



Rondo Center of Diverse Expressions

315 N. Fisk Street,
Saint Paul, MN, 55104
(651) 447-2157
www.rcodemn.org

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

I am writing in support of ensuring that ALL descendants of residents of the historic Rondo neighborhood are eligible for additional down payment assistance through the Inheritance Fund, including those whose families were renters, or purchasing on a contract-for-deed arrangement at the time of displacement.

As it stands, the current framework recognizes descendants of property owners. This does not, however, recognize the historical reality of the Rondo community made up of homeowners, renters and those purchasing a home via a contract-for-deed arrangement. Many families lived in multi-generational households, duplexes, and apartments, and were deeply rooted in the neighborhood's social, cultural, spiritual and economic life. One of the ways the Rondo community came together was through Jewish families purchasing homes on behalf of African American families, because the companies or organizations would not allow African Americans to buy property, and selling it to them on a contract-for-deed. Including renters, helps to capture this demographic.

When I-94 and urban renewal initiatives dismantled the Rondo neighborhood, renters were displaced alongside homeowners and experienced significant loss of stability, community, and opportunity. While renters and contract-for-deed purchasers may not have held title to property, they lost access to neighborhood-based wealth building opportunities, including proximity to community-owned businesses, shared economic networks, resources that had been put in to purchasing property and pathways to future homeownership. The impacts of displacement on these families have had lasting generational consequences that are consistent with the intent of the Inheritance Fund.

Including descendants of renters aligns the program with its purpose to mitigate generational wealth loss tied to displacement. It ensures the program reflects the lived experience of the full Rondo community and does not unintentionally exclude families who were equally impacted.

I respectfully urge the HRA Commission to adopt program guidelines that recognize descendants of residents, not solely property owners, so that the program can more fully address the historic harm experienced by the FULL Rondo community.

Thank you for your consideration and continued leadership.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Palmer
Executive Director