

## Preserve subsidized housing

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Imagine a Manhattan of the future – an island largely for the upper class, and the poor stacked in housing reservations.

As dramatic as this may sound, it's a future where the economic segregation that already exists—from the Upper East Side to El Barrio, for example—becomes so wide that Manhattan is converted to an enclave for anything but poor, working families.

That's the picture that the **Community Service Society (CSS)** more than hints at in its latest housing report.

Since 1990, the city has lost more than 25% of the 120,000 apartments in subsidy programs, according to CSS. Another 18 percent of stock is at risk.

A chunk of the loss resulted from withdrawals from the Mitchell-Lama Program, which offered private landlords subsidized mortgages and tax breaks for renting to low and moderate income tenants. Between 1990 and 2006, more than 26,000 Mitchell-Lama units were lost.

The loss of this and other subsidized rentals yanks accessible housing from poor families. And with landlords either voluntarily removing their buildings from subsidy programs or begging for disqualification through negligence, the loss will continue.

It's long time for a state-city coordinated strategy and emergency effort to preserve affordable housing—where affordability is not defined as simply “below market.”

CSS makes a number of recommendations that should be immediately considered, including measures for the transfer of distressed buildings and rent stabilization for Mitchell-Lama apartments.

A loss of subsidized housing is a loss for families struggling to be a part of this city, but instead finding themselves pushed away. We only need to look to the Lower East Side, where Latino families have been isolated in the projects along the East River, as an example of what may be in store for our city.