

RESEARCH REPORT



Gaining Community Acceptance: Case Studies in Affordable Housing

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GAINING COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE

CASE STUDIES IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Prepared for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
I. INTRODUCTION	9
II. METHODOLOGY	10
Research challenges	10
III. THE CASE STUDIES	12
Scope of the studies.....	12
Case study: B.C. /Yukon — Lakeside Place	13
Case study: B.C. /Yukon — Cates Hill Development	16
Case study: B.C. /Yukon — Mole Hill Development.....	19
Case study: Prairies/North — My Home and My Home Too.....	22
Case Study: Prairies/North — Bob Ward Residence.....	26
Case study: Quebec — Le Manoir A. Pierre Lanctôt	28
Case study: Quebec — Samakhi Housing Cooperative.....	31
Case study: Quebec — Église St. Étienne	34
Case study: Quebec — La Villa de l'avenir.....	37
Case study: Atlantic — Camden Park Cottages.....	39
Case study: Atlantic — Abe Zakem House.....	43
Case study: Atlantic — Rawlins Cross, 135 Military Road.....	46
IV. COMMON CONCERNS	49
Awareness:.....	49
Concerns about new residents:	49
Property values:.....	49
Community impact:.....	49
V. LESSONS LEARNED	50

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. INTRODUCTION

This project developed case studies in places where “not-in-my-backyard” (NIMBY) issues have resulted in significant opposition to affordable housing projects.¹

For this study, NIMBY is defined as “the protectionist attitudes and exclusionary/oppositional tactics adopted by community groups facing an unwelcome development in their neighbourhood.”²

II. METHODOLOGY

The consulting team reviewed long-term housing facilities, transition houses, apartment-style housing, fixed rent and independent living facility projects. The review covered a broad demographic spectrum, including people with disabilities, seniors, women, youth, people with mental health issues and people with addiction issues. Table 1 shows the review’s geographic distribution.

B.C./Yukon	Lakeside Place, Nelson, B.C. Cates Hill Development, Bowen Island, B.C. Mole Hill Development, Vancouver ³ , B.C.
Prairie/North	My Home Project, Saskatoon, Sask. Bob Ward Residence, Calgary, Alta.
Quebec	Le Manoir A. Pierre Lanctôt, Châteauguay La Villa de l’avenir, Val-Bélair Samakhi Housing Cooperative, Montréal Église St. Étienne, Montréal
Atlantic	Camden Park Cottages, Moncton, N.B. Abe Zakem House, Charlottetown, P.E.I. Rawlins Cross, 135 Military Road, St. John’s, N.L.

Table 1 — Geographic distribution of review

III. FINDINGS

A common thread runs through all of the projects even though it is often expressed in many different ways — fear. In most instances, the fear is that affordable housing projects will draw an element considered to be undesirable (low-income individuals and families, at-risk youth, people with physical or mental disabilities) to a neighbourhood. In one case (Cates Hill), that fear fo-

¹ Ontario examples are not included, as CMHC already had Ontario case studies.

² Wolch, J. and M. Dear (1993). *Malign Neglect: Homelessness In An American City*. (Jossey-Bass Publishers: San Francisco)

³ This is not a NIMBY example; rather it involves gaining agreement from local government.

cused on concerns about uncontrolled growth. In many cases, these situations often seem undesirable due to a lack of knowledge or information about a project (or its residents), which can further magnify the fear of the unknown and change.

The reasons for objecting to these projects run the gamut of NIMBY issues — from economic impacts and safety concerns to blatant discrimination. Below are a number of the key concerns raised throughout all of these projects:

Awareness:

- Lack of awareness about the project, contributing to unease when the idea is raised.
- Misconceptions about the proposed function of the structure.

Concerns about new residents:

- Concerns about new residents affecting community safety.
- Concerns that the project would attract an undesirable element.
- Discrimination against the new residents.
- A misinformed connection made by residents between low-income families and crime.

Property values:

- Concerns about a negative effect on property values.
- Concerns about high-density housing, with fears of crime or the lowering of nearby property values.
- Concerns that affordable rentals would be sold once the project receives approval.
- Demand for market-driven rather than low-income housing.

Community impact:

- A different vision for the proposed site.
- Concerns about increased traffic.
- Esthetic concerns — structures would not fit with existing residential buildings.

IV. CONCLUSION

The lessons from this research are clear. The key concepts centre on communication, inclusion, planning, anticipation of problems and persistence. The core strategies, central to any affordable housing project are:

Communication – early, open, frequent, clear and accurate: The key to any successful project is an open and honest communication with residents. The purpose of this communication is to:

- Demonstrate the value of the project.
- Create a transparent process.
- Provide an opportunity for community input – especially those who may object to the process.
- Maintain a regular flow of information and ensure as many people as possible are aware of the project.
- Build support through community connections – bring like-minded agencies together to support the project.
- Allay community concerns about the project.
- Focus on the facts not on the arguments.

The various strategies for community consultations include public meetings, one-on-one consultations, flyers/poster distribution and media exposure.

As well, the development of a communication strategy will assist community groups in preparing for objections to affordable housing projects.

Effective Use of the Media: The media is an effective tool informing the public and combating NIMBY

- Maintain regular contact with the media through news releases or articles to ensure the project is “front and centre” in the mind of the community.
- Positive exposure in the media can also bring credibility to a project.

Develop Relationships with Local Politicians: Both sides of NIMBY disputes draw on political influence in order to achieve their goals. The key for proponents is to:

- Consult with local politicians very early in the process to gauge support.
- Ensure that local politicians are informed of any “sensitive” issues and are updated throughout the process.
- If necessary, lobby for the support of local politicians through letter writing campaigns, attendance at council meetings and other community events.
- Identify political “champions” who can act as an intermediary.

Develop a Clear Plan: Many of the concerns by residents arise out of a lack of knowledge. As a result, developing a comprehensive plan can address these concerns.

- Ensure the plan is open to the public.
- Clearly define all aspects of the project prior to building.
- Make sure that the proponent team is aware of all requirements before starting the process.
- Develop a community relations and communication plan.
- Plan in advance for concerns that may be raised. If possible, address these concerns in early communications with the community.

