

**Overcoming Community  
Opposition to Homelessness  
Sheltering Projects  
under the National  
Homelessness Initiative**

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**Abstract**

Through the analysis of 14 case studies, across 7 cities, covering 5 provinces, this paper examines NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) opposition, lessons learned and best practices collected in overcoming this type of reaction to the development of sheltering facilities, i.e., emergency shelters, transitional and supportive housing, and affordable housing, for homeless men and women and their families or for those at risk of homelessness. Through a better understanding of fears and issues underlying NIMBY opposition and through the application of conflict theory, this paper advances recommendations to assist community social service providers, city planners and government officials to overcome NIMBY responses when planning, developing and implementing sheltering projects under the National Homelessness Initiative.



## Introduction

*'We don't want you people here'* reads a headline in the Toronto Star newspaper on August 31, 2002.<sup>1</sup> This quote from a resident expresses opposition over the prospect of a homelessness shelter moving into his neighbourhood, Iroquois Ridge in Oakville, Ontario. This resident, who lives across the street from the proposed site of the development of a 1500-square foot, 40-bed homelessness shelter continues; "We'll fight you tooth and nail on this! [...] Why can't you understand, we don't want you people here? Period! End of story." These sentiments, echoed by other residents of Iroquois Ridge, are not unique to this community. Rather, this is an example of the growing phenomenon of community opposition to unwanted land use in their neighbourhoods. This is popularly known as NIMBY, short for 'Not in My Back Yard'!

NIMBY opponents typically cite declining property values, increased traffic and crime and unfair distribution of social services as reasons against the development of homeless sheltering facilities in their neighbourhoods. The case study analysis demonstrates however that these NIMBY objections often mask underlying issues and fears. These underlying issues and fears, driving NIMBY opposition are found to be derived from an opponent's lack of participation, their lack of knowledge or understanding, their fear of change and their fear of the perceived threat the proposed intervention causes. In the case of homelessness, the prevalence of NIMBY opposition is heightened due to bias, bigotry and prejudice against homeless people due to stereotyped notions of who homeless people are.

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<sup>1</sup> *'We don't want you people here'*, (2002 August 31) Toronto Star, p. A12



## **The National Homelessness Initiative**

The federal government launched the three-year, \$753 million, National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) in December 1999. The Initiative was designed to help ensure community access to programs, services and support for alleviating homelessness in communities located in all provinces and territories. Recognizing the extent and severity of the homelessness situation, and that three years was not enough time to achieve the full promise of this initiative, the 2003 Government of Canada's Budget announced a further three year, \$405 million extension to the Initiative. Under this initiative communities will be provided with the supports to further implement measures that assist homeless individuals and families in achieving and maintaining self-sufficiency.

The NHI is designed to support community efforts. While understanding that urgent and emergency needs had to be addressed first, the Government of Canada also realized that the approach needed to support a long-term plan at the community level. Sixty-one communities across the country brought service providers and all levels of government together, developed comprehensive plans, and supported projects that addressed the needs of homeless people and their communities. Many partnerships were formed, more than a thousand projects were funded, and homeless people received new and better coordinated supports<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on the Government of Canada's National Homelessness Initiative please visit <http://www.homelessness.gc.ca>



## Homelessness and NIMBY

NIMBY is a major program consideration in implementing sheltering or service provision programs under the NHI and remains an ongoing barrier in the development of emergency shelters, supportive/transitional and affordable housing for homeless people. The impacts of NIMBY opposition can be severe in terms of costs and delays associated with this type of opposition to the project itself as well as the associated impacts on homeless clients and community service providers. Furthermore, NIMBY opposition risks jeopardizing the gains made to date in mobilizing community efforts and resources towards the issue. The costs alone associated with confronting NIMBY opposition through formal planning and provincial appeal boards can well exceed available resources, capacity and expertise of community homelessness service providers.

The problem affects the provision of services in all communities. Alderson-Gill and Associates completed a national evaluation of the NHI<sup>3</sup> and reported that: “every community interviewed (20) brought up NIMBY as an issue they were anticipating or one they had faced” (Rick Gill, Personal Interview, March 14, 2003). There is a great need to support community groups, communities and service providers who face NIMBY opposition in implementing projects under the NHI.

Dear and Wilton (1996) examine the increase in NIMBY reactions over the past decade and describe the impacts that this type of opposition can have on a community:

Over the past decade, the expansion of people in need has been accompanied by a rising tide of local activism and NIMBY sentiments. The result has been an alarmingly high incidence of siting conflicts, the costs of which are principally borne by community, facility operator and clients alike. A community fabric can be irreparably damaged by the anger, frustration and divisiveness engendered by a proposed siting; service providers can become demoralized and financially undermined by prolonged legal battles and other forms of local opposition; and clients can be temporarily or permanently denied access to much needed care and assistance (p. 3).

Homelessness has both human and economic costs to homeless individuals themselves as well as to the broader community. The longer people are homeless, the more expensive it becomes to support them (e.g. emergency hospitalization, correctional facilities, etc.) and the greater the cost to their self-esteem and ability to help themselves. Studies have shown that the provision of safe and secure shelter can lead to a reduction in homelessness, improve stability, as well as provide individuals with mental illness, addiction, and chronic illnesses with a higher quality of life. These are more cost effective solutions that require less government funding or subsidization than traditional forms of interventions, such as hospitalization, crisis care, incarceration or institutionalization (Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California (NHP), 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Full evaluation report of the NHI is available at <http://www.homelessness.gc.ca>



## **The National Secretariat on Homelessness**

The National Secretariat on Homelessness' (NSH) mission is to help alleviate homelessness and advance national understanding of the issue by fostering and promoting innovative partnerships and to empower local communities to take ownership for the issues and the responses required to address it.

The NSH provides program and policy leadership together with program support for the Government of Canada's NHI. It works closely with regional and city homelessness facilitators and provides guidance to the delivery networks implementing NHI projects. In addition, the NSH is responsible for the development of accountability, risk management and evaluation frameworks, for research and the collection and analysis of relevant data and for reporting on NHI results and lessons learned.

In sponsoring this study, it is hoped that useful guidelines for service providers, community groups and government agencies can be developed to assist them in avoiding often costly and lengthy negotiation and confrontation when the NIMBY reaction is at its height. To do so, systems or methods to reduce, manage and potentially prevent NIMBY must be designed and built into both the broader policy framework, including the terms and conditions of the NHI and the planning and development phases of projects under the NHI. It is also hoped that the best practices and lessons learned collected through the case study analysis will be a valuable resource to those who may face similar NIMBY issues in the future.





## Defining NIMBY

Wolch and Dear (1993) define NIMBY as “the protectionist attitudes and exclusionary/oppositional tactics adopted by community groups facing an unwelcome development in their neighbourhood (p. 179).” Over the years, NIMBY has been used to describe public opposition to a wide variety of proposed changes in local environments including landfill sites, hazardous waste facilities, airports, prison, power plants, and even post-secondary institutions (White & Ashton, 1992). However, some of this opposition, e.g. opposition to nuclear power plants, might have more to do with a political standpoint on the issue rather than the fact that its location is proposed within a proximity to someone’s residence. This type of opposition is often referred to as NIABY (Not In Anyone’s Back Yard).

NIMBY for the purpose of this study is used as a more narrowly defined term to describe opponents of new developments who recognize that a facility is needed but are opposed to its siting within their locality. The relevance and prevalence of NIMBY opposition in the case of siting homelessness sheltering facilities is that the large majority of people agree that these facilities are required, yet, as each of the case studies demonstrates, are opposed to them being constructed in their neighbourhood. This is observed repeatedly in the case studies with quotes such as, “we are not opposed to shelters, just not here”. The opposition to the siting of the facilities in these cases was brought about by a small group of people, united not by a political stance on the issue of homelessness but rather by their geographical proximity to the proposed site for its development. These sentiments occur towards homeless facilities in almost every neighbourhood, regardless of economic or social status. The question therefore becomes – as the title of the paper begs – if not here, then where?



