



e² design “Affordable Green Housing”

Background Essay

While the modern definition of community focuses on the commonalities between its members, the scientific definition puts more emphasis on the variety of the individuals living within the community. Jonathan Rose, a third-generation New York developer, has built his philosophy around the concept that the diversity and complexity of a community is what provides its strength and ultimately its sustainability. New York City is known for its diversity, which is probably why there are so many strong communities in the city, but this diversity hasn't always been reflected in its low-income housing. In an effort to provide as much housing as possible at the lowest cost, affordable housing projects have often ignored the social and cultural aspects of the community. Jonathan Rose has been striving to create a different approach by rethinking what affordable housing could and, in his opinion, should be.

The mission of Jonathan Rose's company is to “repair the fabric of communities”. He attempts to accomplish this goal in many ways, only one of which is by building affordable housing projects that respect the natural environment around them, the people who will live within them and the existing communities that will welcome them. This episode follows Mr. Rose through three neighborhoods in which his sustainably-designed housing projects are changing people's perception of what affordable housing is. The projects explored include the Burnham Building in Irvington, New York, the Joyce and David Dinkins' Gardens project in Harlem, and the as-yet-to-be-built mixed-income development Via Verde that will ultimately find its realization in the South Bronx.

To find out more about Jonathan Rose's companies, visit www.rose-network.com



e² design “Affordable Green Housing”

PRE-VIEWING QUESTIONS

1. What do you think of when you hear the term affordable housing? What images come to mind of both the buildings and its tenants?
 2. What makes a neighborhood a community? List some of the elements in your opinion that are essential to a community.
 3. Do you live in an area/community that is mixed-income or level income? Do you think much about it? If you experienced the opposite how do you think it would influence you?
 4. What are some places within walking distance of your home (e.g., stores, parks, theaters, community centers)? What are some places you would like to have and not have within walking distance of your home? Why?
 5. Do you learn more when you talk to a person that is more or less like you? What about when you visit a place that is more or less like your hometown? Why?
-

POST-VIEWING QUESTIONS

1. According to Jonathan Rose, how does diversity strengthen a community? What different types of diversity does he talk about?
2. Why does Jonathan Rose believe that a community is more likely to be sustainable if it's diverse? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
3. How can a real-estate developer “repair the fabric of communities”? What types of buildings contribute to the fabric of a community in a positive way? In a negative way (e.g., homogeneous vs. heterogeneous population, commercial vs. residential, shared space vs. private space)?