Understand Your Community Process: While being open and honest can build credibility in the community, it is often necessary to work within existing community constraints in order to reduce delays.

- Understand existing zoning regulations and whenever possible work within them.
- Work with the city staff to identify potential pitfalls and seek their advice on how to address them.
- Work with those who have experienced NIMBY in the past.
- Have community agencies rather than government act as proponents. This reduces the opportunity for delays related to political influence.
- Understand local bylaws and how they can be used for (and against) the project

Be Persistent: Probably more important than any strategy is ensuring that proponents are aware that these types of projects take time. As a result, it is essential that supporting groups not only maintain momentum within their own organizations but also within the community.

SOMMAIRE

I. INTRODUCTION

La présente recherche porte sur des études de cas d'ensembles de logements abordables qui ont suscité une vive opposition en raison du syndrome pas dans ma cour « (PDMC) ».⁴

Aux fins de l'étude, le syndrome PDMC se définit comme entend des « attitudes protectionnistes et tactiques d'exclusion et d'opposition adoptées par les groupes de la collectivité qui accueillent mal un aménagement dans leur quartier. »⁵

II. MÉTHODE

L'équipe d'experts-conseils a examiné des établissements de logement de longue durée, des maisons de transition, des immeubles à appartements et des ensembles de logements autonomes à loyer fixe. L'examen portait sur un large éventail démographique, y compris des personnes handicapées, des personnes âgées, des femmes, des jeunes, des personnes souffrant de maladie mentale et des personnes ayant des problèmes de toxicomanie. Le Tableau I résume la répartition géographique des ensembles à l'étude.

C.-B./Yukon	Lakeside Place, Nelson, C.-B. Cates Hill Development, île Bowen, C.-B. Mole Hill Development, Vancouver ⁶ , C.-B.
Prairies et Nord	My Home Project, Saskatoon, Sask. Bob Ward Residence, Calgary, Alb.
Québec	Le Manoir A.-Pierre-Lanctôt, Châteauguay La Villa de l'avenir, Val-Bélair Coopérative d'habitation Samakhi, Montréal Église St-Étienne, Montréal
Atlantique	Camden Park Cottages, Moncton, N.-B. Abe Zakem House, Charlottetown, Î.-P.-É Rawlins Cross, 135 Military Road, Saint-Jean, T.-N.-L.

Tableau 2 — Répartition géographique des ensembles à l'étude

III. CONSTATATIONS

Un fil conducteur, qui se manifeste souvent de diverses façons, réunit tous les projets : la crainte. La plupart du temps, on craint que les ensembles de logements abordables n'attirent des éléments

⁴ Les exemples ontariens sont exclus, car la SCHL a déjà publié des études de cas pour l'Ontario.

⁵ Wolch, J., et M. Dear (1993). *Malign Neglect: Homelessness In An American City*. (Jossey-Bass Publishers: San Francisco).

⁶ Ce n'est pas un exemple du syndrome « pas dans ma cour », mais il souligne les efforts déployés en vue d'obtenir le consentement de l'administration municipale.

jugés indésirables (personnes et familles à faible revenu, jeunes à risque ou personnes souffrant de maladie physique ou mentale) dans son quartier. Dans l'un des cas (Cates Hill), la crainte s'est concentrée sur les possibilités de croissance incontrôlée. Dans de nombreux cas, c'est le manque de connaissances ou de renseignements au sujet d'un aménagement (ou de ses résidents) qui amplifie davantage la crainte de l'inconnu et du changement.

Les motifs de l'objection à ces aménagements couvrent toute la gamme des problèmes soulevés par le syndrome « pas dans ma cour », depuis les préoccupations sur les répercussions économiques et la sécurité jusqu'à la discrimination flagrante. Voici certaines préoccupations clés soulevées au cours de l'aménagement de ces ensembles :

Sensibilisation

- Manque de sensibilisation à l'égard du projet, ce qui crée un malaise lorsque l'idée est soulevée.
- Idées fausses sur la fonction proposée de la structure.

Préoccupations au sujet des résidents de l'ensemble

- Crainte que les nouveaux résidents compromettent la sécurité de la collectivité.
- Crainte que le projet attire des éléments indésirables.
- Discrimination contre les nouveaux résidents.
- Lien non fondé qu'établit la collectivité entre les familles à faible revenu et le crime.

Valeur des propriétés

- Crainte d'effets négatifs sur la valeur des propriétés.
- Préoccupations au sujet des habitations à haute densité accompagnées de craintes relatives à la criminalité et à la baisse de la valeur des propriétés avoisinantes.
- Crainte que les logements locatifs abordables soient vendus une fois le projet d'habitation approuvé.
- Demande axée sur le marché plutôt que sur le logement des personnes à faible revenu.

Répercussions sur la collectivité

- Vision différente de l'emplacement proposé.
- Préoccupations au sujet de l'accroissement de la circulation.
- Préoccupations esthétiques — les ensembles ne s'harmoniseraient pas avec les bâtiments résidentiels existants.

IV. CONCLUSION

Les leçons tirées de cette étude sont évidentes. Les notions clés tournent autour de la communication, de l'inclusion, de la planification, de la prévision des problèmes et de la persistance. Les stratégies de base au centre de tout ensemble de logements abordables sont les suivantes :

Établir des communications – précoces, publiques, fréquentes, claires et précises : La clé de la réussite de tout projet réside dans des communications ouvertes et franches avec les résidents. Ces communications visent les buts suivants :

- Témoigner de la valeur du projet.
- Créer un processus transparent.
- Permettre aux membres de la collectivité d'apporter une contribution – et en particulier à ceux qui peuvent s'opposer au processus.
- Assurer une diffusion régulière de renseignements et veiller à ce que le plus grand nombre possible de personnes soient au courant du projet.
- Gagner l'appui en établissant des liens avec la collectivité – amener les organismes partageant la même vision à soutenir le projet.
- Dissiper les préoccupations de la collectivité à l'égard du projet.
- Se concentrer sur les faits et non sur les différends.

Parmi les diverses stratégies de consultation de la collectivité, mentionnons les réunions publiques, les consultations individuelles, la distribution de dépliants ou d'affiches et la couverture des médias.