Burningham (2000) warns that the acronym NIMBY is now so firmly associated with limited and self-interested responses to local environmental change that it seems problematic and confusing to retain the acronym if such negative assumptions are not being made. She sees NIMBY as a value judgment that serves to legitimize one protest and undermine another. Opponents in such disputes understand NIMBY as a pejorative term and are aware that if they live close to a proposed new development their opposition could be construed this way. However, living locally is at the same time an important resource for objectors, providing the basis for claims of local knowledge and experience that are often used to counter the assessments of ‘experts’ who do not live in the area.

Thus [opponents] face something of a dilemma: they are often keen to assert their local identity but at the same time need to fend off the implication that their protest is simply a NIMBY one (p. 1).

The analysis of case studies reveals the opposition towards sheltering facilities for homeless people is often fuelled by fears of the negative impact of the facility on their neighbourhood and prejudice towards the homeless clients these facilities would serve. NIMBY opposition in these cases carries with it a negative connotation because it is a type of opposition that tries to manipulate the democratic processes available, often under the guise of constructive criticism to satisfy individual interests and control the end user of a proposed development. It is important to note that discrimination of people through the use of zoning is referred to as “people zoning” and was made illegal by the Supreme Court of Canada (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2001).



## Ethics of NIMBY

It is important to establish at the outset that concerns raised by citizens as part of democratic processes are not necessarily bad and correspondingly, that democratic processes are inherently good. Furthermore, zoning and permit approval processes at the municipal level have played an important function historically in protecting the rights and interests of individual homeowners.

NIMBY, in a liberal-democratic society, can be seen as a by-product of the ongoing tension between individual freedom of choice and the potential infringement of the rights of others that such freedom entails (White & Ashton, 1992). There is a constant struggle to balance individual liberty and collective responsibility in terms of public housing and sheltering supports and services. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states in Article 25(1) that:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of oneself and one's family, including food, clothing, *housing* and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond one's control.<sup>4</sup> (United Nations, 1948, Article 25(1))

Conversely however, land use zoning policies have focused on individual property rights and home-ownership. Plotkin (1987) argues that zoning is best understood as “the protective public armour of landed property in a nation that holds trespassers in contempt (p.23).”

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<sup>4</sup> See also Articles 12, 22 and 23 (3): “everyone has the right to a supplement to ensure existence, worthy of human dignity.”



## The NIMBY Context

The prevalence of NIMBY has increased over the past thirty years, precipitated in part by the deinstitutionalization of various groups of people with disabilities and the need for different forms of community housing, such as foster homes, group homes, hostels and supported housing for people leaving these institutions (Piat, 2000). While the public generally supported the idea of deinstitutionalization, residents reacted negatively to the idea of community housing in their neighbourhoods. Takahashi (1998) traces the further intensification of NIMBY in the 1980s and 1990s to the expansion of homelessness in North America during this time period.

According to Taylor and Dear (1981), there are three key factors that can predict a NIMBY response. These are geographical proximity, client characteristics, and the nature of the facility. The first refers to the location of the proposed facility in relation to the residents of a community. A Toronto study showed a 'consistent distance decay function', which is defined as a decrease in intensity of opposition the further the facility is located away from a residence (Taylor & Dear, 1981). The second and third factors – client characteristics and nature of facility – imply that certain client groups and types of facilities will likely face more resistance than others.

As the table below suggests, different kinds of human services do not engender comparable levels of community opposition. Some residential facilities or drop-in centres will open with little or no animosity from neighbours, while others may be halted indefinitely at the planning or even abandoned altogether because the opposition is so intense



<b>Three Tiers of Acceptability</b>	
<b>Most Welcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School</li> <li>• Day Care Centre</li> <li>• Nursing Home</li> <li>• Hospital</li> <li>• Mental Clinic</li> </ul>
<b>Mixed Opinions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group Home (Mental Disability)</li> <li>• Homeless Shelter</li> <li>• Alcohol Rehab Centre</li> <li>• Drug-Treatment Centre</li> </ul>
<b>Absolutely Unwelcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facility for Mentally Ill</li> <li>• Shopping Mall</li> <li>• Group Home (AIDS patients)</li> <li>• Factory</li> <li>• Garbage Landfill</li> <li>• Prison</li> </ul>

(Adapted from Daniel Yankelovich Group, 1990)

Dear and Wilton (1998) describe siting problems as consisting of three principal dimensions: the characteristics of the host community, the facility itself, and the client population. The social, political, economic, and physical structure of a host community will have a profound effect upon residents' unwillingness to accept controversial human service facilities. At the same time, the facility itself – its appearance, the reputation of the sponsoring agency, and the aspects of its daily operations – will also influence the reception afforded by the host community. The intended consumers of the facility's services may also have a marked impact upon the neighbourhood response. People who are stigmatized are viewed as a differentiated group: they are the "others", the "strangers". These "others" are usually perceived according to varying degrees of undesirability.

Given the lack of knowledge and understanding about homelessness in Canada – its causes, characteristics and scope – homeless people are often stigmatized due to stereotyped notions of who the homeless are. The stigmatization associated with homeless people can help to explain why NIMBY reaction is so prevalent and heightened towards the development of sheltering facilities for homeless people.



## The NIMBY Cycle

Dear (1992) describes NIMBY as a three-stage, cyclical process, beginning with 'youth' stage, when news of the proposal breaks and residents who live extremely close to the proposed development express outrage, usually in blunt and irrational terms. Next is the 'maturity' stage, where the two sides assemble supporters, and the debate moves into the public forum, framed in somewhat more rational and objective terms. The opposition strategies used in the maturity stage take a variety of forms, such as letter writing to local politicians and media, public campaigns and demonstrations, and sometimes violence. Coordinated with these actions is the use of land-use planning mechanisms to prevent development as a special permit is often required for a human service facility in a residential neighbourhood. If the proponents of the development cannot proceed as-of-right, then they can face serious obstacles in obtaining permission.

Finally there is 'old age' stage, which is the often long, costly and drawn-out period of conflict resolution. Typically, some kind of professional, political, or legal process is employed in order for resolution to take place. In these cases, the side with more stamina and resources tends to prevail. Unfortunately, in the case of community service providers homeless people, the costs and delays associated with this phase of the conflict are often too great to bear. Therefore, avoiding the escalation of conflict to the maturity phase is important. Using conflict theory, community acceptance strategies must begin when conflict is still in the "youth" phase.



## **Federal Intervention and Fair Share**

As described earlier, NIMBY can cause an ethical dilemma for decision-makers attempting to balance between individual liberty and collective responsibility in terms of public housing. According to Plunkett (1998), “the most difficult and controversial of municipal responsibilities involves the planning and regulation of land use (p.13)”. In the case of the Government of Canada, this debate is complicated by jurisdictional issues between federal, provincial and local governments.

As part of a package of changes in Dutch law, their Parliament passed a NIMBY bill aimed at speeding up procedures to permit new housing developments and limiting the influence of local residents, authorities and organizations whose opposition was seen to reflect a disregard for “common good”. Wolsink (1994) cautions, that the introduction of this bill under Dutch law presents an issue of power politics. It assumes a ‘higher interest’, one that is above the interests of others, particularly if they have the power to let their own interests prevail. As power becomes more decisive than arguments, siting decisions, according to Wolsink, will create severe conflicts.

There are a combination of six implicit assumptions and premises upon which the NIMBY rests in the case of the Dutch bill, according to Wolsink.

1. The decision-making model on local facility siting is laborious.
2. The projects involved represent ‘higher’ interests than those of the local population.
3. Everyone agrees on the usefulness of these facilities.
4. Everyone prefers not to have the facilities situated in their own backyard.
5. Everyone prefers to have the facilities situated in someone else’s backyard.
6. The attitudes and opinions which go to make up NIMBY are static (p. 5).

