

## Moving from NIMBY to YIMBY Communities

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### What is NIMBY? Not In My Backyard

No one wants to admit to being part of a NIMBYism, but almost everyone is.

**Test yourself:** Have I ever thought “I would prefer that (Fill in the blank: apartment building, Community Care facility, long term care facility), not be built in my backyard “?

If you can answer YES – then you have been a part of a NIMBY thought process.

**NIMBYs** oppose & stall development through public action/deputations and sometimes demonstrations. **Nimbyism is often caused by fear of property value loss, loss of community “standing” and/or loss of treasured historical, environmental, or ecological features.** Sometimes, this fear is based on stigma, stereotypes and, frequently, underlying prejudice. NIMBYs may also recognize the social value of a proposed development but prefer it to be built elsewhere or not at all. **NIMBYism is not always wrong-minded** but almost always intends to stop, stall, or disrupt development and is an important impediment to building affordable housing.

**What does the Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force February 2022 say about Nimbyism:** Full report: [Housing Affordability Task Force report | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/housing)

“Depoliticize the process and cut red tape

NIMBYism (not in my backyard) is a major obstacle to building housing. It drags out the approval process, pushes up costs, and keeps out new residents. Because local councillors depend on the votes of residents who want to keep the status quo, the planning process has become politicized. Municipalities allow far more public consultation than required, often using formats that make it hard for working people and families with young children to take part. Too few technical decisions are delegated to municipal staff. Pressure to designate buildings with little or no heritage value as “heritage” if development is proposed and bulk listings of properties with “heritage potential” are also standing in the way of getting homes built. Dysfunction throughout the system, risk aversion and needless bureaucracy have resulted in a situation where Ontario lags the rest of Canada and the developed world in approval times. Ontarians have waited long enough.

Recommendations 13 through 25 would require municipalities to limit consultations to the

decisions, prevent abuse of the heritage process and see property owners compensated for financial loss resulting from designation, restore the right of developers to appeal Official Plans and Municipal Comprehensive Reviews, legislate timelines for approvals and enact several other common sense changes that would allow housing to be built more quickly and affordably. Fix the Ontario Land Tribunal Largely because of the politicization of the planning process, many proponents look to the Tribunal, a quasi-judicial body, to give the go-ahead to projects that should have been approved by the municipality. Even when there is municipal approval, however, opponents appeal to the Tribunal – paying only a \$400 fee – knowing that this may well succeed in delaying a project to the point where it might no longer make economic sense. As a result, the Tribunal faces a backlog of more than 1,000 cases and is seriously under-resourced. Recommendations 26 through 31 seek to weed out or prevent appeals aimed purely at delaying projects, allow adjudicators to award costs to proponents in more cases, including instances where a municipality has refused an approval to avoid missing a legislated deadline, reduce the time to issue decisions, increase funding, and encourage the Tribunal to prioritize cases that would increase housing supply quickly as it tackles the backlog.

Fixing the housing crisis needs everyone working together. Delivering 1.5 million homes will require the provincial and federal governments to invest in change. Municipalities that make the difficult but necessary choices to grow housing supply should be rewarded, and those that resist new housing should see funding reductions. Recommendations 49 and 50 call for Ontario government to create a large “Ontario Housing Delivery Fund” and encourage the federal government to match funding and suggest how the province should reward municipalities that support change and reduce funding for municipalities that do not.”

*February 2022 Report of the Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force | Page 5 Excerpt*

### **Local IMPACT of NIMBYISM**

Being a NIMBY costs someone money, and that affects the affordability of development. For a developer, the costs of defending their plans at a Land Tribunal hearing adds hundreds of thousands of dollars to their expenses. This expense takes away from the bottom line, thereby reducing the affordability of each unit. It also significantly delays the creation of units. In our region, an example is a recent decision made in the Town of Blue Mountains. A proposed attainable housing corporation build was reduced to three storeys from four. The reduced height decision was made to avoid further delays in the build and the costs that would have come from an anticipated appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal. Everyone loses – the community in the number AND cost of units in the attainable project, and the developer – with an increase in the cost per unit.

## **The Impact of Bill 23 on NIMBYISM**

As Ontario's Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022 proposes in its title, its purpose is to -build more homes faster. The Bill addresses processes that may slow down a development's progress, at a variety of levels of government, including in municipalities. The Bill removes and/or provides controls over such things that traditionally may have been raised by Nimby advocates. The impact of the Bill has yet to be determined.

**For a local overview on the impact of Bill 23 on NIMBYISM see:**

[Bill 23 – More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022 passed... fast.](#)

Chris Barnett, Evan Barz, Andrew Rintoul [Osler](#) Nov. 2022.

## **Communities CAN move from NIMBY to YIMBY**

Strategies for communities: What can we do about NIMBYism?

### **1. Promote YIMBYism: Yes in My Backyard.**

Recognize the stories and simple strategies that community members take to support a housing for all approach: renting at below market rents; private rent to own transactions; supporting those "other" costs that are part of the 30% of income affordability threshold, such as food programs, subsidized transportation, energy cost support.

### **2. Find ways to communicate "YES" our community cares through public education**

Public communication strategies work. Here are a few from other communities to get the imagination going. ( a few noted here) to counter Myths within a NIMBY culture; Social Media campaigns a few noted here in [Yes! In My Backyard \(YIMBY\) Guelph](#) or **check out this video** from [BILDqta](#) the Building Industry and Land Development Association in Toronto or join the American online community [Yimby Action](#) for ideas and more community strategies.

### **3. Independent citizen-appointed project review panels.**

In Australia, for example, panels are used to review large scale housing projects. Panels can be made up of individuals from the community typically **outside** Government who review development based on criteria aligned to Official Plans and "the greater health of the over all community." Stakeholders could include representation by local developers, "in-jeopardy" residents, businesses, and municipal staff/council members.

#### **4. Encourage and Organize YIMBY presence at Developer presentations and public forums.**

These delegations, which could be Affordable Housing Task Forces, can watch for regulatory provisions and sustainability measures to assure vacant homes in areas of greatest housing demand & real estate “flipping” are taxed appropriately. These delegations can encourage a say “Yes” approach to increased awareness of the needs & sustainability of the whole community, regardless of age, race, socio-economic background while busting myths about: who is (or will be) homeless, who needs affordable housing, & potential ‘decreased land values’ caused by affordable housing developments.

Here are some close-to-home examples of delegations including municipal and citizen-appointed review panels or task forces. See their website/information on members & accomplishments:

Muskoka:

<https://www.engagemuskoka.ca/muskoka-housing-task-force>

City of Brantford Housing Plan of 2020 designed by their Mayor appointed Task Force:

<https://www.brantford.ca/en/living-here/mayors-housing-partnerships-task-force.aspx>

<https://www.brantford.ca/en/living-here/resources/Documents/Housing/2020-Dec15-MHPTF-ActionPlan.pdf>

City of Collingwood Affordable Housing Task Force:

<https://www.collingwood.ca/council-government/committees-boards/affordable-housing-task-force>

Further Resources:

<https://www.brucecounty.on.ca/living/yimby> Grey Bruce YIMBY Action Information

<https://caeh.ca/bright-spot-yimby/> Guelph’s YIMBY action Movement

<https://www.facebook.com/WRYIMBY> Waterloo Region’s YIMBY Action Movement

On Twitter: @OntarioYIMBY