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# Plans For Affordable Housing Near The 606 Are A Joke, Experts Say

by [Margaret Paulson](#) in [News](#) on Aug 12, 2015 12:20 pm



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Now that the Bloomingdale Trail has been open for two solid months and we have collectively had the

chance to [complain about it](#), [rave about it](#), and generally appreciate the novelty of it, Chicagoans tuned into economic/social justice issues are ramping up their concerns about its impact on area housing costs.

First, [we have to separate the complainers](#) from the concerned citizens. The complainers are typically the wealthy homeowners along the trail who don't like having strangers riding bikes and skateboards in their neighborhoods.

The concerned citizens are those who worry, even while appreciating the new elevated park, that The 606 is causing rapid gentrification by [raising home values in the area](#) and encouraging landlords to hike up the rents or sell their single-family homes, pushing low-income people and renters out of Humboldt Park and other areas near The 606. More immediately, the 2.7-mile-long trail, which cost a stunning \$95 million to build, has been a contributing factor in the rapidly increasing property taxes in Logan Square, Humboldt Park, and other areas.

According to [a June 2015 story by The Reader](#), the Latin United Community Housing Association, which advocates for, preserves, and makes available affordable housing in Logan Square, Humboldt Park and West Town, saw property taxes on one of its affordable housing units at North and Central Park Avenues double between 2012 and 2013, before construction really even began on the trail.

Additionally, according to The Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul, [4.2 percent of properties in the 606 area are small rentals](#). These two- to four-unit buildings made up half of all foreclosures during and after the recession, making them easy pickings for developers looking to renovate them into single-family homes that long-time, low- and middle-income residents will be unable to afford.

But when the Tribune recently pressed Mayor Rahm Emanuel's office for details about his plan to keep housing near the Bloomingdale Trail affordable, [the mayor's suggestions were slim](#). He said rent vouchers were one initiative, and his office cited projects from a decade ago, as well as initiatives underway over a mile away from the trail.

Meanwhile, activists say his office hasn't addressed the issue adequately, and that rent vouchers and renovation subsidies don't protect residents from future price increases.

"This isn't a housing strategy," Janet Smith, co-director of the Voorhees Center for Neighborhood and Community Improvement at the University of Illinois at Chicago told the Tribune.

Smith told the Tribune a more longterm solution would have to include property tax caps or abatements.

The Logan Square Neighborhood Association and other organizations are asking Cook County assessor Joe Berrios and commissioner Luis Arroyo to consider instituting property tax abatements, which provide tax exemption or reduction to long-time homeowners to ease their financial burden and allow them time to prepare and save for higher tax rates.

A statement from the mayor's office said that over \$77.9 million in city financial assistance was going toward creating 355 new affordable housing units near The 606.

Contact the [author](#) of this article or email [tips@chicagoist.com](mailto:tips@chicagoist.com) with further questions, comments or tips.

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