De plus, l'élaboration d'une stratégie de communication aidera les organismes communautaires à se préparer à répondre aux objections contre les ensembles de logements abordables.

Utiliser efficacement les médias : Les médias constituent un outil efficace pour informer la population et combattre le syndrome « pas dans ma cour ».

- Maintenir un contact régulier avec les médias à l'aide de communiqués ou d'articles pour que le projet reste le point de mire de la collectivité.
- Une couverture favorable des médias peut également donner de la crédibilité au projet.

Établir des relations avec les politiciens municipaux : Les deux clans de disputes « pas dans ma cour » font appel à l'influence politique pour réaliser leurs objectifs. Pour que cette stratégie fonctionne, les promoteurs doivent :

- Consulter les politiciens municipaux très tôt dans le processus pour obtenir leur appui.
- S'assurer que ces politiciens sont informés de toutes les questions « délicates » et mis à jour tout au long du processus.
- Chercher, au besoin, à obtenir le soutien de ces politiciens en organisant des campagnes d'information, en assistant aux réunions des membres du conseil municipal et à d'autres activités communautaires.
- Identifier les « champions » politiques qui peuvent agir comme intermédiaires.

Élaborer un plan clair : Bon nombre des préoccupations des résidents résultent d'un manque de connaissances. C'est pourquoi l'élaboration d'un plan exhaustif peut apaiser ces préoccupations.

- S'assurer que le plan est connu du public.
- Préciser clairement tous les aspects de l'aménagement avant la construction.
- S'assurer que l'équipe des promoteurs est au courant de toutes les exigences avant le démarrage du processus.
- Élaborer des relations avec la collectivité et un plan de communication.
- Prévoir les préoccupations pouvant être soulevées. Si possible, apaiser ces préoccupations par des communications précoces avec la collectivité.

Comprendre le processus communautaire : Le fait d'être ouvert et franc peut accroître la crédibilité auprès de la collectivité, mais il est souvent nécessaire de s'adapter aux contraintes existantes dans la collectivité afin de réduire les retards.

- Comprendre les règlements de zonage en vigueur et, dans la mesure du possible, s'y adapter.
- Collaborer avec les fonctionnaires municipaux en vue de déterminer les écueils possibles et leur demander conseil sur la façon de les éviter.
- S'associer avec ceux qui ont déjà été confrontés au syndrome « pas dans ma cour ».
- Demander aux organismes communautaires plutôt qu'au gouvernement d'agir comme promoteurs. Cette manière de procéder réduit les risques de retards attribuables à l'influence politique.
- Comprendre les règlements locaux et savoir comment s'en servir pour aider ou nuire au projet.

Persister : La stratégie qui est probablement la plus importante de toutes consiste à s'assurer que les promoteurs savent que ce type de projet prend du temps. Par conséquent, il est essentiel que les groupes appuyant le projet nourrissent l'intérêt non seulement au sein de leur organisme mais aussi au sein de la collectivité.



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I. INTRODUCTION

This project, funded by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), developed case studies in places where “not-in-my-backyard” (NIMBY) issues have resulted in significant opposition to affordable housing projects.⁷

For this study, NIMBY is defined as “the protectionist attitudes and exclusionary/oppositional tactics adopted by community groups facing an unwelcome development in their neighbourhood.”⁸

The consulting team reviewed long-term housing facilities, transition houses, apartment-style housing, fixed rent and independent living facility projects. The review covered a broad demographic spectrum, including people with disabilities, seniors, women, youth, people with mental health issues and people with addiction issues. Table 1 shows the review’s geographic distribution.

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Table 3 — Geographic distribution of review

7 Ontario examples are not included, as CMHC already had Ontario case studies.

8 Wolch, J. and M. Dear (1993). *Malign Neglect: Homelessness In An American City*. (Jossey-Bass Publishers: San Francisco)

II. METHODOLOGY

The consulting team began by conferring with housing experts in the regions CMHC identified for the study. The experts included national housing organizations and local, provincial and federal government contacts. The team also conducted an extensive literature search.

Through this field research the team identified a number of potential case studies. The team also received potential examples and contacts from CMHC and the project officer.

CMHC chose 12 of the 21 examples it was given to consider. Once CMHC presented the consulting team with its choices, the team began additional research and telephone interviews.

For each case, the team provided an overview that included:

- Project name and location
- Construction type and target residents
- Project proponents
- Project outcomes and time frame
- Background
- Concerns about the project and community response
- Proponent's process
- Strategies
- Sources.

The cases show differing forms of opposition to affordable housing as well as strategies proponents used to effectively overcome the NIMBY response and gain community acceptance.

The interviews with community contacts involved establishing what role they played with the project and then conducting an extensive interview that:

- Reviewed project background and the interviewee's contribution;
- Established the basic level of their understanding of NIMBY and the role it played in the project;
- Identified key stakeholders;
- Described the community problem-solving and planning processes;
- Described outcomes and results.

Research challenges

In completing this initial research, the team encountered four unexpected challenges caused, in part, because of the nature of the study's guidelines. The team was asked to identify affordable housing projects completed to occupancy during the past five years despite substantial NIMBY opposition. The challenges were:

1. *Limited funding for housing:*

While there has been some investment by CMHC and by some provincial governments, the relatively low level of funding in the late-1990s by all levels of government and the private sector resulted in a low number of projects suitable for consideration as case studies.

2. *Lack of successful projects:*

The criteria of using only successfully completed projects substantially reduced the pool of potential case studies. In the initial screening, the research team talked to a number of proponents who could speak about some of their strategies and more importantly the lessons they had learned — but projects were unsuccessful because of NIMBY issues. This leads directly into the next challenge.

3. *NIMBY lessons and affordable housing:*

Many proponents have learned a great deal from initially unsuccessful projects. As a result, they have implemented strategies that were so successful that NIMBY was virtually non-existent in subsequent projects. Unfortunately for the research, this proactive approach means that the subsequent projects did not fit the criteria for this research project.

As well, during the initial research phase, the team found that affordable housing projects often do not encounter excessive NIMBY — at least not to the same degree as homeless shelters, temporary youth facilities and halfway houses. Seniors facilities and housing for people with disabilities may cause concern about density issues or misunderstandings about the nature of the development, but are generally not as controversial as other projects. It appears that the types of client served are a key factor in NIMBY. (*See “IV. COMMON CONCERNS,”* page 49, for the research team’s conclusions on ways to effectively deal with these issues.)