The Dutch NIMBY bill is based on the basic assumption that public opposition is caused only by NIMBY attitudes. This is an extreme example of dealing with NIMBY as there is no room for legitimate public concern. Such broad sweeping policies are inherently problematic and risk jeopardizing the democratic processes implemented to protect individual rights. Nevertheless, the idea of federal intervention in the common interest is one worthy of active consideration.



In the United States, the federal government has developed programs and made resources available to empower local organizations and service providers to override municipal rulings on the siting of facilities on the basis of discriminatory practices and Fair Share policies. 'Fair Share' policies aim to correct the planning trends that have disproportionately located human service facilities in particular communities in order to ensure an even distribution of facilities across neighbourhoods. The challenge is to determine what number and type of facilities is considered fair. In 1989, New York City mandated its Planning Commission to develop criteria that would;

[...] further the fair distribution among communities of the burdens and benefits associated with city facilities [...] with due regard for the social and economic impacts of such facilities upon the areas surrounding the sites (Weisberg, 1993, p.94).

The program was implemented in 1991 after input from the City's fifty-nine planning boards and five boroughs presidents. According to Barbara Weisberg, Assistant Executive Director at the planning department, the development of criteria centered on early and open consultation with communities and considered both equity and efficiency concerns (p.94). The criteria were first used as the mayor announced plans to build twenty-four small shelters throughout the city. However, the idea that the sites had been determined through fair and collaborative means did not minimize the level of NIMBY reactions. Joseph Rose (1993) stated that the decision 'nearly ignited an urban civil war'. Neighbourhoods of all social, economic and racial backgrounds reacted extremely strongly, arguing that their communities were unfairly singled out.

The importance of this debate cannot be understated. At stake is the conflict between two valid principles, the right of everyone to the quiet enjoyment of their property and the duty of the state to come to the aid of the less fortunate through social supports and services. Through an understanding of conflict theory and conflict management theory, ways and means are available to recognize and respect both principles for the betterment of all.





## Methodology

For the purpose of this study, 14 case studies were selected based on the following criteria.

Case Study Selection Criteria	
Regional Representation	Case studies were selected from communities across Canada spanning British Columbia, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland.
Size of Community	Case studies represent a cross section of Canadian cities, ranging from large metropolitan centres (e.g. Toronto, Vancouver) to smaller communities (e.g. Charlottetown) and remote communities (e.g. Sudbury).
Development Type	Case studies were also selected in terms of development type (e.g. renovation or new construction).
Facility Type	Case studies were selected to represent projects along the whole continuum of supports for homeless individuals and families ranging from emergency shelters to transitional and supportive housing to affordable housing.
Target Client Population	An effort was also made to ensure that case studies represented a variety of target client groups including homeless individuals and families, women fleeing violence, ex-offenders and Aboriginal people facing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.
Outcome	An effort was also made to ensure that there was a representation of both successful projects and failed proposals in order to determine whether there were identifiable factors that contributed to either outcome.

Full case study profiles are available<sup>5</sup> for each of the 14 case studies selected. The case study profiles include: a project description, community processes, concerns raised, outcomes, best practices and lessons learned.

NIMBY incidents are documented in this case study format for the purpose of:

- Comparison, in order to determine commonalities and differences;
- Analysis of underlying issues and concerns;
- Collection of best practices and lessons learned.

<sup>5</sup> Contact Jeannie Wynne-Edwards at the NSH for full case study profiles.



## Opposition and Respondent Groups

The following summarizes the opposition groups and the respondent groups involved in the case studies.

<b>Opposition Groups</b> (presented in order of prevalence)	
1.	Adjacent Neighbours
2.	Local Residents
3.	Schools (Parent/Teacher Committees)
4.	Businesses (Community Business Associations)

<b>Respondent Groups</b>
Service Providers
Municipal Planners
Local Councillors
Provincial/Municipal Boards
Funding Bodies (e.g. Federal and Provincial Government)

In most of the cases studied, community opposition is developed by neighbouring residents, either adjacent to or within the same community. The definition of community in this context can vary from a one-block radius or adjacent neighbours to a larger radius, eg. six blocks. Community may also include local businesses as well as schools or other facilities operating within the proposed project's vicinity.

The respondent groups in a NIMBY dispute are those who must respond to the objections. They are the decision-makers who NIMBY citizens are trying to influence, and with whom responsibility for the outcome of a NIMBY incident ultimately lies. From the case studies reviewed, five key respondent groups to NIMBY opposition were identified.



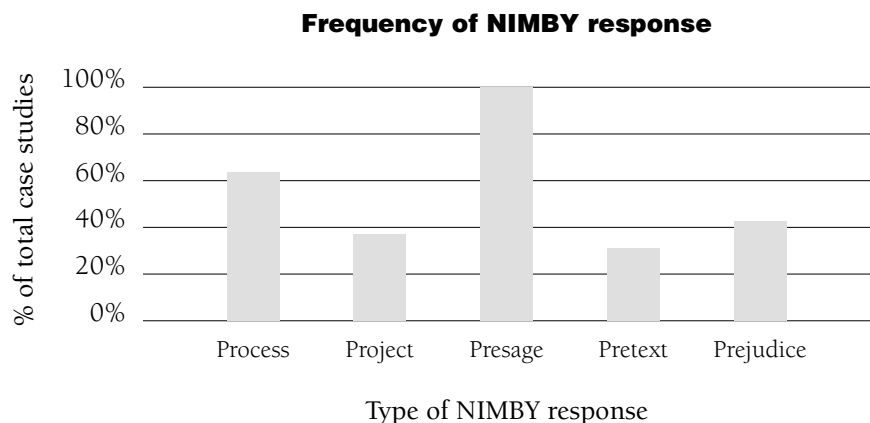
## Five types of NIMBY objections

According to White and Ashton (1992) there are five types of NIMBY objections that categorize typical housing-related NIMBY objections: process, project, presage, pretext and prejudice.

Five Types of NIMBY Objections	
Process	Objections that relate to criticism of land use regulations and the public participation process.
Project	Objections that comment on the physical characteristics of the proposal.
Presage	Objections that are largely speculative in nature about the proposal and were not confirmed or supported with evidence.
Pretext	Comments that indicate that the issue is not exclusively related to the process itself, but to prior conditions or previous development experiences in the community.
Prejudice	Objections that clearly or implicitly are aimed at the occupants of the housing proposal.

(Table adapted from - White & Ashton, 1992, p.36)

Applying White and Ashton's (1992) methodology – categorizing housing-related NIMBY objections into five types – the analysis of the case studies reveals that each of the five types of NIMBY objections is prevalent. The table below summarizes the prevalence of NIMBY objections found in the case studies selected. Presage concerns were observed in 100% of cases studied.



The following section presents the case study findings grouped according to the five types of NIMBY objections identified by White and Ashton (1992). For each type of objection, a list of specific concerns raised and best practices and lessons learned from the case studies is presented. By grouping common concerns according to these five types of NIMBY objections, patterns in opposition and methods to overcome it become evident.



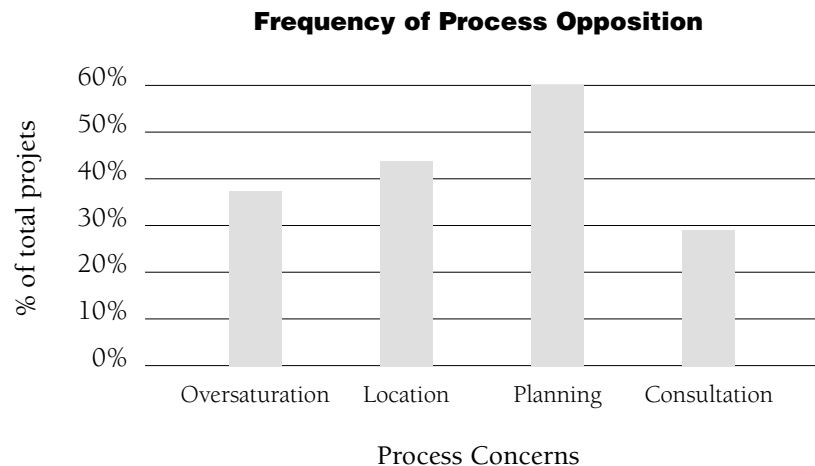
## Objection Type: Process

*Objections related to criticism of land use regulations and the public participation process.*

This type of NIMBY opposition is demonstrated in 64 percent of the cases examined. Four separate sub-areas of opposition are revealed under this type of opposition.

