

March 25, 2026

Letter of Support

From: Rondo Elders/Descendants of Renters

Dear HRA Interim Director Melanie McMahon, Chair Cheniqua Johnson, and Commissioners,

I am a descendant of families who lived in the historic Rondo neighborhood prior to its destruction. I specifically lived at 409 St. Anthony and was an eyewitness of the destructive creation of the freeway.

Many of our parents and grandparents lived along Rondo Avenue and the surrounding streets as renters. While some families owned homes, a significant portion of the community rented from property owners, who did not live in Saint Paul. Despite this, Rondo was a deeply connected and thriving predominately Black community where families-built lives, raised children, and supported one another.

When the neighborhood was dismantled, the impact was not experienced equally. Property owners were often able to relocate structures or received some form of compensation. In many cases, homes were moved to affluent areas such as the Mac Groveland and Highland neighborhood. Renters, however, were left without relocation support, without compensation, and without a clear path forward. Families were forced to scatter, often with little notice, and without the resources to re-establish themselves in the same way.

The loss for renters was profound. It was not only the loss of housing, but the loss of community, stability, and access to opportunity. Many families never recovered from that displacement, and the effects are still felt today.

For this reason, any effort to repair the harm done to Rondo must include those who lived in the neighborhood, not only those who held title to property. The history of Rondo cannot be told through ownership alone. It must reflect the full community that was displaced.

We support efforts to ensure that descendants of Rondo residents, including renters, are recognized in programs intended to address generational wealth loss and displacement.

Respectfully,

Elder Frank White