

Listen, Learn Ask and Transform how we do community work...

Community Building Committee  
Minutes. January 6, 2021  
Recorder: Susan Larson-Fleming

Attending: Jerry Stein, Susan Larson-Fleming, Lynn Von Korff, Ben Tuthill, Jenna Hoge, Vera Marshall, Kyra Nygaard, Jeremy Schlitz, Kaaha Kaahiye, David Frank

An update on Learning Dreams was added to the agenda.

Jessica Focht-Perlberg, Executive Director of SECIA(Southeast Como Improvement Assn) and SECIA intern Laura Schlotterback, were introduced. They are planning to start a renters initiative in S.E. Como and interested to hear our experience.

Renters subgroup

Jenna and Ben updated the group on the renters rights activities. **(Minutes from the Renters subgroup meeting are included at the end of this document.)** They reported on TOPA, Tenants Opportunity Purchase Act, now bubbling up in city government. Grace from the Powderhorn association is presenting and Robin Garwood from Cam Gordon's office will be available to answer questions at the next PPA meeting. This is a city program now getting local support. It seeks to give first opportunity to purchase to property tenants and second opportunity to non-profits.

The renters subgroup is proposing the following motions to be considered by the PPA Board:

- a. that the Treasurer allocate \$379 from the Tenants' Rights (Housing) fund to cover Moodle-Cloud costs for the Tenants' Rights online curriculum project. It was noted that this motion does not need to be approved by the board because the board approved a renters' rights budget.
- b. that, prior to the January PPA Community/Board meeting, the Board be presented with information regarding a Minneapolis Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA); and, at the January PPA Community/Board meeting, that the Board allots time for short information sessions by representatives from the Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association (PPNA) and the office of Cam Gordon.
- c. that, at the January PP Community/Board meeting, the Board be presented with the TOPA Community Sign On form and be provided with the opportunity to sign.
- d. that, at the February Community Building committee meeting we will discuss a proposed motion for the PPA board to sign the TOPA Community Sign On form.

Kaaha noted that MPHA tenants were specifically not included in those allowed to purchase and said that MPHA has sold over 700 units of scattered site housing, for \$1.00 each and those living in these units were not allowed an opportunity to purchase. MPHA stated they could not find any tenants who were interested. It is unconscionable that a program that seeks to help low income renters does not include those living in public housing. Any recommenda-

tion in favor of this program by the PPA board should request that all renters are included, not specific groups excluded. Jenna, Ben and Kaaha will speak with the Housing Justice Coalition about Public Housing concerns.

Committee voted to send motion b. for consideration by the PPA Board and that motions c and d be held over until the February PPA Board meeting.

#### Learning Dreams

Kyra updated the committee on the newest Learning Dreams project, a 9 week photo class for high school students living in Glendale. This is an opportunity to tell their own stories through photographs. Kyra, a student at MCAD, is working on lesson plans. Each participant will receive 3 disposable cameras. One goal is to put together a zine and distribute first to Glendale and then to the wider community. Ismail, Eastside youth worker at Glendale is also part of this program. Start date end of January, beginning of February. These plans are still in development.

#### Glendale Historic District (**Refer to PPA website for background information on this initiative**)

Approved last year by the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission, the City Council has as yet not issued final approval. Discussions with Cam Gordon continue on how best to make approval happen. We know that MPHA opposes designation, falsely believing that no changes can be made to the buildings and site if designation is received. Many already designated historic properties in Minneapolis have received extensive renovation, including ADA upgrades, without affecting their historic designation. MPHA has indicated that they intend to sell Glendale to a private developer, through the RAD program, in the coming year. Once owned by a private developer, there is only a limited time required to preserve the properties as public housing. For example, The Elliot Twins towers were sold last year. Developer contract requires only a 15 year commitment to public housing, after which time "upgrades" and rent increases can legally displace public housing tenants. Many in the neighborhood have posted signs in support of Glendale. Soon their additional support may be needed.