4. *Methodological challenges:*

The team also encountered several challenges with access to respondents. Finalizing interviews with individuals was, in many cases, extremely difficult. As well, because of the nature of some of these projects, there were only a very few people who had intimate knowledge of the process. There were challenges in identifying them and then in reaching them — sometimes years after their active participation.

We are confident, however, that the results of this study provide a valid range of NIMBY experience and lessons learned to reduce or avoid this syndrome.

III. THE CASE STUDIES

These case studies are an excellent variety of examples, lessons learned and strategies for combating NIMBY as well as gaining community acceptance in developing affordable housing projects. The people interviewed for these case studies have extensive experience in social services and housing as service providers, developers, government representatives or private citizens.

Scope of the studies

While each case is unique geographically, there are many threads that run through all of them — the importance of communicating project objectives, commitment of proponents and volunteers and the importance of building partnerships. While some cases provide strategies that may only be specific to a particular province, each example will be useful to affordable housing proponents across Canada. (“V. LESSONS LEARNED”, page 50, compiles the strategies)



Figure I — Location of the cases

Case study: B.C. /Yukon — Lakeside Place

Project name:	Lakeside Place
Project location:	Nelson, British Columbia (Lower Fairview neighbourhood)
Construction type:	28 low-cost housing units; renovation of existing motel and addition of a new eight-plex on the same site.
Target residents:	Single occupants, low-income families and those with mental illness.
Project proponents:	Nelson and District Housing Society; BC Housing; Canadian Mental Health Association, Nelson Branch and the Grodski family; the Real Estate Foundation of B.C.; CMHC; The Vancouver Foundation; Mental Health Services Society; Day-break Rotary; the Nelson District Credit Union.
Project outcomes:	Completion in 2001 of 28 units. Priority placement was given to persons with mental illness.
Project time frame:	<i>Start:</i> 1998 <i>Public knowledge:</i> 1998 <i>Occupancy:</i> 2001 <i>Delay from community process:</i> 30 months

Background:

The lack of housing for persons with mental illness was identified as one of the most important concerns in Nelson. Persons with mental illness faced discrimination from landlords, which was compounded by the inability of persons in this situation to afford market rents. Nelson and District Housing Society (NDHS) decided to expand its existing four-unit house for persons with mental illness. The NDHS had to choose a different site when community objections resulted in the NDHS having to sell its property, rather than endure the delays caused by community opposition. NDHS decided to renovate an existing motel because:

1. It had the appropriate zoning and NDHS would not have to apply for re-zoning or variances.
2. The building was rundown and redevelopment would benefit Nelson.
3. There was support among key community stakeholders for this approach.

Lakeside Place's capital cost was \$839,120. BC Housing provided interim financing and provides NDHS with an annual subsidy to run this project, which in the first year was about \$74,000.

CHMC, through its Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) for rental property, provided a grant of \$72,000. The B.C. Ministry of Health contributed \$45,000; the Canadian Mental Health Association, through a bequest, contributed \$50,000; the Vancouver Foundation, \$50,000; the Nelson Rotary Club, about \$10,000 and the Real Estate Foundation of B.C., \$150,000.

The NDHS contributed about \$2,500 as well as about \$150,000 from the sale of its four-unit house. Some of the property where the motel was situated was sold to BC Housing for another project operated by NDHS.

Neighbourhood concerns:

Neighbours made serious objections to the project. Many were unaware that people living in the four-unit house, which NDHS had run for 15 years, were mental health clients.

Neighbours were concerned about lower property values from the development. Some believed that clients of the project would be “a hazard to kids in the adjacent park.” The NDHS dropped the idea of expanding the house.

There was no way we would subject our tenants to that kind of animosity. [The house] had been there for 10–15 years and had been operating as an unstaffed group home for mental health clients — can you imagine what a shock it was? This is a small community and we went around and told people (about the project) and I was shaken to my roots that there was such a negative response. That was my first experience of that kind of negative reaction from people that I thought I knew. It’s very unpleasant. — *Proponent*

There were two delays. The first was the result of the objections to expanding the existing four-unit house. The decision to sell the house and find a different location delayed the project significantly. The second, but less significant, delay was consultation and approval.

The community response:

A small but vocal community group organized a small-scale letter-writing campaign to the Nelson *Daily News* before the rezoning hearing for the existing property. Opponents were not an organized, identifiable group, but individuals who had their own particular reasons for objecting to the re-zoning. News coverage by the *Daily News* of the public meeting appears to have been very balanced.

The proponent’s process:

The NDHS held information sessions with the mayor, city council and the police board about the necessity of the project.

Some people in the community knew that the NDHS owned and operated the unstaffed, four-unit house for mental health clients. The residents of the house paid rent to NDHS, even though the project was subsidized. Once NDHS retired the mortgage on the property, revenue was directed to the NDHS. The NDHS decided to increase housing for people with mental illness and supporters of the expanded project invited neighbours to come to a meeting “over cookies” to talk about it. Essentially, the supporters told neighbours that the expansion plan was already in place. In these meetings, it became clear that there was intense negative reaction to expanding the capacity of the existing house.

However, the NDHS had anticipated this degree of opposition. As one respondent in favour of the project said, they were “...armed with the knowledge of earlier rejections, we know what will happen — we know we will deal with problems, but we did not need to re-zone as it was already rezoned for multiple housing use.”

The reaction resulted in NDHS buying an old motel, renovating it and converting it into long-term independent living units, rather than expanding the existing facility.

The NDHS approached the process in a somewhat innovative way because of the zoning situation. NDHS knew it had to renovate, but because NDHS did not need to rezone, it did not need to seek permission. NDHS committed to having 12 of the 28 units dedicated for mental health clients and making the other 16 available to people who needed affordable housing but were not necessarily living with a mental illness. Interestingly, it turned out many of these tenants were also mental health clients.

The NDHS arranged a meeting for residents and supporters in a seniors' complex that NDHS operates. NDHS posted all the drawings and related information for the facility. NDHS staff and volunteers were ready to answer questions. There was still some animosity, but NDHS was able to diffuse the situation by focusing people's attention on what the motel looked like at the time — "the cheapest and most rundown motel in Nelson."

