



Asian Americans For Equality

AAFE ALBANY HOUSING AGENDA 2005

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The New York City housing crisis has only escalated in the last decade. Immigrants face the added barriers of language and culture in accessing the limited affordable housing stock. They are also more likely to fall prey to unscrupulous landlords or live in illegally converted buildings turned into overcrowded tenements. In the Asian community, the lack of housing is often times a hidden problem. It is all too common to find two families living together in a one bedroom apartment in severely overcrowded conditions. According to a recent housing survey conducted by Asian Americans for Equality¹, 85% of the respondents are paying 50% or more of their total monthly income on rent and 62% are living in severely overcrowded conditions.²

Since the 1980s, AAFE has undertaken construction and management of affordable housing units in Chinatown and the Lower East Side, predominantly Asian and Latino neighborhoods, to increase access to housing opportunities for immigrant families. The budget allocation for the production and preservation of affordable housing continue to decrease while the economic downturns increase the need for these units. Our state and city leaders must make this urgent need for affordable housing a priority to ensure that every individual and family has a decent and affordable place to live.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. ***AAFE supports an expansion of funding for the Neighborhood Preservation Program (NPP) administered by the NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) to include Queens.*** Currently, the NPP does not include any Queens-based organizations. The NPP provides money for community based organizations to provide housing counseling for tenants and landlords, eviction prevention and community organizing activities. Currently, Queens' residents have no place to go for help for these services. Funding from NPP can help community-based organizations produce affordable housing units to preserve neighborhoods and keep immigrants from being displaced and forced into cramped quarters with relatives, typical of "hidden homelessness" among Asian communities.
2. ***AAFE urges our State legislature to hold accountable our Governor Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg to deliver on the promise that Battery Park City Surplus monies be used for the production and preservation of affordable housing in New York City.*** It is estimated that Battery Park City will generate \$75 million dollars annually in revenue that can produce and preserve 15,000 units of affordable housing.
3. In Queens, plans for redeveloping parts of downtown Flushing are underway. However, these plans do not adequately include affordable housing as a ~~any~~ component. To ensure that families and community residents continue to be able to live in their neighborhoods for future generations to come, ***AAFE asks the State legislature to facilitate balance between commercial development interests and the dire need for families and seniors to live in affordable housing.***

¹ Asian Americans for Equality's housing survey was conducted between the period of January 2005 to March 2005. 133 surveys were collected from senior citizens living throughout Queens.

² Severely overcrowding is defined as more than one person per room in a housing unit by federal standards.