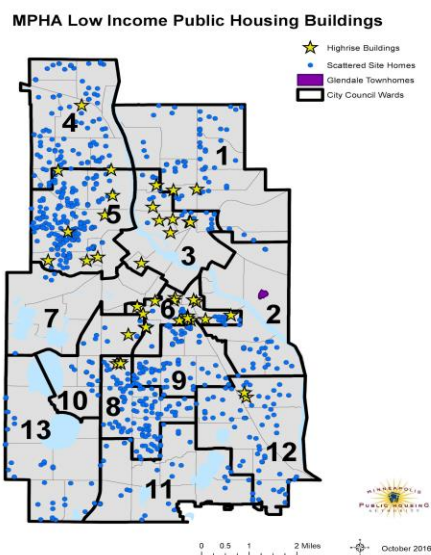
## VI. The Racial Wealth Gap

[The Area Median Income \(AMI\) for a family of four in the majority-white Twin Cities metro area was \\$94,300 in 2018.](#) The most recent census data lists the AMI for Black Minnesotan households as just \$33,436, or roughly a third of the metro’s AMI. Yet AMI is the metric on which government-subsidized affordable housing is based at \$94,300. The huge gap between the majority white Twin Cities AMI and the Black AMI household and income means that Black residents will not be able to come back to the neighborhoods they were pushed out of because “affordable” units will only be affordable to white upper-middle-class households that are moving in. It is important to note public housing residents’ rents

are calculated based on their income and not AMI. Public housing residents pay 30% of their yearly income for their rents. As a result, public housing is income based and not AMI based. This will be discussed in more detail in Section VIII.

In addition to its wide income gap, Minneapolis has one of the largest gaps in homeownership between Black and white households. According to the [Urban Institute](#), “owning a home can increase a family’s [financial security](#), but BIPOC communities [significantly lag behind white people in homeownership](#) rates, a major factor contributing to the [racial wealth gap](#).” POC and other minorities in Minneapolis lag behind white people in homeownership rate: 74.8% of white folks own homes, in contrast with only 24.8% of Black residents that’s a 50% homeownership gap; <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/mapping-black-homeownership-gap>. The large homeownership gap (and the related racial wealth gap) between Black and White households can be traced back to centuries of discriminatory housing and economic policies, and community wealth discrimination. Since the majority of Black and Brown residents are renters in their communities including low-income renters, and public housing tenants, and homeownership rates are low, it is easy for Greg Russ and City of Minneapolis to use the Opportunity Atlas to push Black and Brown residents out of their neighborhoods, make way for developers to profit and for high end white wealthier renters to move in. This will only lead to the destruction of Black and Browns communities.

## VII. Location of Public Housing Buildings in Minneapolis; Map 4



[Map 4](#) shows where MPHA’s 42 public housing high-rises (yellow stars) and over 740 single family public housing homes i.e. scattered sites (blue dots) are located throughout Minneapolis which totals over 11,000 people. This map does not include over 15,000 residents that have been using Section 8 Vouchers to rent throughout Minneapolis in majority Black and Brown neighborhoods especially in North Minneapolis Wards 4 and 5. But lately, new Section 8 recipients face extreme discrimination and are not able to find rentals anywhere in Minneapolis due to the City’s gentrification agenda. Notice that the majority of these homes and buildings are in the above-mentioned wards with the largest BIPOC communities and the wards with the most neighborhoods considered “low opportunity” by the Opportunity Atlas are the same. The Opportunity Atlas labels these neighborhoods as the “bad neighborhoods” and targets them to be gentrified through programs like Opportunity Zones, which introduces market-rate housing to replace existing public housing. This development ends up disrupting

and displacing the thriving Black, Brown and immigrant communities and businesses that have been there for generations. Introducing market-rate housing is not a solution but rather a way to capitalize on high-value land in the city core. If Minneapolis' officials were really concerned with the well-being of low-income Black and Brown residents, they would invest in Black and Brown neighborhoods without out pushing them out, and introduce more public housing as a public good, educational opportunities, minority business investment, jobs, homeownership programs, health clinics amongst other infrastructure, and NOT introduce market-rate housing for affluent white people. It is very clear that Greg Russ and the City of Minneapolis want to move families out of these neighborhoods so that developers can take over and gentrify the neighborhoods for the sake of "development" and "opportunity" for the white middle- and upper-class and for campaign donations.

### **VIII. MPHA's Plan to Use the Opportunity Atlas to Displace Public Housing Residents**

Using MPHA's own public documents, statements, and plans, a fairly clear picture emerges for how Greg Russ and MPHA plan on displacing public housing residents out of Minneapolis with the support of Mayor Jacob Frey and Minneapolis City Council.

