Housing that consumes less than 30 to 40 percent of total household income is considered affordable. People at any income level can find affordable housing a problem, but it mostly afflicts poor and middle-class households since the private market rarely produces a sufficient amount of housing to meet their needs. As a result, governments often regulate housing and finance markets and provide subsidies to ensure that housing is affordable to households no matter their income.

In the United States, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has created a measure called the area median income (AMI) to determine who needs affordable housing. It is a relative measure of housing need and is calculated separately for metropolitan areas and families of different sizes. Most often, households with incomes less than 30 percent of the AMI are considered very low income, those with incomes 30 to 50 percent are low income, 50 to 80 percent are moderate income, and those above 80 percent are thought able to afford market rate housing. Because housing costs vary by locality, so also does affordability. In cities like New York City, it can reach 200 percent of the AMI.

The AMI has enabled governments to determine how many households need housing and to set guidelines for housing subsidies. Governments can provide subsidies to developers to produce additional housing units, or they can provide subsidies to individuals or building owners to make existing units affordable. Incentives for private developers include tax abatements, zoning changes, height allowances, infrastructure improvements, and financing assistance. Governments can also impose rent regulations that limit rental price increases.

In 1937 the federal government expanded its housing commitment by funding public housing construction, and in 1949 it established the goal of providing a "decent home and suitable living environment for every American family." Between the 1930s and the 1970s, the federal government produced public housing for very-low-income groups. In the 1970s, it shifted from public production and ownership to strategies that used subsidies to make existing private housing more affordable and spur the creation of new affordable housing in weak urban markets. In the 1980s the federal government withdrew from housing production almost entirely and left affordable housing construction and management to nonprofit, community-based organizations. New financial intermediaries—organizations that directed capital from financial markets to communities—such as the Local Initiatives Support Corporation and the Enterprise Foundation emerged to finance inner-city and rural housing construction. Federal efforts turned toward creating tax incentives. The 1986 Low Income Housing Tax Credit, which provides tax benefits to private investors, has created much of the affordable housing in the past 20 years. Little of this housing is affordable to very-low-income households without additional subsidies such as housing vouchers. Unlike the subsidies provided for public housing, which were largely permanent, the private subsidies from the 1970s and 1980s are time delimited; that is, they are designed to expire and thus significantly reduce the stock of affordable housing.

The debate about how best to provide affordable housing continues. Some argue that the increasing production of luxury housing will increase the availability of lower-income housing through a filtering process. Others argue that only vast production schemes will meet the needs of low-income communities. Who should provide the subsidies, who should be responsible for production and ownership, and who should receive these subsidies are questions that continue to be debated.

Kathe Newman

See also Fair Housing; Gentrification; Homeownership; Housing Policy; Right to the City

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AGORA

Agora, a Greek word meaning, in early times, "a gathering place" (Homer), later "marketplace," is used in English particularly to denote the commercial and civic center of an ancient Greek city.

The Latin equivalent of agora is *forum*. The functions of the agora were much more varied than the English translations of the term might suggest. Typically located in the geographical heart of a city, on low-lying ground below the acropolis ("high city"), the agora was a place where people came together for a great range of activities: not only commercial, but also political, religious, and social. The overall layout of an agora followed no specific design. In cities of remote origins and long history, such as Athens, the agora developed gradually over centuries, its buildings and monuments placed according to the needs of a particular time. By the later Hellenistic and Roman periods, such city centers must have seemed like architectural jumbles. In newly founded cities, such as Priene (from the fourth century BC), the agora could be neatly planned, typically a rectangular plaza lined with stoas (porticoed buildings).

The ancient Greeks developed specific building types to house functions routine in the agora, such as the stoa and the *bouleuterion* (council chamber). One would also see such structures as fountain houses (where people obtained fresh water) and temples. In addition, certain activities might take place in buildings or areas that seem generic; that is, their features do not reveal any specific purpose. Identifying what uses such buildings or spaces were put to thus becomes an archaeological puzzle.