#### UDA (University District Alliance)

Susan and Lynn attended the last meeting as new PPA representatives. The group meets quarterly and is currently led by the University representatives. Neighborhood representatives have met separately. Jessica (SECIA) noted that so far UDA has not lived up to its potential but relationships are important. The University mentioned at the last meeting that the University is updating its master plan.

#### Eastside/Pratt.PPA collaboration

Money was raised to provide fall programming. A future issue is the return of the walking bus for students from Glendale to get to Pratt. The Minneapolis School District(MPS) has reworked boundaries and many families now at Pratt who live across the river have been assigned to new schools. Many Glendale students have been assigned to Pratt but there is concern that Glendale parents are reluctant to let their young children to walk to Pratt unaccompanied. One thought is to restart the walking bus program which had adults escorting Glendale students to and from school. Now that the walkway has been successfully rebuilt, access is much easier. We will work with parties involved to solve this issue.

#### Jackson memorial project/playground

The joint committee is putting together rough cost estimates for playground renovation, Jackson memorial, Tower Hill reconstruction and street reworking. A daughter of Helen Jackson Claytor may join the committee at their next zoom meeting.

*Emergent Strategy*

Several committee members now have copies of the book by adrienne maree brown.

.At our next meeting we will talk about ways to have discussion about this book

Next meeting: February 10 at 4pm

Added material regarding TOPA program:

Minutes:

PPA Renters' Subcommittee December 9, 2020

Attendees: Ben Tuthill, Jenna Hoge, Jenna Thorsett, Lynn VonKorff, Aloida Zargoza, Mary Begley, Simone Hendrix, Ami Naff, Blake Love

Welcome and Norms - Ben

Review of last meeting – Jenna

Language Note: All are encouraged to use Resident Renter or Resident instead of tenant or renter, and property manager or property owner instead of landlord.

Renters Education Platform: Moodle – Ben, Lynn

Jenna – Could the U of MN host this education curriculum

Motion to allocate these funds for a moodle site: unanimously approved

TOPA – Ben

Motion to bring the TOPA Community Doc to the January Board Meeting, as well as an education session, and recommend the Board considers signing: unanimously approved

Eviction Moratorium – All

Do we want to have a renter support fund? Is there need? We need to collect more data.

Scheduling - January conflict, - Jenna

Other – Topic: housing justice organization Conversation to present curriculum and bad property manager situations at a different time

Adjourn

Motions (to be approved by the PPA Community Building Committee):

1. that the Treasurer allocate \$379 from the Tenants' Rights (Housing) fund to cover Moodle-Cloud costs for the Tenants' Rights online curriculum project.

2a. that, prior to the January PPA Community/Board meeting, the Board be presented with information regarding a Minneapolis Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA); and, at the January PPA Community/Board meeting, that the Board allots time for short information sessions

by representatives from the Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association (PPNA) and the office of Cam Gordon.

2b. that, at the January PP Community/Board meeting, the Board be presented with the TOPA Community Sign On form and be provided with the opportunity to sign.

2c. that, at the January PPA Community/Board meeting, the Community Building Committee motions the PPA Board to sign the TOPA Community Sign On form.

Additional Information:

A Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) is a city policy that gives resident renters first opportunity to purchase their property of residence if/when that property is sold. Furthermore, TOPA could provide the opportunity for resident renters to identify a buyer or LLC to receive second opportunity to purchase. For example, I live in a fourplex; if the property owner of my building decided to sell my building, my fellow residents and I have the opportunity to purchase our building (either individually or as a co-op/LLC) prior to going to general market. If my fellow residents and I declined, we could instead identify a housing non-profit that was willing to purchase the property. If that non-profit declined, the house would then go to market.

TOPA is a relatively innovative housing justice strategy. TOPA has been in place in Washington, D.C. for over 30 years, but does not exist in any other U.S. major cities. TOPA has the support of five Minneapolis City Council Members (Gordon, Ellison, Fletcher, Schroeder, Reich) and a broad coalition of Twin Cities housing advocacy groups.