#### **1. Remove the Declarations of Trust (DOT) That Protect Public Housing**

Greg Russ and MPHA want to [remove the Declarations of Trust](#) that protect public housing from privatization. If they succeed in removing the DOTs for public housing in Minneapolis, they will be able to sell or demolish these properties. MPHA will use the Opportunity Atlas to justify this, as much of the public housing in Minneapolis is located in neighborhoods that have not been designated "opportunity areas" by the Atlas.

#### **2. Privatize Public Housing Through RAD & Section 18 Demolition & Disposition**

MPHA plans to use RAD to privatize all high rises in Minneapolis (MPHA [Strategic Vision & Capital Plan](#), page 18) and Section 18 Demolition & Disposition to sell or demolish over 740 scattered sites single-family public housing homes in Minneapolis. You can learn more about RAD [here](#) and Section 18 Demolition & Disposition [here](#).

Importantly, [HUD's rules for Section 18 Demolition & Disposition](#) allow for the relocation aka displacement of residents to areas "generally not less desirable than the location of the displaced person's housing." This means that MPHA can relocate residents of single-family homes scattered sites to suburbs, using the Opportunity Atlas to argue that they are moving the residents to better "opportunity areas" than where they currently live but there is no guarantee from MPHA, City of Minneapolis or Carson and Trump's HUD plans that "opportunity" area will actually offer better opportunities for Black and Brown families that have been displaced because usually, the opposite is true. HUD has [issued a newsletter](#) touting how RAD could be used in concert with research by Raj Chetty (lead author of the Opportunity Atlas) to move families to "high opportunity, low poverty communities, stating "a RAD property owner can support and even instigate these opportunity-creating moves".

MPHA will use the Opportunity Atlas to justify moving public housing residents out of their homes after privatizing their homes through Section 18 Demolition and Disposition or RAD conversion by saying that they are moving families to better neighborhoods than where they used to live. This is not the case because families will be pushed out of communities that gave them stability and support. Families lose the power to choose the neighborhoods they want to

live in. This is forced relocation aka displacement. A [2011 paper](#) by University of Minnesota Professor Ed Goetz found that “public housing demolition and dispersal have been employed as economic development strategies by local governments intent on finding and forcing new paths of neighborhood change and gentrification”. Goetz’s study found that after displacement, only 1 out of 5 public housing residents come back.

MPHA is already enacting this part of their plan. On January 8, MPHA distributed letters to residents at Elliot Twins which stated that MPHA’s RAD application to privatize the Elliot Twins will be approved by HUD and that residents would be displaced as a part of the conversion process. MPHA [sent these letters amidst a government shutdown](#), which means that there is no proper oversight over this process, a deeply disturbing state of affairs. Then, in March 2019, DG&PHC received a leaked copy of MPHA’s draft relocation plan for Elliot Twins, which is really an eviction plan. You can read DG&PHC’s full analysis of that plan, which will evict hundreds of elders and people with disabilities in the middle of winter 2020 from Elliot Twins with no guaranteed replacement housing, [here](#). Elliot Twins residents will face homelessness.

It is important to note that there is a conflict of interest going on here that elected officials don’t want to address. Greg Russ’s wife and father-in-law own and manage one of the [largest companies specializing in federally subsidized low-income and tax credit properties in Minnesota](#), which stand to benefit from the privatization and dismantling of public housing.

### **3. Use the City Council’s Public Housing Resolution and Memorandum of Understanding to Justify their Privatization Plans**

On December 7, 2018, the Minneapolis City Council passed a [resolution](#), authored by Council Members Andrea Jenkins (Ward 8) and Abdi Warsame (Ward 6) that used much of MPHA’s own language to endorse privatization while pretending to be about public housing preservation. This was after the Council Members ignored DG&PHC’s request to change the language to make it a [resident centered resolution](#). MPHA [issued a statement](#) immediately following the passage of the City Council’s anti-public housing resolution touting its support for “MPHA’s efforts to ‘stabilize and increase its funding sources’ through federal programs such as the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) and Section 18”. This means that MPHA plans to use the City Council’s public housing resolution as evidence of City’s support for their privatization, demolition, and displacement plans, in spite of the opposition of public housing residents and the people of Minneapolis.

Then, on April 19, 2019, the City Council unanimously passed a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) between the City and MPHA, which again uses MPHA’s own language to endorse privatization under the guise of providing resident protections. They did so after Council Members Cam Gordon (Ward 2) and Abdi Warsame (Ward 6, where Elliot Twins are located) held only one under-publicized listening session just two days before the vote. Public housing residents were not notified about the MOU or the listening session. DG&PHC requested the vote be delayed until more public housing residents could participate in more listening sessions, but the Council Members refused and passed their problematic MOU anyway. [As DG&PHC has documented](#), the resident protections in the MOU are vague and unenforceable. The MOU will not protect residents. What it will do, like the City Council resolution, is signal to HUD that the City is supportive of MPHA’s privatization and displacement plans.