1. *Over-saturation* of services in the area. Residents feel that their community had already done its share and worry about the lasting impact on the neighbourhood of the entrenchment of these services.
2. *Location*. While residents agree that the facility is needed, they do not want it located in the site proposed.
3. *Planning*. Residents feel that the proposal was inconsistent with the City or neighbourhood plans for development. These objections are generally based on planning principles.
4. *Consultation*. Objections are based on a perceived or real lack of input and participation in the project planning, development and decision-making processes.

The frequency of occurrence of each of these subtypes of process opposition is summarized in the table below:



## Best practices and lessons learned related to “process type” objections:

- Project developers should not have made assumptions: a) that re-zoning was not necessary and b) that given that they had been operating previously only half a block away, that they did not require community support.
- Given that there was no existing by-law (would have been grandfathered in if developed), they could have opened and stayed open but wanted to generate support and work with the system.
- Search for properties that are zoned appropriately for the project’s purchase as it will take a minimum of 6-9 months to negotiate re-zoning with the city.
- Ensure that you have general community support and proper zoning in place before purchasing property.
- Ensure that your project is done under a broad social policy framework for social housing or a community action plan.
- Demonstrate to the community what the land could be used for without their approval, i.e., if zoned industrial or if zoned for a higher density proposal.
- “Take something bad and make it better” as if you take something bad and improve it, you effectively silence any opposition, even if it is masked in a rational form.
- The support of decision-makers is crucial for issues requiring a project that strays from planned use.
- There are repercussions from the city’s approval without community support. E.g. In the construction of one project, the organization had to cut down a tree. A neighbour phoned the city immediately to complain. A building contractor parked on the sidewalk and again the city received a complaint.
- Avoid election years, as political pressure from unhappy constituents can become too much for even the most socially oriented councillors. A new city council with a multiple year mandate can work in your favour.
- An active and capable civic housing authority can speed the process and better assure positive outcomes.
- Know your legal rights.



- Ensure that your project involves multiple partners.
- Ensure that your organization has the corresponding mandate to do the work (as well as the technical skills required to undertake the work).
- Budget appropriately for technical resources-planners, lawyers and a development team.
- Approach city council and other key decision makers from the standpoint that the community as a whole has an issue to address (i.e. women fleeing violence in Sudbury required shelter). Communicate that this was not about the service provider or project developer winning but rather about the community getting the services they need.
- The need to be cautious about the savings associated with purchasing a few lots of residential property vs. more expensive industrial property as these savings can be quickly dissipated in terms of cost associated with opposition and delays. Generally, most felt that industrially zoned sites are more socially acceptable for this type of facility and may receive less community opposition. Conversely however, industrial sites may not provide the community context required for the facility.
- Engage community leaders (political, social and RCMP) as part of the process from diagnosing the problem and associated need for services to lobbying the support.
- Ensure that your project is done under a broader social policy framework for social housing or a community action plan. This is important for addressing concerns based on planning principles and for securing local political support for the project.
- Engaging participants in the process is important in generating their support. However, this is not a guaranteed solution in all cases. Underlying issues and fears driving NIMBY reactions must also be addressed through education and awareness raising activities.



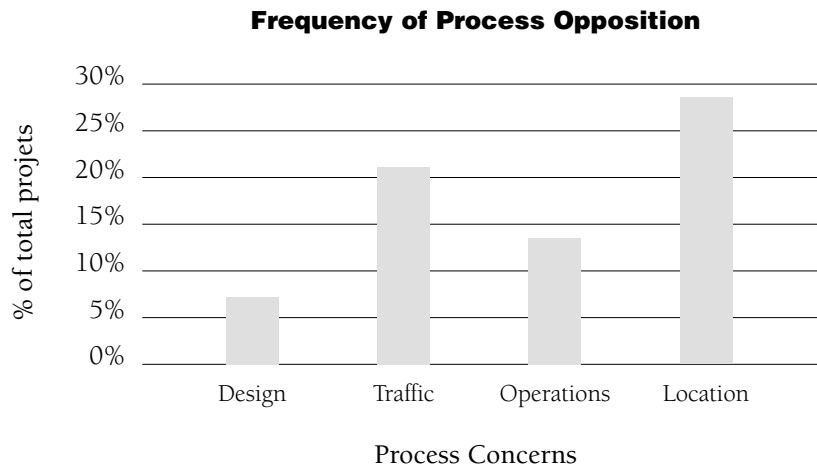
## Objection Type: Project

*Objections that comment on the physical characteristics of the proposal*

The project type of NIMBY objection is identified in 36 percent of the cases studied. Of these, four prominent sub-types of project objections are identified:

1. *Design.* Objections related to the building structure and design of the proposed development itself.
2. *Traffic.* Objections that focus on the perceived associated increase of traffic due to the new development as well as concerns over the traffic routing proposed in the project design.
3. *Operational.* Concerns regarding the operations of the proposed project or facility including, concerns over safety and supervision of the client population that the facility would serve.
4. *Location.* Concerns regarding location are raised in several of the cases studied and range from those who argue that the site is not suitable for the needs of the proposed client group to those who had safety concerns given the proximity of the site to schools and seniors residences.

The frequency of occurrence of these sub-types of project oppositions is summarized in the table below.



## Best practices and lessons learned related to “project type” NIMBY objections:

- Credibility of the sponsoring organization is critical.
- Ensure that your organization has the corresponding mandate to do the work (as well as the technical skills required to undertake the work). This enables you to address concerns based on planning principles and project design and can help to reveal and address the real fears of residents which might be driving the opposition.
- Create a steering committee for the project, engaging key stakeholders and get the project onto the city planning agenda.
- Design project to meet pre-established client needs criteria.
- “Keep your friends close and your enemies closer”. Determine your key opponents and engage them in the process in a meaningful way.
- Get an architect who can work with the community to design and incorporate their ideas. Engage the community in the design sooner rather than later so as to avoid double costs for work (such as the case with Metro Turning Point). Have the architect describe in detail what is possible and impossible with the site and with the funds available.
- Inform people that the services are open for anyone and could one day be available for a family member in need.
- Include a CAP (community computer access point with internet access) centre in the proposal for the shelter available for the whole community to use.
- Make the argument that the development of shelters improves quality of life for the neighbourhood by removing slum landlord rooming houses. There is supervision at a shelter, the profile of the occupants is known and the facility must meet health codes.
- Establish clear rules and guidelines and stick to them.
- Time your consultation with communities appropriately so that they cannot take strategic advantage of your project’s formal application process to oppose.
- Develop Good Neighbour Agreements.





- Demonstrate that the project fits into the official City plan.
- Build upon prior experience from other communities where approaches have worked well.
- Employ local services and businesses where possible in the development of your facility.
- Identify stakeholders early and engage them one on one.
- Set up a representative advisory committee as soon as possible, and include opponents.
- Ensure that professional project management is in place for the logistical demands.
- Legitimate planning concerns raised by the community can be very helpful in project design. “In all cases where there is constructive criticism of the proposed plans and design we end up with a better project. The neighbours have a better understanding of site specific considerations in most cases.”
- Guidelines on how to successfully lobby city officials are useful to organizations.
- Be aware that even though you invite neighbours to attend information sessions, they often do not attend to hear what you plan for the project. They come in order to express fears.
- Service providers can sponsor meetings in which neighbours’ suggestions can be solicited and, when appropriate, incorporated into the design. However, it is important that ground rules and expectations are agreed upon first in order to avoid disappointment.
- The differences in the level and force of opposition from a more affluent and a less affluent community to the development are an important lesson gathered from the case studies. More affluent communities tend to have more resources, more political clout and knowledge to oppose development. Project developers should consider this in designing their community acceptance strategy.