NDHS told the community meeting that Nelson would have an upgraded building as well as a completely new eight-plex run by an organization with a long history of housing in the community. As well, if it turned out that mental health clients were causing a disturbance, the NDHS still had the right to limit their numbers to 12 units. This was seen as a reasonable compromise.

Strategies:

- Demonstrate the value of the project to influential stakeholders (including local service providers, the mayor and council, as well as local, provincial and national funders) so that those who wish to do so can act as advocates—champions during development.
- Develop a clear plan that is open to scrutiny.
- Be open and clear about sharing information and always invite people to come and have a look at any aspect of the project as it evolves.
- Engage other organizations in the community so there is no sense of secrecy.
- When the project is complete, ask neighbours to tour the buildings and invite them to discuss any problems with staff.
- Solicit input from those who object to the project.
- Proponents have to use the community connections of all the people on their boards and of their staff.

Sources:

1. Interview with Joan Reichardt, Director, Nelson and District Housing Society, September 28, 2005.
2. Interview with P'nina Shames, Case Manager, Interior Health, October 10, 2005.
3. The NIMBY Report, March 2001-
<http://www.bettercommunities.org/index.cfm?method=nimby22>

Case study: B.C. /Yukon — Cates Hill Development

Project name:	Cates Hill Development
Project location:	Bowen Island, British Columbia
Construction type:	26 rental units (12 subsidized and 14 non-subsidized) in a comprehensively planned village.
Target residents:	Singles and families in need of affordable housing.
Project proponents:	Cates Hill Joint Venture; Islands Trust; Municipality of Bowen Island (after 1999 when the Island was incorporated as a municipality).
Project outcomes:	14, one- to three-bedroom units constructed as part of three mixed commercial-residential buildings; and 12 units in three buildings on the same site as the Bowen Island Municipal Hall (three studio apartments; three, one-bedroom; two, two-bedroom plus den and four, three-bedroom units). The municipality rents the hall from the developer. 12 of the rental units are subsidized so that rents are 15 % below the Metropolitan Vancouver average as identified in CMHC's annual <i>Vancouver Rental Market Report</i> . The remaining units are rented at market rates.
Project time frame:	<i>Start:</i> 1986 (planning) <i>Public knowledge:</i> 1988 <i>Occupancy:</i> 2003 <i>Delay from community process:</i> 4 to 6 years

Background:

There is a chronic lack of year-round, affordable housing on Bowen Island. Restrictive zoning requirements and a ban on secondary suites compound this problem. However, the Official Community Plan (OCP) for Bowen Island includes a provision to allow rezoning when amenities, including affordable housing, are provided. This provision facilitated the construction of the Cates Hill rental units. In fact, the developers included affordable-subsidized housing in the project to benefit from the OCP.

Although the early planning stages began in 1986, the process began in earnest with the initial submission to the Islands Trust in 1988. Funding for the project was all private sector-based — including the subsidized housing component.

Neighbourhood concerns:

Many Gulf Islands residents (not only those on Bowen Island) are concerned about projects that bring higher density to the Islands. In this case, there was also concern about the project's esthetics and concern that the units might be sold rather than remaining as affordable rentals — even though it was the developers who offered affordable housing. There were also concerns that the project design was not rural enough and would change the rural character of Bowen Island.

The community response:

There were objections at community meetings as well as in letters to the editor in the local paper. There were two particular elements of NIMBY. Some members of the Islands Trust local Trust Committee raised the same concerns as residents—the issue of higher density housing. Those concerns were resolved as the project moved through the extensive application and revision process.

As well, there were objections from local residents, most of whom live on the Island year round, who do not want Bowen Island to change. They saw this development as a threat and felt it would bring more people to the Island and place additional demands on resources and services. They also believed there would be a negative effect on the environment. Many who protested against the development did not live on that part of the Island — so were not going to be directly affected — but still expressed considerable concern. However, because there was a rezoning application, all residents had a say in the proposed project.

The proponent's process:

In 1988, the developers put forward their development proposal to the Island Trust. Because the project required rezoning, it triggered a public process. The residents were given the opportunity to look at the plans and provide comments. The developers decided to actively involve the community early on and to make as much information as possible available through newspaper advertising and by displaying the rezoning proposal in areas frequented by residents, such as the local coffee shops. Because of the complex rules regarding development on the Island as well as the objections of some community members, the proposal was initially rejected and amended three times — each with its own public consultation process.

During the process of refining the application, the developers allocated land for other projects — a pre-school, library, a lot for institutional purposes, parks, a series of trails and covenants for nature conservancy on three lots.

As the developers encountered resistance they went into the community to address concerns and solicit input on what could make the project successful.

In 1999, the developers garnered considerable public support with their final revisions to the project and received final approval.

Leading up to the final public hearing, the developers advertised in the local media. They posted the rezoning proposal in less formal settings, such as coffee shops. In essence, the developers made every effort to ensure that the Island Trustees knew that major efforts had been made to inform the community. As well, the developers addressed many of the concerns and fears raised by residents. Strategies used included:

- Including a “phasing-in covenant” that meant that no more than 10 occupancy permits would be issued each year for a large percentage of the lots to be developed — thus preventing an immediate strain on Island resources;

- Formalizing an agreement regarding rents — making them 15 % less than Metropolitan Vancouver rates;
- Adding green space covenants, such as trails, streams, treed areas and landscaping.

The developers credit much of their success to being able to mobilize the “silent majority” by providing a series of advertisements and individual meetings between supporters and the general public. The result was that more than 100 people showed up at the final public meeting and over 90 % spoke in favour of the project.

Emphasis throughout this entire process was placed on the long-term benefits of this project (such as additional amenities for Island residents), rather than focusing on the particularly contentious issue of increased density.

Strategies:

- In planning the project, incorporate proposals that address the concerns of residents as identified through community meetings, charettes and so on.
- When the plan is presented to the public, be prepared to modify the project as much as possible to address public concerns.
- Provide an opportunity for community participation early in the process.
- Ensure that as many people as possible are aware of the project so that you can ensure that all those in favour of it are able to show their support.

