City Council Candidates To Discuss Affordable Housing In East Harlem

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Tuesday, August 27, 2013 02:24 PM -

NEW YORK — The growing threat of gentrification in East Harlem is forcing residents, community leaders, and City Council candidates to discuss affordable housing in one of the most diverse working-class communities in Manhattan.

The candidates vying for New York City's 8th District — incumbent City Councilmember Melissa Mark-Viverito, Ralina Cardona, Sean Garner, Gwen Goodwin, Tamika Humphreys and Ed Santos — are expected to discuss their policy ideas for preserving and encouraging affordable housing at a forum tonight.

Marina Ortiz, founder of East Harlem Preservation, said the neighborhood is facing the possibility of losing its character and historical richness because of the rise in "luxury developments that look nothing like the rest of the neighborhood." The district spans from East Harlem north to Mott Haven in the South Bronx.

Angel Mescain, assistant district manager of the Community Board 11 of Manhattan, said affordable housing has always been key to East Harlem's diversity. Rising home prices "affects the ability of the local housing market to serve lower and middle income households," he said.

Ortiz said the median income of a household in East Harlem, around $20,000 , is far less than the median income of the city as a whole, which is $63,000 for a family of four.
"Even when affordable housing is developed, young adults and families in the neighborhood cannot afford to move in so we lose that next generation," she said.

The forum, which begins at 6 p.m., is co-sponsored by East Harlem Preservation and JustPublics@365. It will to be held at the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College on 2180 Third Ave.