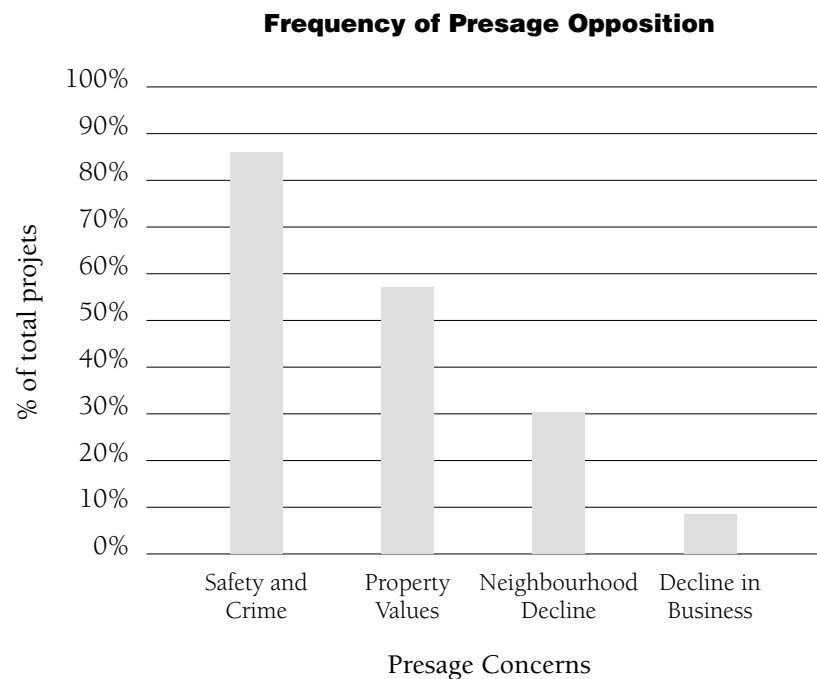
## Objection Type: Presage

*Objections that are largely speculative in nature about the proposal and are not confirmed or supported with evidence.*

This type of NIMBY opposition is by far the most prevalent in the case studies. In fact, opponents in each of the 14 cases exhibited these reactions. Four sub-types of Presage opposition were revealed.

1. *Crime and safety.* Neighbourhood objections are raised based on concerns for safety and the associated perception of increased crime that would be caused by the facility and its clients entering the neighbourhood.
2. *Property values.* Neighbouring residents are concerned that their house and property values would decrease as a result of the facility being located within a close proximity of their property.
3. *Neighbourhood decline.* Concerns are raised about a perceived overall decline of the neighbourhood and its character caused by the facility being located within the community.
4. *Decline in Business.* In one case, the local business community is concerned that the facility would cause a further deterioration of the neighbourhood and an associated decline in business.

The table below presents the frequency of occurrence of these four sub-types of Presage opposition.



## Best practices and lessons learned related to “presage type” of NIMBY objections:

- Education is important. By de-mystifying the fears about the proposed facility and its clients opponents can be brought to support the project.
- Church engagement is important.
- Be proactive in conducting public meetings.
- Engage the media and use local newspapers to assist with public education and promotion of your organization.
- Helpful tools to assist organizations facing NIMBY include: public awareness guide and plan, and, media engagement/awareness guidelines and plan.
- Get your facts organized before you meet the community. The ability to answer questions in an informed, fair manner is critical.
- Canvas the neighbourhood to raise awareness and to obtain a sense of how neighbours and key stakeholders would react to your project.
- It is important to do background work on neighbours concerns. By anticipating residents’ concerns, experts, resources and information can be provided to dispel myths right away.
- Develop a good working relationship with the media. It is helpful to have a single spokesperson for the project to ensure a consistent message and an available contact person. The Coordinator on Homelessness for the City of Charlottetown developed a positive relationship with the media and was always available and eager to participate.
- Generally, those who attended the community meetings were only there because the project is in their backyard, and are not the same people who would be interested in the city planning process.
- Argue that the development of shelters improves the community by removing slum landlord rooming houses. There is supervision at a shelter, the profile of the occupants is known and the facility must meet health codes.
- Target clientele can impact the level of opposition. If the project has been geared towards women, it was felt that it probably would not have had the same reaction.
- Timing is important. Opponents are harder to deal with if they are already upset.



- If the City Council had participated in a NIMBY workshop it could have helped to get them on side. Their support is critical.
- Build trust in the neighbourhood. Be open and try to become part of the neighbourhood, not hidden.
- Prepare positive messages about the facility and keep these in front of opponents. Keep repeating the same clear key messages.
- Getting the police support for the project is key for easing safety concerns.
- Engage the media in a positive way.
- Employ a local real estate agent to provide supporting evidence that the argument alleging property value decline associated with shelters is inaccurate.
- Provide statistics and information from the City and Police to address community safety concerns. Some concerned neighbours called police themselves to ask questions.
- Develop a community advisory committee to be involved in the project development. This is an important function as it gives these opponents, who have argued strongly and publicly in their own community against the shelter, an out. Their participation in the advisory committee is a way for them to save face given that the rest of the community has either begun to demonstrate support or at least has stopped opposing the project.
- Gain the support of the local newspaper and invite them to publish letters to the editor and stories that are supportive of the shelter.
- People do not come to meetings to support projects, they usually only attend in opposition.
- Communities need to be educated about the issues more broadly throughout the whole project development process. Public awareness and education strategies cannot be addressed in a public meeting alone.
- When addressing individual concerns (e.g. will my children be safe, will my property value decrease), bring dialogue to the community level (e.g. address issues of building safer neighbourhoods).
- Undertake community safety audits as a means to assess levels of community safety and place the proposed facility in the context of the neighbourhood. The approach can be useful in diverting people's attention away from the proposed facility itself and onto existing deficiencies in the neighbourhood. The assessment could also be used to negotiate factors in the development of the facility such as lighting and landscaping.



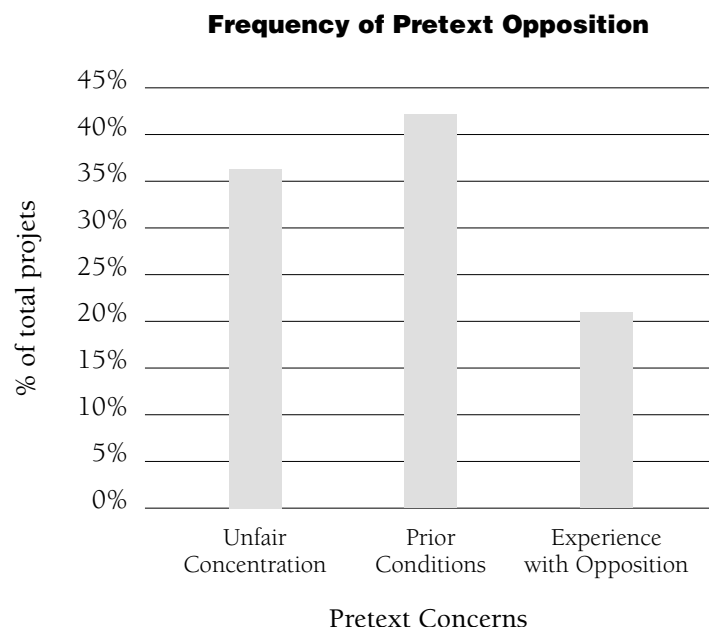
## Objection Type: Pretext

*Comments that indicate that the issue was not exclusively related to the process itself, but to prior conditions or previous development experiences in the community*

The pretext type of NIMBY objections is observed in 29 percent of the cases studied. Three prominent sub-groups of this type of opposition emerged.