Sources:

1. Interview with Gina MacKay, Island Community Planner, Bowen Island Municipality, September 23, 2005.
2. Interview with Larry Adams, Cates Hill Joint Venture, Bowen Island, October 14, 2005.
3. http://www.mcaws.gov.bc.ca/housing/affordable/chapter4_casestudy4.htm - A brief case study done by the B.C. government.

Case study: B.C. /Yukon — Mole Hill Development

Note: This is not a NIMBY example. Rather, in this particular case, the proponents (affordable housing advocates and local residents) did not agree with the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Parks Board, both of which saw drastically different uses for Mole Hill. The purpose of this case is to acknowledge that when it comes to the issue of affordable housing, gaining acceptance for the project can involve gaining agreement from local government.

Project name:	Mole Hill Development
Project location:	Vancouver, British Columbia
Construction type:	Renovation project of several houses and new construction that provide 170 units of affordable housing and social–community facilities (ground-oriented suites, heritage home preservation and non-market housing).
Target residents:	Low- and modest income singles/households; persons living with HIV/AIDS.
Project proponents:	Mole Hill Community Housing Society and Mole Hill Living Heritage Society. Additional support from the Dr. Peter Centre for persons living with HIV/AIDS, B.C. Ministry of Health, BC Housing and CMHC.
Project outcomes:	All units are rented; the heritage zone was successfully preserved, the buildings include environmental and energy-efficient features and a green space was added.
Project time frame:	<i>Start:</i> 1994 <i>Public knowledge:</i> 1994 (winter) <i>Occupancy:</i> 2002 (70 units); 2003 (100 units) <i>Delay from community process:</i> 5 to 7 years

Background:

Mole Hill is in the heart of Vancouver’s West End, where houses date back to 1888, making it one of Vancouver’s oldest neighbourhoods. The area covered by this development is made up of 33 Victorian and Edwardian homes as well as an Edwardian apartment building, along with a variety of other housing types (28 of those homes were saved and are included in the project). Property values in this area are very high, but some of the houses involved in this project had been targeted for demolition since the 1950s. Many of the units in question had been designated as heritage homes, despite the City’s intent to demolish them and enlarge an existing park to cover two full city blocks.

Leading up to the 1990s, affordable housing (especially in the downtown core) became an ever-increasing problem. The City’s focus on demolishing the old homes for parkland waned and instead turned to redevelopment. Council focused on the development of high-rise–high-density towers. Residents and community organizations resisted demolition of the homes in favour of converting them to affordable, multi-unit dwellings — similar to the past rooming house tradition of many of these homes. There were no guarantees that the high-density housing that the City envisioned would be affordable.

A working group, the Friends of Mole Hill (made up of 35 community agencies), was formed with the intent of preserving heritage housing and ensuring it was affordable and would support tenants with AIDS. The group had architects inspect the houses to make sure they were still structurally sound. They then began the long process of petitioning Council to save the project. After almost 10 years, the project was completed.

Neighbourhood concerns:

The primary source of opposition in this project was the City and the Parks Board, each with different visions for this neighbourhood.

The City, in the early 1990s, wanted demolition and redevelopment of the area into high-density towers. The City did not feel that renovation of the old homes was an efficient use of the area and a process began in which various stakeholders — primarily those advocating for housing for seniors, people with AIDS and so on — contested the goals of development.

The Parks Board wanted demolition and expansion of the existing parkland.

Although there wasn't any resident opposition to the project, there were complaints by some developers. Those opposed wanted new, market-priced residential development. Some developers began handing out information about Mole Hill to encourage the City to allow re-development in the area, saying that it would add to city tax revenues. However, during the public process only one developer spoke out against the renovation of the existing houses.

The community response:

City staff wanted 72 fewer rental houses and half of the site converted to higher-end market housing, similar to what exists in the neighbourhood already. The Mole Hill Working Group opposed the city and fought for its own vision throughout the process, including the planning phase. Proponents of the project attended council meetings, as well as Parks Board meetings and wrote letters to the editors of the *Vancouver Sun* and *Vancouver Province* in their efforts to preserve and protect these heritage houses.

The proponent's process:

The Friends of Mole Hill Working Group eventually brought together support from more than 10,000 people and 35 community, religious, health and heritage groups to apply sustained pressure to the City to follow their vision.

"We kept ourselves in the media the whole time," said one proponent.

The Friends of Mole Hill arranged petition signings, attended meetings at City Hall with large numbers of speakers and at the 1995 public hearings had 100 speakers signed up with 400 people in attendance. The public process took more than four months to complete.

To gain acceptance for the project, the Friends of Mole Hill included everyone possible in the process.

“We were being proactive, not offensive, saying ‘here’s what we can do’ and we consulted with the community.”

They determined what residents would like to see come in the project — park space, community gardens, public art.

The extended planning process with the City (from 1994 to 1997) did not resolve the issue. So in 1998 the Friends lobbied the provincial government. As well, the Friends approached some of the prominent unions to provide funding in an attempt to get the City to lease the Mole Hill houses to the group. Eventually their persistence paid off, as BC Housing provided support to the project. The Mole Hill group had an architect prepare some preliminary drawings to show at the meetings. The City was still not convinced — concerned about “turning a capital resource into a social resource.”

The proponents were then advised to form a new society, develop a block plan and hold a public meeting. They put up posters in an eight- block area for the meeting and had 150 people in attendance. They focused on the heritage aspect of the area, including further researching the history of the houses.

A defining moment for the Mole Hill project occurred during a series of four meetings in 1995–1996 when “we just blew them away,” as one respondent said, with petitions and a number of speakers.

“The City realized we weren’t going away and that this was much bigger than they’d imagined.”

Strategies:

- Use the media to keep the issue front and centre in the mind of residents by inviting reporters to meetings, writing letters to the editor, calling radio phone-in shows and so on.
- Bring like-minded groups together. A project of this nature can unify groups in working toward a common goal.
- Mobilize public support for the project. Make sure that supporters attend public meetings. Work with community agencies to promote letter-writing campaigns.
- Find out the concerns of those who object to the project and make an effort to resolve them, thus reducing their ability to complain. Always find a way to accommodate a reasonable request.
- Be persistent.