Realtor groups and certain City Council members have expressed disapproval of TOPA, mostly due to its potential disruption of the housing market and its potential to increase regulation and red tape. TOPA has caused controversy in D.C., and has been tweaked several times over the past 30 years, most recently in 2018 (see Washington Post, "What renters and landlords need to know about the new D.C. TOPA law").

Housing advocates believe that TOPA is a strong policy that supports resident renters who are committed to their neighborhoods/communities. It encourages resident investment and discourages absentee landlords and large management companies from purchasing rental properties in neighborhoods. It expands opportunities for economic development and inclusivity that creates a pathway to home ownership for resident renters across the city.

TOPA would impact a small minority of property sales in Minneapolis. A majority of renters are not interested or able to purchase their residencies, and the field of currently existing housing non-profits interested in or able to purchase rental properties is small. Beyond a period of delay, TOPA would have little impact on the Twin Cities real estate market at large.

Community advocates are calling for local organizations and neighborhood associations to sign on in support of a rigorous TOPA policy that includes single-unit dwellings, individual right to purchase, and strong regulations for LLCs offered second right of purchase. A (condensed) summary of the community advocate positions is included below.

The Renters' Subcommittee unanimously supports a rigorous TOPA strategy and encourages the PPA Board of Directors to sign the TOPA Community Sign On form: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScIBZFMt0m7WYdMms1Selen-SsXgX7MxIVjKRHgo6nrz6N-VsQ/viewform>.

TOPA Community Advocate Positions (condensed; see full document at [https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Rj7D4\\_Qx3pCzQcea4ichDY0jtTsnEegMkHBthpDoV8/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/18Rj7D4_Qx3pCzQcea4ichDY0jtTsnEegMkHBthpDoV8/edit))

This document summarizes the points and positions of how a group of housing advocates believe a Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) policy would be most effective to accomplish City and Community goals.

Ensure that the proposed policy is a tool to empower tenants with the right to purchase their building OR assign their rights.

There are different ways that this policy has been implemented in other cities. We feel strongly

in a policy that maximizes tenant rights so that they can either purchase a building themselves or work with another developer.

Most importantly, we believe that the assignability of rights by tenants should take place through a process that ensures they are in relationship with a “good faith” buyer who follows a buyer code of conduct. Rather than have a predetermined list of potential buyers (which has been limiting in previous CPED programs due to complex application processes), create a code of conduct that details how developers/buyers would have to negotiate.

In the event that tenants choose not to exercise OR assign their right, Qualified Buyers/Developers should have the second right to purchase.

The group does support the City/CPED identifying a list of developers that could get a right of refusal if tenants don’t take action. This is similar to what is often called community opportunity to purchase. However, this should only happen after tenants decide not to take action.

In order to be most effective, a tenant opportunity to purchase policy must apply broadly to rental properties across the city, with as few exemptions as possible.

There are people who may want to exclude Single Family Homes from this policy. While there may need to be exceptions for people who own a home that they rent out, homes owned by LLCs or other entities are for profit and should be included.

We applaud the deep and well-rounded research and community engagement process that has taken place over the years around TOPA, and encourage you to pass a policy as soon as possible. We sometimes have seen the council delay taking action in favor of more research. We believe there is enough information now to create a strong policy. There have been many forums where community members have expressed support for renter’s rights, affordable housing, and community wealth building. We also know that it may take time for resources to become available to truly build out this work, but that’s not a reason to delay giving people a right.

Adequate funding will be key to helping tenants and/or Qualified Buyers/Developers utilize a TOPA policy and preserve homes.

One of the reasons this policy is effective in Washington DC is because there are significant funds to support purchasing properties and funding to tenant advocates to help tenants through the process. It sounds like many of those resources won’t be immediately available (not in the 2021 budget), but we should still be looking to advocate for them. However, as stated above, that should not preclude us from providing tenants with this right.