#### **4. Take Advantage of the Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan Blanket Upzoning**

MPHA will use Section 18 Demolition and Disposition to flip over 740 single family public housing properties throughout Minneapolis (scattered sites) into privately owned tri or fourplexes, [with the support of Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey](#). MPHA states in their [2019 MTW Annual Plan](#) (page 12) that “In 2019, MPHA will explore replacing certain obsolete scattered site single family homes with fourplexes or triplexes. This flexibility depends in part upon certain zoning changes approved by the City of Minneapolis”. Greg Russ stated on May 16, 2018, MPHA Board of Commissioners meeting that he envisions these new developments on formerly scattered site locations as housing families making 80%-120% of AMI, or \$75,000-\$113,000 per year. Currently, most families in Minneapolis public housing make less than 30% of AMI. The average family in Minneapolis public housing has an annual income of just \$14,841. Once they are privatized, these homes will not be affordable to the families currently living in them, and they will not be income based at 30% of residents’ incomes.

Given that the scattered sites single-family homes are concentrated in the same wards identified in the Opportunity Atlas as low-opportunity areas (wards 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9), this means that MPHA will be replacing public housing with new fourplexes or triplexes in the most diverse neighborhoods in Minneapolis. This will simultaneously displace thousands of residents of color (majority Black and Black Muslims) currently living in the scattered sites, while also attracting new higher-income white residents to the newly constructed non-public housing four- or triplexes.

It is significant that the City Council passed its public housing privatization resolution the same day they approved the Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Taken together, the vote to approve the blanket upzoning of Minneapolis while simultaneously endorsing MPHA’s privatization and displacement plans reveals the two-pronged approach to completely gentrify Minneapolis: MPHA will displace low-income residents of color, disabled and seniors out of their communities in the name of providing better access to “opportunity,” while developers simultaneously build more luxury and market-rate units in those same neighborhoods for wealthier white residents, thereby intensifying gentrification and attracting more upwardly mobile white residents to these neighborhoods.

[Minutes from MPHA's November 2018 Board meeting](#) also show that they plan to push forward with the Section 18 Demolition and Disposition of scattered sites single-family homes in early 2019. This shows how MPHA is trying to take advantage of the City’s 2040 Comprehensive Plan as quickly as possible to displace residents and gentrify the city.

#### **5. Replace Public Housing, Where Renters Pay 30% of Their Income, With AMI Housing, which is Not Affordable for Low-Income Households**

Once MPHA privatizes homes through Section 18 Disposition & Demolition or RAD, the rules that govern public housing no longer apply. Most non-public housing properties in Minneapolis use the Area Median Income (AMI) to set rents, but AMI housing is not affordable. For example, the AMI for the Twin Cities is \$94,300 for a family of four. 60%-80% of this AMI is between \$56,580 & \$75,440. The AMI for Black households in Minneapolis is \$33,436. This plan means that Black families will not be able to afford rent in Minneapolis. This includes public housing

residents, 80% of whom are Black, African Americans, and East Africans. This shows that AMI housing is not for Black households. Learn more about AMI housing and why it does not work for low-income households [here](#).

#### **6. Push Residents Out by Giving Them Section 8 Vouchers Knowing Section 8 Housing is Not Available in Minneapolis**

Greg Russ is recorded [on video](#) telling residents at Elliot Twins that they may receive Section 8 vouchers during a RAD conversion. Section 8 Vouchers do not work, because Minneapolis landlords discriminate against Section 8 recipients, which will push residents out to further ring suburbs away from their communities. MPHA will claim that these vouchers will allow residents to move into “opportunity areas”, but these areas are mostly white, and East African, Black, Immigrant, and Muslim families face discrimination and constant displacement in these areas. For more on what it is like trying to find and maintain housing using a Section 8 Voucher in the suburbs of Minneapolis as a Somali family, please see our story about Sahrooni [here](#). Also, see the latest public relations stunt by MPHA and the City of Minneapolis to try to normalize the displacement of residents through Section 8, knowing that voucher holders face extreme discrimination by private landlords and the city will not do anything about it, [here](#).

The other option is pushing current Section 8 Voucher holders out of the majority Black and Brown communities in Minneapolis that they have lived in for decades. According to their [2019 MTW Annual Plan](#) (page 20), MPHA manages over 5000 Section 8 Vouchers serving over 15,000 low-income people. MPHA will use their Mobility Voucher Program to target voucher holders in Black and Brown neighborhoods of Minneapolis for displacement and push them out of Minneapolis.