Sources:

1. Interview with Blair Petrie, Coordinator, Mole Hill Community Housing Society, October 12, 2005.
2. <http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/growth/GOMDH/2003-VancouverMoleHill.pdf>

Case study: Prairies/North — My Home and My Home Too

Project name:	My Home and My Home Too
Project location:	Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
Construction type:	New construction — two homes, especially built for the program.
Target residents:	At-risk young women trying to start a new life.
Project proponents:	EGADZ (Saskatoon Downtown Youth Center Inc.); Department of Community Resources and Employment — Saskatchewan.
Project outcomes:	Two project homes.
Project time frame:	<i>Start:</i> 2004 <i>Public knowledge:</i> January 2005 <i>Occupancy:</i> August 2005 <i>Delay from community process:</i> 3 to 4 months

Background:

The need for safe housing for adolescents living on the street was highlighted when a provincial court judge subpoenaed a provincial deputy minister to draw attention to a child with no permanent home who kept breaching her probation.

In response to situations such as this, the existing My Home project, which had been operating a home for three women aged 16 and 17, planned to provide a home for up to 10 young women, under the mentorship of a house parent who can relate to young people.

Residents are expected to maintain the home, buy their own groceries and develop a sense of responsibility. The project provides long-term stability for the residents (who would normally have no family support) as well as life-skills training, addiction counselling and first aid training.

EGADZ — the Saskatoon Downtown Youth Center Inc.—took a lead role in this project (the Saskatchewan Department of Community Resources and Employment provided funding for previous My Home centres) and used its considerable influence in the community to build two homes to house 10 young women.

The purpose of these projects was to provide a home-like environment for the young women. Without a family, young people often create their own family — often by joining gangs. The young women associated with this project were so distrustful of adults that the only way that they could participate was to work under a set of principles that they were part of developing. As a result, under the guidance of a house mother, the young women were made responsible for all aspects of the home — including cleaning, minor maintenance, shopping.

The Saskatchewan Department of Community Resources and Employment (DCRE) provided base funding as well as ongoing per diem funding for the project.

Neighbourhood concerns:

Opponents to the project objected to it on the following grounds:

- Too many resources for at-risk individuals and youth were already concentrated in this area of Saskatoon.
- There was a fear of these youth in the community. People were afraid that their children were going to get involved with bad elements and street gangs.
- There was a fear that they were going to bring a street culture to the neighbourhood.
- There was a concern about the effect of the homes on property values.
- Other developers were also concerned about the property value and community desirability in neighbouring subdivisions.

The community response:

Neighbours were strongly opposed to the presence of the homes. A Community Association meeting drew 30 residents opposed to the project. A petition to stop the development was started at a local store. As well, a city councillor objected to the placement of the homes in his ward.

According to a representative of EGADZ, opposition to My Home was virulent and at times showed very negative stereotyping of the young women, with neighbourhood children being told that the residents were “drug addicts and hookers.”

The proponent's process:

Building on what they had learned from opposition to previous projects, the proponents developed a strategy of providing information to, but not asking the permission of, residents and politicians.

They researched the type of structure that was allowed on each piece of property under the existing zoning and worked within that. This meant that their plans shifted slightly from one, 10-bedroom house to two, five-bedroom houses. The strategy was to reduce public opposition and, more importantly, reduce the opportunity for the project to stall in the rezoning process.

The other strategy was to shift DCRE from proponent to partial funder, with EGADZ taking the lead. EGADZ was the public face of the project and public opposition would not be directed at the government.

The next step was to garner support of the Community Association and local service providers who would be the most important sources of support. As well, EGADZ has an excellent reputation with the private sector in Saskatchewan and the EGADZ staff took considerable time to gain support (and donations of supplies — more than \$50,000 and considerable in-kind contributions) from businesses.

To clear up misconceptions about the project, the proponent held a community meeting to find out how residents felt about the project and why. The meeting was open to all residents, businesses, government and services providers. After encountering some opposition to the project,

the proponent then sought to educate the community about the program, its residents and the need in the community. The meeting and subsequent communications with the residents allowed EGADZ to communicate the concept of a more holistic approach to working with at-risk youth.

As well, those who attended the meeting or met with EGADZ representatives saw that the houses would be consistent with other structures in the neighbourhood. The important aspect for EGADZ was that even though it was not required to have community input, because the project conformed to existing zoning, it did not want to surprise the community and thus create an uncomfortable situation for My Home residents.

EGADZ promised that the My Home residents would become an integrated part of the community by actively maintaining the houses. My Home residents built a new fence, replaced a neighbour's old fence and added a new one. This was a valuable experience for them and presented them in a positive light to the community.

But, for EGADZ, the most important thing was to emphasize that, while they would do everything to ensure that any potential risks to the community were reduced, this project was moving ahead because it was all being done within the existing zoning.

Strategies:

- Work with the city in order to try and secure support.
- Completely research all aspects of the project in advance to facilitate construction, including ensuring the project complies with zoning restrictions.
- Whenever possible, work within existing zoning so objectors cannot hold up the process at a rezoning stage.
- Attract the private sector to get corporate sponsorship and in-kind contributions.
- Have a service provider take the lead rather than government. For the most part, service providers are able to focus on the specific issue at hand, whereas government departments and agencies may be particularly sensitive to NIMBY concerns.
- Ensure that residents are aware of how the project will co-exist with the current community esthetic. Emphasize aspects such as the quality of construction, the reputation of the developer-builder and so on.
- Recruit other supporters by meeting with local agencies and associations and telling them about the benefits of the project.
- Work with people experienced with NIMBY-related issues to prepare for opposition.
- If possible, during construction, bring the future residents to the site to be a part of the process.
- Be persistent and be creative with funding, building partnerships and dealing with community opposition.

Sources:

1. Interview with Don Mickle, Client Services Coordinator, EGADZ Youth Centre, June 10 and September 29, 2005.
2. Interview with Mike Dunphy, Case Worker, John Howard Society, August 22, 2005.

3. Interview with Andy Field, Area Services Manager, Resources and Youth Program, Department of Community, Resources and Employment, August 29, 2005.