1. *Unfair concentration.* Opposition based on unfair concentration is raised by residents that felt their community had been the victim of an unfair saturation of services in their neighbourhood. Opposition therefore, did not focus exclusively on the proposal itself but rather on the residents' perception that the community had already done its fair share.
2. *Prior conditions.* Concerns that are raised relating to the community's existing conditions include negative experiences the community attributed to similar facilities and a fear of exacerbating the existing social problems in the neighbourhood.
3. *Experience with Opposition.* Although a community's prior experience with opposition to developments in their neighbourhood were not raised by opponents as a form of opposition, they have been noted as having an impact on the community's level and strength of resistance in the case studies examined.

The table below summarizes the frequency of occurrence of these three sub-types of pretext opposition.



## Best practices and lessons learned related to “pretext type” of NIMBY objections:

- Avoid becoming the community scapegoat for other community problems and refocus the attention to the particular project in question.
- Avoid becoming a scapegoat of people’s frustration over larger social issues surrounding homelessness and focus on the services and supports that are required given the current situation.
- Be aware that your project may be perceived by the community as the “straw that broke the camel’s back”.
- Communities that have had prior experience in formal opposition may be empowered by their knowledge of the political processes and may have raised expectations of their ability to stop the process from prior experience. These individuals and communities may also have a heightened awareness and knowledge of the political process.
- Organizations should assess the community’s prior experience with organized opposition prior to developing a community acceptance strategy.

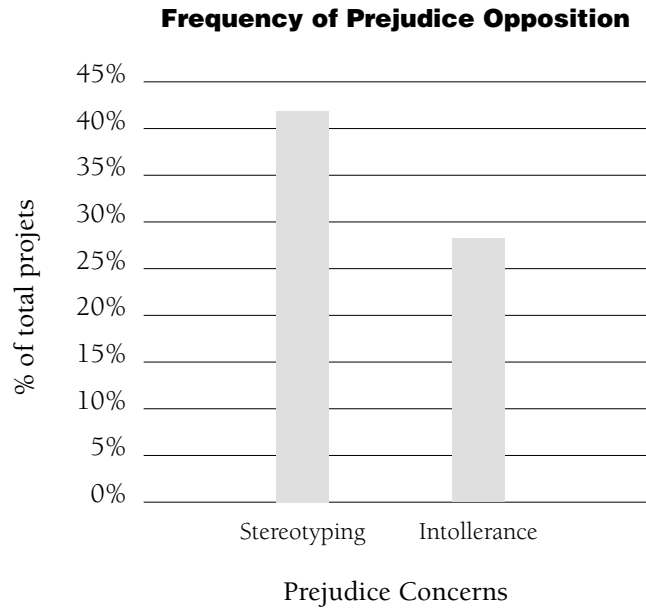


## Objection Type: Prejudice

*Objections that clearly or implicitly are aimed at the occupants or housing proposal*

Objections based expressly on prejudice are noted in 43 percent of cases studied. This opposition is attributed to intolerance and the stereotyping of the clients the proposed facility would serve.

A summary of the frequency of occurrence of each of these sub-types of prejudice opposition is provided in the table below.



## Best practices and lessons learned related to “prejudice type” of NIMBY objections:

- Never use the words “racial prejudice” even if that is what you believe to be the issue.
- “Keep your cool”, never get upset and try not to get frustrated.
- Accept that you are never going to change everyone’s mind on these deep seeded issues.
- Keep repeating the same clear key messages.
- Identify yourself as part of the community to avoid an “us versus them” scenario.”
- People are almost always threatened by change. Their response to change is often dictated by fear. It is felt that people feel more threatened by projects for low-income people.
- Underlying concerns and the root of opposition will not be at a level that will not afford you with the luxury of convincing people to support you based on project information.
- People-zoning is illegal.
- Prepare a legal strategy.

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights states in Article 25(1): Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of oneself and one's family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond one's control (emphasis added).





- Sometimes members of the public are resentful when informed about laws protecting homeless people. This feeling sometimes arises out of the expectation that someone currently living in a neighbourhood has a right to determine who else can move in. This unfortunate understanding fuels confusion and painful community conflict (NPH, 2000).
- Political support is critical for gaining community acceptance. If local City Councillors are supportive of the proposed shelter from its inception and are strong advocates for the clients of the proposed project, they can be helpful in raising awareness in the community on the issue of homelessness and their needs.
- While bias and prejudice may not yield to facts, education and awareness through the presentation of facts is important. This fear can only be addressed through education, awareness and change.
- Stay focused on your objective. The delays and costs associated with fighting appeals could impact the project's budget and an organizations ability to provide shelter or services in a timely and efficient way and in a community that would be accepting.



**Case Study  
Analysis:  
Underlying  
Interests**

*During a consultation you have to be prepared to address the surface issues [planning related], once those are addressed however, you have to be prepared to address the real underlying issues, fears and concerns (Collette Prévost, Personal Interview, July 21, 2003).*

As noted, there are five identifiable types of NIMBY responses<sup>6</sup> in the case studies. The first are process-oriented criticisms that focus on the public participation, decision-making processes, and land use regulations (observed in 64 percent of cases). The second are project criticisms that comment on the physical character of the proposal (observed in 36 percent of cases). The third is a more subjective type of opposition that is based on a view of the potential impact of the project (observed in 100 percent of cases). The fourth type is pretext type of opposition that has more to do with prior conditions or previous development experiences of the community (observed in 29 percent of cases). The fifth observable form of opposition is based on prejudice against the proposed occupants of the shelter (observed in 43 percent of cases).

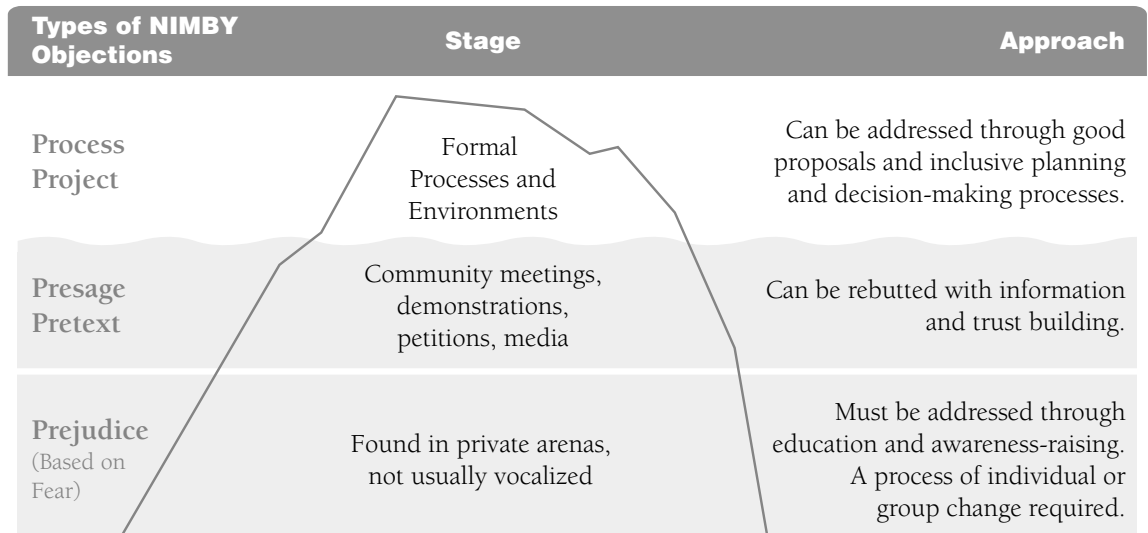
Categorizing NIMBY concerns in this manner is useful for analysis of the cases. It allows for the evaluation of approaches used for each type and for the identification of best practices and lessons learned in each instance. However, it is clear from the analysis of the cases studied that a hierarchy of concerns is present in every NIMBY reaction. Namely, while opponents might cite “process” or “project” types of concerns, they may be opposed to the project at a more fundamental level. These are considered “presenting issues”, issues that are acceptable forms of opposition in public forums but have as their end goal the prevention of the proposed development. These presenting issues are driven by underlying objections that are not voiced upfront because they are perceived as socially unacceptable. These underlying objectives have more to do with presage and prejudice types of opposition, driven by fear. This is portrayed employing the iceberg metaphor.