The best known of the ancient Greek agoras is that of Athens. The reasons for this are two. First, the great majority of Greek texts known to us were written by Athenians. Books, essays, speeches, poems, plays (tragedies, comedies), and inscriptions (documents carved on stone, for the attention of the public) contain a wealth of information about the life of Athens, including its agora. Second, the Athenian Agora has been explored continuously since 1931 (except for the years of World War II and immediately after), through archaeological excavations conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. These excavations have uncovered an enormous richness of buildings, monuments, inscriptions, and objects. In addition, the findings have been well published, both for a scholarly audience and for the interested public. So important is the Athenian Agora for understanding the ancient Greek city center that the rest of this entry is devoted to it.

Agora in Athens
Source: Vasilis Gavrilis.

The Athenian Agora

The Agora is located on low ground northwest of the Acropolis, a natural hill used in Greek and Roman times as the main religious center of the city. Agora and Acropolis together formed the central focus of Athens. The territory occupied by the Agora was further defined by a hill on the west (the Kolonos Agoraios) and a small river (the Eridanos) on the north, but was open to the east. Variously used in the Bronze Age and early Iron Age for housing and for burials, the Agora was first laid out as a public center in the early Archaic period, circa 600 BC. By 500 BC, vertical shafts of marble were set up at entrances to the open area to mark the space formally. These boundary stones were inscribed, "I am the boundary of the Agora." In addition, basins for holy water (*perirrhanteria*) were placed at the entrances, recalling the sacred character of certain functions. Indeed, those guilty of certain types of behavior were considered to have violated this sanctity and so could not enter the Agora: traitors, those who avoided military service or deserted, and those who mistreated their parents.

By 400 BC the character of the Agora as the civic center was well defined, thanks to the buildings erected during the previous 200 years. The Agora continued to serve as civic center through the Roman Empire, even with many changes to its buildings and monuments. During the Middle Ages, however, after devastating attacks on the city by such outsiders as Herulians (in 267) and Visigoths (395), and as political structures and socioeconomic needs veered away from Greco-Roman habits, the buildings of the Agora gradually fell into ruin. The area was transformed into a residential district, a character that would change only with the start of excavations in modern times.

Civic Buildings

During the period 600 to 400 BC, the west and south sides of the Agora were lined with major civic buildings. A look at their design and usage gives some insight into the nature of political and civic life in Athens.

The stoa was a favorite building type for public spaces such as an agora. Simple in concept, a stoa consisted of a roofed space, normally rectangular in plan, walled at the rear and on the sides, but with columns on the front. The stoa was thus a kind of portico. More complex designs might include shops at the rear, a second row of columns down the center, and even an upper story. This sheltered space could be used for many functions, official and informal. In the Athenian Agora, early stoas included the Royal Stoa (probably sixth century BC, rebuilt in the fifth century BC) and the Painted Stoa, or Stoa Poikile (475–450 BC), both located in the northwest sector. The former served as the seat of the king archon, the second-in-command of the city government. The Painted Stoa was so called after the paintings on wooden panels displayed inside, famous depictions of Athenian military prowess. Battles illustrated were both mythical, such as against Amazons, and real, notably the Battle of Marathon (490 BC), in which the Greeks defeated the Persians. The paintings survived until the late fourth century AD, emblems of Athenian greatness on permanent public view.

Government buildings located along the west side of the Agora at the base of the hill, the Kolonos Agoraios, included two bouleuterions (an "old" one, ca. 500 BC, later replaced by a "new" one, ca. 415–406 BC), the seat of the *boule,* the council of 500 men serving for one year that enacted legislation. Each structure must have looked like a small indoor theater, with seating on three sides. With the building of the New Bouleuterion, the Old Bouleuterion was transformed into the Metroon, a shrine to the Mother of the gods, but used also for the storing of archives. Next to these two was the Tholos (ca. 470–460 BC), a round building used as the dining hall of the *prytaneis,* the executive committee of 50 men that ran the daily affairs of the city, a rotating contingent of the council of 500. Nearby stood the Monument of the Eponymous Heroes (originally ca. 425 BC; rebuilt ca. 330 BC), a key center for disseminating information to the public. This monument consisted of a long, tall, narrow base with, on top, bronze statues of the mythical heroes representing the 10 tribes into which the Athenian citizenry had been divided during the political reforms of Kleisthenes, 508–507 BC. Below the statues, notices were posted, announcing legislation that would be introduced, military conscription, court hearings, and the like.

