The Department of Urban Planning & Policy is pleased to announce the upcoming doctoral dissertation defense:

Ph.D CANDIDATE:

Ivis Garcia Zambrana

TITLE OF DISSERTATION:
The Puerto Rican Identity: Reconstructing Ownership in the Face of Change

Date/Time:

Friday, April 3, 2015, 1:00 pm

Location:

SRH (Student Residence Hall)
818 S. Wolcott
Chicago, IL 60607
Room 325

DEFENSE COMMITTEE:

Dr. David C. Perry (Advisor and Chair)
Dr. Janet Smith
Dr. John J. Betancur
Dr. Phil Ashton
Dr. Ralph Cintron, UIC English Department

ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to elucidate currently existing as well as historic relationships between market typologies, the structured dynamics of housing stratification and distribution, and community development strategies in a primarily Puerto Rican community. In particular this research constructs a model framework from which to interpret Puerto Rican discourses surrounding ownership in Humboldt Park, Chicago. In this work, I contend that Puerto Ricans have attempted, with some degree of success, to construct narrativized and symbolic forms of ownership in lieu of the individualized and commodified ideals held as common-sense within the broader American community.

To ground the theoretical propositions espoused within the dissertation, I spent more than four and a half years conducting participatory action research alongside the Puerto Rican Agenda—an activist organization on Chicago’s West Side composed of community leaders, academics, and executive directors representing various non-profit organizations (known colloquially as the “Agenda”)—and implemented a cross section of qualitative case-study methods regarding focus group facilitation, interviews, and document mining. Quantitatively, my study was largely informed through surveys, demographic techniques and analyses which are represented with geospatial statistical analyses.

Where successful, the community’s attempts at constructing systems of ownership outside of the mainstream financial and market-dependent modalities have tended to present a legitimate challenge to marketized housing schemes and, if pursued and developed more fully, may offer collectivized solutions to the structurally problematic ideals of privatized and highly individuated modes of economy. While this sort of community-driven ownership has obvious implications for disenfranchised groups (racialized, ethnic, non-traditional), there is also potential for far deeper implications pertaining to the problems of uneven development, the role of the state in the formation and maintenance of market-economies, grassroots organizing, and housing policy more generally.