



Strategies to Address NIMBY Reactions and Community Opposition

Affordable housing projects, increased density and other proposed regulatory changes to established neighborhoods can be contentious issues that provoke common “not in my back yard” (NIMBY) reactions from the surrounding community. Building community support throughout the planning process is essential to building acceptance for a particular project or regulatory change. Strategies include community outreach plans, strategic marketing, coalition building, education, and ongoing communication.

BACKGROUND

Building community support requires patience, listening and creativity. It can be a time-consuming process and may require expert consultation. Because of the variety of motives groups have for mobilizing around an effort, jurisdictions and housing advocates will likely need to create different messages that respond to particular issues. The goal is to be persuasive and to demonstrate how providing housing for all is a community benefit on many levels. Projects will appeal to more people if outreach relates to deeper values and interests.

WHEN SHOULD THESE STRATEGIES BE USED?

Residents may cite a variety of concerns that may be based on misconceptions about a project. Common claims around affordable housing center on concerns about declining property values, increased traffic, changing character of a neighborhood or stereotypes about residents. Many of these concerns are based upon misinformation and can be addressed with educational outreach.

TOOL PROFILE

Objectives

[Housing in Centers and Near Transit](#)

[Housing Options in Expensive Markets](#)

[Missing Middle Density](#)

[Build Community Support](#)

[Addressing Racial Inequities](#)

Type of Tool

Education and Outreach

Project Type

Single family

Multifamily

Ownership

Rental

Affordability Level

Market-rate incentives and tools

**Most effective for units
<80% AMI**

Other community concerns, such as those relating to traffic congestion, service provision or environmental quality, should be addressed within development plans, not brushed off as disguises for NIMBY attitudes. Concerns about design and unsightliness may be addressed through design charettes and review processes.

Stereotypes can be harder to dislodge but can be counteracted by interactions between concerned neighbors and actual residents of affordable housing, and by building a relationship among neighbors, residents and developers. The links below offer more specific suggestions on addressing common community concerns.

WHAT STRATEGIES EXIST TO ADDRESS NIMBY REACTIONS AND COMMUNITY OPPOSITION?

The process of building support can take many forms. The outreach approach can range from promotional, where jurisdictions or developers provide information and communicate a project or concept, to collaborative, where information is being shared and gathered by each side of the issue. Jurisdictions should think about their goal(s), such as whether they are trying to inform the community about a proposed development or create a coalition supporting affordable housing issues. Not all techniques for building support will work in every situation. A variety of strategies can be used, depending on the project, the community's familiarity with the subject, and who is involved.

Developing a [community engagement plan](#) is a first step to identifying key stakeholders and ensuring all voices are heard in the process.

RESOURCES

BC Housing: [Supportive Housing in your Community](#) (2020)

California Planning Roundtable and California Department of Housing & Community Development: [Myths and Facts about Affordable & High Density Housing](#) (2002)

Corporation for Supportive Housing: [Six Steps to Building Community Support](#) (2013)

Enterprise Community Partners Inc. and FrameWorks Institute: [“You Don’t Have to Live Here” Why Housing Messages Backfire and 10 Things We Can Do About It](#) (2016)

GCA Strategies: [Overcoming NIMBY Opposition](#) (2010)

Housing Toolbox for Massachusetts Communities: [Addressing Community Concerns about Affordable Housing](#) (2020)

National Multifamily Housing Council (NMHC): [NIMBY Objections](#) (2020)

Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California: [The Original NPH Toolkit](#) (2020)

US Department of Housing and Urban Development: [NIMBY Risk Assessment and Decision Tree Tool](#) (2020)