MPHA and Mayor Jacob Frey will also use a new program called [Stable Homes Stable Schools](#), which targets homeless students in Minneapolis. In a [recent job posting](#) for a position Stable Homes Stable Schools, MPHA lists one of the primary duties of its new hires as helping participants find housing “in communities within the metropolitan area.” It’s notable that they do not say Minneapolis, but the entire metro area because their goal is to displace BIPOC and low-income families from Minneapolis in order to make way for gentrification.

#### **7. Form a “Regional MTW Authority” with Other Local PHA’s**

On page 14 of their [2019 MTW Annual Plan](#) MPHA states their intention to form a “Regional MTW Agency.” MPHA wants to form this regional public housing agency because it would make it much easier for them to move residents out of the city, using the Opportunity Atlas to justify moving residents from the city to the suburbs in the name of increasing access to opportunity.

#### **8. Use the Opportunity Atlas to Move Residents out of Their Communities**

In their [2019 MTW Annual Plan](#) (pg. 14), MPHA also states their intention to “Increase Opportunity through Mobility and Regional Collaboration”. They state that they intend to “create a first-of-its-kind regional mobility initiative to understand which program interventions are most effective in enabling families to successfully move to areas of opportunity.” In other words, MPHA will use the Opportunity Atlas to label Black and Brown neighborhoods as deficient in order to justify moving public housing and Section 8 Voucher residents from these

neighborhoods out to white suburban areas, and destroy Black and Brown working class neighborhoods and the minority businesses that rely on them.

We know this because MPHA already has a Mobility Voucher Program, which, according to their website, “requires participant families to move to communities of greater opportunity within Minneapolis and the 7 County Metro Area.” This program is for people and families currently receiving Section 8 Voucher benefits or on the waitlist. MPHA goes on to list eligibility criteria for the program as: “applicants must be currently living in a Minneapolis area impacted by race and poverty ... and be willing to enter into a contract and relocate to an area not impacted by poverty, for a minimum of three years.” So MPHA is explicitly targeting Black and Brown neighborhoods in Minneapolis. Participants will not be able to move to or stay in neighborhoods of color, because MPHA has deemed them to be low opportunity areas. They will not be able to find Section 8 housing in Minneapolis, for the reasons discussed above. So, the Mobility Voucher Program aka Section 8 Vouchers are designed to push families into the suburbs. MPHA is also mandating that people leave their neighborhoods for at least three years, so even if residents change their mind, they will not be able to move back.

#### **IX. Conclusion: Greg Russ Must Not Be Allowed to Use the Opportunity Atlas to Displace Public Housing Residents**

Public housing is the best and most affordable housing available to our city’s low-income residents. It is permanent, stable, safe and truly affordable at 30% of residents’ income. Public housing residents have built communities with their neighbors and have strong ties to their neighborhoods and it supports thriving minority businesses. Greg Russ and MPHA want to dismantle all of that so developers can take advantage of a housing boom and profit from the dismantling of public housing in Minneapolis. Private Section 8 Vouchers or AMI-based housing does not provide the same level of stability or affordability for residents as public housing does. Our city is already experiencing an affordable housing and homelessness crisis, and MPHA’s privatization schemes will make it worse. By supporting these plans, Mayor Jacob Frey and the Minneapolis City Council are complicit in worsening the housing crisis.

The Opportunity Atlas is nothing more than a public relations effort to sell MPHA’s planned mass displacement and gentrification as being good for public housing residents and other low-income, BIPOC families. It ignores the historic and continued causes of poverty such as racism and structural inequality. It blames neighborhoods that experienced racist and classist disinvestment for those problems, which were caused by the racist real estate industry and a white supremacist political system. Now, with the help of programs like the Opportunity Atlas and Opportunity Zones, the same forces that drove historic disinvestment in BIPOC neighborhoods will get to profit from them, thanks to government officials like Greg Russ and politicians like our Mayor and City Council who want to dismantle long-standing communities in the name of providing “opportunity”. This is a cynical and dangerous project, and Minneapolis residents must oppose it as we continue to oppose all forms of public housing privatization and the larger project of gentrification that they are part of.

**Defend Glendale & Public Housing Coalition, May 3, 2019**

[defendglendale @ gmail.com](mailto:defendglendale@gmail.com) | [www.dgphc.org](http://www.dgphc.org) | [facebook @ defendglendale](https://www.facebook.com/defendglendale) | [twitter @ defendglendale](https://twitter.com/defendglendale)

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