Other civic buildings included law courts, attested from written sources but not easily identifiable among the architectural remains; a prison; and a mint. This last, originally from the late fifth century BC, was a square building that contained evidence of bronze working: slag, water basins, and many bronze coin-blanks intended to be stamped as: coins.

Religious Buildings and Monuments

Religious practices in the Athenian Agora are reflected in numerous buildings and monuments. Crossing the Agora on the diagonal, from northwest to southeast, was the Panathenaic Way, the processional route used for the most important religious festival of the Athenians, the Panathenaia, a yearly festival in honor of Athena, the city's patron goddess. The route ran from the Dipylon Gate to the Acropolis, the center of Athena's cult. By this street, in the northwest corner of the Agora, stood the important Altar of the Twelve Gods, originally established in 521 BC, a square enclosure marked by a low wall, with an altar in the center. Here, suppliants were granted refuge. In addition, distances from Athens were measured from this point.

The grandest of the religious buildings was the Hephaisteion, a temple for both Hephaistos, god of the forge, and Athena, built on the Kolonos Agoraios. It continues to dominate the area, overlooking the Agora from the west. Built in the mid to late fifth century BC, this Doric order temple owes its excellent preservation largely to its long use as a Christian church.

Commercial Activities

A major commercial building was the South Stoa I, a long stoa that lined the south edge of the Agora. First erected in 430 to 420 BC, it was replaced in the second century BC by a complex of two stoas (Middle Stoa and South Stoa II) that together formed an enclosed rectangular space, the South Square. South Stoa I contained rooms at the rear that served as dining rooms, evidently necessary components of the businesses that operated here.

Just outside the formal boundaries of the Agora, numerous workshops were found. Trades attested include the manufacture of pottery and terracotta figurines, bronze and iron working, sculpture and other marble working, and shoemaking. Also in the area were wine shops and private houses.

Dedications by Foreign Rulers

Lastly, the interest of foreign rulers in Athens is worth noting. Although Athens lost its military and economic edge after its defeat in the Peloponnesian War in the late fifth century BC, the prestige of the city as an intellectual and cultural center continued undiminished. As a result, the city was granted handsome benefactions during Hellenistic and Roman times. One striking addition to the Agora was the Stoa of Attalos, a magnificent two-storied stoa placed along the east edge of the area, the donation of Attalos II, king of Pergamon (ruled 159–138 BC). Reconstructed in 1956, the stoa today serves as the museum for the Agora and the headquarters of the Agora excavations. Roman gifts included a large Odeion, a covered concert hall, given by the emperor Augustus's son-in-law Agrippa in circa 16–12 BC, and a basilica (a three-aisled hall, for administrative and business matters) and a nymphaion (an elaborate fountain building), built during the reign of Hadrian (ruled AD 117–138).

Charles Gates

See also Acropolis; Ancient Cities; Athens, Greece

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Airports

Airports are important transportation and communication nodes in the network age. As essential hubs in the global urban fabric, they show the extent to which the traffic of digital information, people, and things depends on high-speed logistical systems. The growth in world air travel relates directly to the major developments in globalization and demonstrates the extent to which the process of modernization is being rolled out across the first world and "developing" countries. To this extent, airports provide "early warning" signals or "laboratory conditions" for the study of global networks and information flows. This is particularly evident in the post–September 11, 2001, context, which has seen the intensification of data profiling, biometrics, and other intrusive security measure being trialed and tested throughout many international air terminals in the name of passenger safety and risk management. Although airports have always been important markers in the spectacularization of technology, it is important to consider the