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<sup>6</sup> Five types of typical NIMBY objections as identified by White & Ashton (1992).



## The NIMBY Iceberg



This Iceberg Metaphor demonstrates the hierarchy of NIMBY objections. The visible concerns (the tip of the Iceberg) present the immediate problems and interests. However, you have to examine the patterns of behaviour and the issues that lie beneath the surface in order to effect meaningful and sustainable change. Through the use of conflict theory, factual investigation, and conflict intervention theory, you can understand that underlying issues exist, and find ways and means to manage them, often by their resolution.

Collette Prévost, speaking about the development of the YWCA Women's Shelter<sup>7</sup> in Sudbury, Ontario said:

At first, residents wanted to hear about the project, how it would affect traffic, property values, how we would address safety concerns, etc. [...] By the end of the meeting however, when it became clear to the residents that this project was going ahead, "the neighbours got down to the real issues behind NIMBY; fear, classism and elitism". People became more descriptive once all of the surface, rational concerns (safety, traffic) were addressed. The concerns became: Are their children going to attend our schools? How many men will be coming through the neighbourhood? What bus stop will they be using? Some neighbours argued that they "didn't want their children to see violence against women". Argument became that they did not want these women and the issues of family violence in their face. "Don't mix them with us, with our kids in our social environment, in our lives." Following the meeting there were individual conversations that took place. The tone of the one on one conversation was much more positive, sympathetic and constructive. However, a conversation of a few neighbours was overheard in the washroom following the consultation which was filled with incredible anger. I remarked that there was obviously an intended level of restraint in the room (Collette Prevost, Personal Interview, July 21, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> See the YWCA Case Study Profile in Appendix A for greater detail on the project.

## **The Tip of the Iceberg: Overcoming Process and Project Concerns**

“Process” and “Project” types of concerns are the most easily addressed. By definition, they are the types of concerns that are welcomed in a city’s planning process. However, analysis demonstrates that in many cases these objections often mask underlying issues and fears and are presented only as an attempt to block developments. This is demonstrated when tangible, “presenting” objections are successfully addressed, through demonstrated validity according to the community plan and active engagement in the process yet residents remain opposed. Inferential logic and human experience tell us that there is an underlying reason for their continued opposition.

As illustrated by the iceberg metaphor and confirmed through the case study analysis, if only the surface issues are addressed the project proponent will be surprised to find that the opposition prevails. For example, as the case study of the Sojourn House for refugees in Toronto illustrates, addressing surface issues is not enough. Once they believed the project would be realized, opponents in this case were formally engaged in the project development, were consulted on the building’s design and had played a role in the development of some of its operating policies. However, as soon as a new city bylaw was introduced, these same organizations saw a new window of opportunity and appealed the city’s decision which exempted the Sojourn House from the by-law, to the provincial municipal board.

Nevertheless, as Lind and Tyler’s (1995) Theory of Social Psychology of Procedural Justice suggests, the more you involve people in the process, the more you give them a voice and the more you then listen to them, the more they will be satisfied with the outcome, regardless what it is. People, according to this theory, use a sense of subjective procedural justice as a proxy for accepting the outcome. What disputants consider fair depends on their subjective perceptions of the procedure and the outcome, rather than any objective benefit gained. In turn, if disputants’ subjective expectations of justice are not met, this leads to feelings of dissatisfaction with both the process and the outcome. Simply put, people are as interested in the process as they are in the outcomes of the process. In fact, Lind and Tyler show that people are more likely to accept negative outcomes and/or adverse settlements and report an improvement in long-term relationships between disputants if the procedure is perceived as fair.



According to this logic, therefore, people must be permitted to participate in the public processes provided. Correspondingly, the system must be prepared to address all their legitimate concerns especially when these concerns contribute to a better project. If a proposal is within current zoning or established community planning regimes, or if it can be successfully argued as an exception, then the project should proceed as of right. If the opposition is about design or project policy, then the credible and useful objections should be incorporated into the project proposal. The key at this level of “maturity” in the NIMBY cycle is having a city council (or decision-makers) made aware of these parameters so they not bow to pressure from constituents’ concerns based on fears that cannot be substantiated or are based on prejudice.

If opponents remain unsatisfied with the process and the outcome at this stage, they can appeal city decisions to the provincial authorities, and will be rewarded with the desired impact of delaying projects or potentially preventing their development altogether. Opponents can outlast many organizations that are often comprised of community volunteers or charities, as they do not have the resources, the capacity, nor, the time to pursue these appeals. In order to avoid the escalation of conflict to this level, planning and process objections must be addressed and opponents must be satisfied with both the process and the outcome. Both process and outcome satisfaction, as Lind and Tyler suggest can be achieved through the opponents’ sense of satisfaction of procedural justice. To achieve this, according to this theory and to some of the cases examined, opponents must be engaged in the process in a meaningful way. Other cases, such as the Sojourn House, revealed however that this is not a guaranteed solution. In order to truly overcome NIMBY opposition, underlying issues of fear and prejudice must be addressed.



## **Below the Surface: Overcoming Presage Type of Opposition**

The “Presage” type of NIMBY opposition also exhibits this hierarchy when lasting and sometimes inflamed opposition continues to exist even after factual information, testimonials, and expert opinion evidence address their opposition. The most common “Presage” or subjective oppositions observed in the case studies include concerns over safety, declining property values, increased traffic and a decline in the overall character of the neighbourhood. These are concerns about the potential and perceived impacts of the housing proposal but in most instances can be easily rebutted or countered with evidence.

For example, neighbours’ concerns over a decline in property values were demonstrated in the majority of the cases studied. However, numerous studies have been conducted to test whether there is actually a relationship between property values and the introduction of low-income housing or homeless shelters, and none have demonstrated a clear link (Cummings & Landis, 1993). Property value is primarily determined by the condition of the particular property for sale and other broader, more complex forces, such as overall area development and prosperity. The location of sheltering facilities for homeless individuals and families has been found to have no significant impact on these conditions that affect property values (Non Profit Housing Association of Northern California (NPH), ND).

A second, common “presage” type of concern frequently raised in the case studies is crime and safety. Crime and safety become a NIMBY issue when neighbours believe that the safety and integrity of their communities will be jeopardized because threatening individuals are introduced into their neighbourhoods. Hence, neighbours frequently voice complaints that neighbourhood crime rates will increase and their personal security will be compromised as a result of the sheltering facility. Most of these fears are ultimately based on stereotypes of prospective residents-homeless people. While arrest rates among the homeless population are generally higher than those of the population as a whole, their link to crime has been exacerbated, at least in part, because individuals have been unable to access appropriate levels of support. Given that homeless people live their lives in public spaces, day-to-day behaviours that would normally be undertaken in private may be treated as criminal when they must be performed in public (e.g. sleeping, drinking and urination) (Dear & Wilton, 1996). While relatively under-researched to date, existing studies on the link between criminal activity and the location of homelessness sheltering facilities demonstrate that these concerns have no relationship to the reality and experiences of community-based facilities for homeless people (Dear & Wilton, 1996).



Another “presage” type of opposition frequently raised is framed in terms of the clients’ best interests, i.e., lack of support for deinstitutionalization or the shelter system, or a belief that the neighbourhood is not suitable for the clients. However, as a recently conducted study of NIMBY groups concluded:

A careful analysis of the residents’ verbatim and rationale may reveal that it is not so much their opposition to the deinstitutionalization and social integration policies per se, rather thinly covered expressions of their ignorance, fear, distrust and abhorrence of those ‘strangers’ living in their midst (Kim, 2000, p.1).

