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## What They're Talking About When They're Promising Affordable Housing

Submitted by john on February 12, 2009 - 11:23

As gentrification sweeps through neighborhoods, housing displacement becomes an issue of major concern. One way to stanch the displacement of poor people from gentrifying neighborhoods seems pretty obvious: give them housing they can afford. So activists demand affordable housing, politicians promise it, and developers - after negotiation - sometimes even agree to produce it. But what exactly is meant by "affordable housing"? How is it, for instance, that a guy who works at Merrill Lynch Investments qualifies for affordable housing in Brooklyn? (True story.) Though the term "affordable housing" gets used in an everyday sense, it has a highly specific meaning, defined by the federal government, that is not necessarily clear to non-bureaucrats. In this workshop, you will learn exactly what politicians and developers are talking about when they're promising affordable housing for Baltimore City (or elsewhere). You'll also be better able, after this workshop, to critique affordable housing proposals and frame your own demands for housing that is truly accessible to the people who need it.

This is a 50-minute workshop that works best for a group of 15 people, maximum. The workshop is highly visual, tactile, and interactive. We use a big felt board and sticky pieces to get people up and moving around, thinking about the relationships between jobs, income, and housing policy in their neighborhoods.

The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP), based in Brooklyn, makes educational projects about how cities work. We conduct our workshop on housing affordability for community groups in New York City and beyond. This affordable housing tool is part of CUP's Envisioning Development Toolkit.

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