At its most basic level, NIMBY can be seen as primarily a reaction against unwanted or unfamiliar change. As Marcus (2000) highlights, “any change process, at the individual, group, organizational, community or societal level finds conflict inherent in the process”. Similarly, he contends, “any conflict resolution process brings about change in some form between or within the parties in conflict (p. 366).”

Alterations to the physical or social characteristics of a neighbourhood have the potential to change the neighbourhood social and economic dynamics and thus can be seen as a threat. The insecurity expressed by residents in many of the cases studied, as needs-based theories would suggest, is a fundamental source of conflict (Brown, 2000). “People revert to territorial and fear-based emotions when they feel threatened by things they cannot control. In this sense, a NIMBY reaction is simply an attempt to remove the perceived threat and restore the status quo (White & Ashton, 1992, p.12).”

Using the academic discipline of social psychology, Fisher (1993) seeks to integrate an understanding of individual processes, with knowledge of social process to comprehend and constructively address conflict at the inter-group level. Real conflicts of interests, values, needs or power, according to Fisher, cause inter-group conflict. One’s home represents a sense of safety to most people – whether physical, social or economic safety. Thus, strong protectionist sentiments are likely to be invoked against anything that is seen to threaten this safety interest or need (White & Ashton, 1992).



Maslow (1971) argues that one has a basic need to be safe, and to feel safe.

The process here basically poses the question of what people need universally. It seems to me that there is a fair amount of evidence that the things people need as basic human beings are few in number. It is not very complicated. They need a feeling of protection and safety, to be taken care of when they are young so that they feel safe. Second, they need a feeling of belongingness, some kind of family, clan, or group, or something that they feel that they are in and belong to by right. Third, they have to have a feeling that people have affection for them, that they are worth being loved. And fourth, they must experience respect and esteem. And that's about it... (Maslow, 1971, p. 21).

The corresponding opposite feeling then must be fear - fear of the unknown, fear of change, fear of not belonging, fear of not being respected, and fear of strangers. This fear is a strong motivator; it brings people together, drives much of the NIMBY opposition and must be addressed if one hopes to overcome NIMBY opposition.





## **Getting to the Bottom: Overcoming Opposition based on Prejudice**

Opposition based on prejudice was not raised in public forums yet was implied in many of the cases studied and is assessed to be underlying some of the other “presenting issues”. For example, in the case of the Ottawa Transitional House, the opposition was publicly based on sound planning principals but was assessed by project developers to be actually based on a fear of the end-user of the proposed development. In this case, the building was already standing, no changes were proposed to the exterior, the same number of people would be residing in the building, and the clientele would remain the same-women. Therefore, all variables remained constant except that the women living in the facility would no longer be nuns but would rather be low-income or homeless women. Opposition was thus determined to be based on prejudice in respect to level of income of the intended occupants.

Stein (1996) suggests that issues underlying NIMBY reactions are not formally voiced because they trigger a moral dilemma for many people.

Between the horns of individualism and of social responsibility, most citizens face an un-resolvable moral dilemma when it comes to affordable housing developments. Supporting affordable housing may offend their moral commitment toward self-determination, but opposing affordable housing will violate their ethical duty to help the weak (Stein, 1996, p1).

According to Stein, when neighbours scream “not in my backyard”, they sometimes feel guilty for breaching their own ethical standards of sacrifice and charity. This guilt often triggers anger: anger directed towards the project sponsor for triggering the moral dilemma and their own terrible feelings (Stein, 1996, p.2).

The best one can hope for is a sympathetic, informed and aware community that would recognize the problem of homelessness and welcome the solution. This, unfortunately, is frequently not the case, especially when the solution is proposed too close to home. Fear drives much of the prejudice evidenced through the case studies. While bias and prejudice may not yield to facts, education and awareness through the presentation of facts is important. These fears and prejudices can be addressed through awareness raising activities, education and by engaging the opponents in the processes. It is only when facilities and their clients become part of a community that true community acceptance is achieved.

If the organization can overcome opposition through city planning committees, and provincial municipal boards (when required), they are awarded the legal authority to proceed with their project. If desired, negotiating further and lasting community acceptance requires that these same organizations find strategies that address the tasks concerning ongoing community relations, education and public awareness. In an ideal world this could pave the road for future proposals.



## Conclusion

NIMBY opposition involves a hierarchy of concerns and issues. Given that you cannot separate out the constructive opposition from the coercive types of opposition at the outset without jeopardizing the democratic process, each level of opposition must be addressed and opponents must be engaged in the process.

NIMBY comes from the lack of participation of some stakeholders in the process, their lack of knowledge, and their fear of the perceived threat the proposed intervention causes. These underlying issues must be built into the planning and design stages of project development; stakeholders must be involved in the process to reach satisfactory outcomes, be they substantive goals, or satisfaction goals, or both. Fundamentally, addressing NIMBY is about enacting meaningful change. The issues that lay beneath the surface are at the root of the NIMBY opposition. An effective strategy for intervention must address all levels of the opposition.

By focusing on the stakeholder's apparent and underlying issues, the Government of Canada's strategy for intervention under the NHI can lie in what Burton and Dukes (1990) describe as "provention". The term "provention" has recently been introduced to signify getting to the sources of conflict and taking measures to avoid conflict, including alterations in institutions and social policies, rather than just preventing conflict by deterrent threat or suppression (Burton, 1990). This approach moves beyond the application of dispute resolution and conflict resolution processes which seek to settle a particular dispute or conflict. Even if they get to the root of the problem, traditional approaches typically do not prevent another case of the same type of dispute occurring.

"Provention", as an extension of analytical conflict resolution, is the process by which theoretical and empirical findings regarding particular cases of conflict are generalized and translated into policies. By analyzing the past and anticipating the future, decision-making processes are taken to remove the sources of likely disputes and conflict (Burton & Dukes, 1990).



## Recommendations

In the spirit of “provention”, systems or methods to reduce, manage and potentially prevent NIMBY must be designed and built into both the broader policy framework, including the terms and conditions of the NHI and the planning and development phases of projects under the NHI. These methods aim to assist community groups and service providers to avoid (often costly) negotiation and confrontation and associated delays long before NIMBY escalates into a potent force requiring resources otherwise needed for homeless individuals and families. It is also hoped that the best practices and lessons learned collected through the case study analysis will be a valuable resource to support community groups and service providers who may face similar NIMBY issues in the future.

The following are a set of practical recommendations for the Government of Canada to manage, predict and prevent NIMBY reactions in the future.

- Ensure that approval of capital projects under the NHI is conditional on 1) appropriate zoning and permit approval, and 2) a demonstration of community consultation and community support in order to reduce federal risk on investment.
- Community Entity or Planning Committee should be required to monitor capital projects for early intervention, lobbying, public awareness activities in order to minimize potential NIMBY opposition.
- Extend timeframes for funding under the NHI for communities that are involved in NIMBY disputes when required.
- Ensure that provisions are available within the Terms and Conditions of the Surplus Real Federal Properties for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI) to extend the allowable timeframe for the transfer of properties where NIMBY related delays occur.



- Make resources (both financial and expertise) available to communities that are facing NIMBY opposition.
- Ensure that communities have the knowledge and supports required to engage in effective community engagement strategies.
- Develop tools and resources to build community capacity to address NIMBY opposition where required. Such tools might usefully include:
  - The development and delivery of NIMBY workshops to develop capacity within communities for overcoming NIMBY.
  - The development of tools to assist communities to develop strategies to: undertake public education campaigns on homelessness; engage the media; lobby local officials; counter common NIMBY concerns (e.g. property values, etc.); go before City Council and/or Provincial Municipal Boards.
- Provide training programs for local decision makers on how to address NIMBY opposition.
- Facilitate the sharing of best practices and lessons learned among community groups.



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