Case Study: Prairies/North — Bob Ward Residence

Project name:	Bob Ward Residence
Project location:	Calgary, Alberta (community of Glamorgan – established suburban neighbourhood)
Construction type:	Apartment building — new construction (61 units).
Target residents:	People with mental illness (60 units); brain injury clients (1, four-bedroom unit); 10 % of units are barrier-free.
Project proponents:	Joint Venture (Horizon Housing Society in partnership with the Calgary Homeless Foundation, the Calgary Home Builders Foundation and Calgary Home Builders Association). A flagship charitable project of the Calgary Home Builders Foundation for 2002-2003.
Project outcomes:	Transitional housing for people living with mental illness, low-income people requiring support and brain injury clients who are well-integrated into the existing community in a residential setting. An unexpected outcome of the project was the very positive integration of the brain injury patients with the rest of the project clients.
Project time frame:	<i>Start:</i> 2001 <i>Public knowledge:</i> 2001 (fundraising campaign); 2002 (public consultation) <i>Occupancy:</i> 2003 <i>Delay due to community process:</i> None

Background:

The proponents for the project sought a site in a residential setting that would allow the project clients to integrate into the existing community.

The site was chosen for a number of reasons:

- The City of Calgary owned the site and granted it to the project under a 60-year lease.
- The appropriate zoning for a special care facility was in place.
- There was political support for the project — the ward alderman had made a commitment to affordable housing and the support housing for low-income people fit with that sentiment.

The building was designed to complement the adjacent, three-storey, walk-up condominium buildings.

Neighbourhood concerns:

The neighbourhood Community Association was consulted early in the process and it soon became a major supporter.

The adjacent residents — occupants of a seniors residence and single-family homeowners — were considered to be a separate stakeholder group. They had two major concerns:

1. Persons with mental health illness would be a threat.
2. Traffic generated by the project would exceed the levels typical of a residential setting.

The proponent's process:

The proponents were experienced in development processes and community consultation.

The following steps were taken:

- Meeting with community alderman to confirm support for the project.
- Meetings with the community association board and members. The community assigned a contact person for the project; she soon became a strong supporter for the project.
- Project information hand-delivered to residences within a six-block area introducing the project. Adjacent residents were the only group initially opposed to the project.
- Four open houses were held in different parts of the community at different times of day to ensure all neighbours had an opportunity to review the project. Open houses were the chosen format (rather than presentations at meetings) to avoid a confrontational atmosphere and allow the general community to mingle with the project proponents and ask questions.
- One of the open houses was held at an existing Horizon Housing project to demonstrate what the proposed project would look like (transportation to the site was provided).

Adjacent residents were extensively consulted. Additional time was spent with the group, addressing issues such as building design, traffic, parking, garbage storage, and lighting. Architects, traffic planners and Horizon Housing staff were able to explain the project and address all concerns raised. In the end, the project won the support of the nearby neighbours and was approved by the City of Calgary Planning Department with no appeals.

Strategies:

- Establish a good working relationship with the Community Association representing the community and also with the adjacent neighbours.
- Allow enough time for sufficient community consultation in order to ensure that the project was well understood and any potential concerns were addressed.
- Have the support of the ward alderman and the City's Planning Department for the project.

Sources:

1. Interviews with staff members, CHF, May 20, 2004.

Case study: Quebec — Le Manoir A. Pierre Lanctôt

Project name:	Le Manoir A. Pierre Lanctôt
Project location:	Châteauguay
Construction type:	New construction of a two- and of a three-storey building, with 34-unit social housing facility and a cafeteria.
Target residents:	Seniors with a slight loss of autonomy.
Project proponents:	Comité de logement social de Châteauguay; Centre local de services communautaires (community health clinic); volunteers who formed the board of the Corporation des Manoirs Châteauguay (an OSBL — Organisme sans but lucratif — not-for-profit) who run the project; Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ — Quebec housing department); Regional Health Board; City of Châteauguay.
Project outcomes:	Successful completion of the 34-unit facility. Project was completed and integrated into the neighbourhood and ultimately there was no additional conflict because the NIMBY forces acknowledged graciously that they had lost. Now some people from the surrounding neighbourhood want to live in the project.
Project time frame:	<i>Start:</i> 1999 <i>Public knowledge:</i> 2000 <i>Occupancy:</i> 2001 <i>Delay from community process:</i> Several months

Background:

The idea for this project started in the mid-1990s. A group wanted to save a monastery by buying it and converting it to housing for elderly people, but the Roman Catholic Church archdiocese didn't want to sell the monastery. Comité de logement social de Châteauguay began working with the CLSC (Centre local de services communautaires) health clinic. The two groups sought help from volunteers to form a non-profit housing corporation (which was ultimately called the Corporation des Manoirs Châteauguay, which is an OSBL – Organisme sans but lucratif or not-for-profit).

Unable to buy the monastery, the Corporation des Manoirs Châteauguay looked for other land. The City of Châteauguay donated land zoned as a park but used as a dog run.

The surrounding neighbourhood is mainly single-family homes, although there is a 24 unit Habitations à Loyer Modique (HLM — social housing project) in the neighbourhood.

The 34-unit housing project is designed for elderly people who have lost their independence.

Neighbourhood concerns:

The person leading the NIMBY initiative was a property owner who worked in social services and feared the project would cause problems. He told other people that social housing disrupted neighbourhoods. This led to concerns among nearby residents that:

- The project was going to be a long-term care home.

- There was going to be lots of traffic at night.
- The buildings would be ugly because it was social housing.
- They would be over height and unsightly.
- Property would be better used as a park.
- Property values might be negatively affected.
- The neighbourhood might become noisier.

The community response:

The most vocal objectors called for a referendum, which was permitted because of the need for a zoning change.

According to Quebec law, residents of an area where a zoning change is required to construct a building can ask for a public consultation. In order for this to happen, a certain percentage of people must sign a petition saying they want to be consulted. If they gather enough signatures, they can ask for a referendum on the zoning change.⁹ A group of citizens mobilized to try to make this happen.

The proponent's process:

There were four residential zones affected by the project. Residents of a zone immediately adjacent wanted a referendum and started the process.

But, according to Quebec law, other zones have to be consulted as well. The Comité de logement social de Châteauguay — the lead proponent — obtained a list of the 1,800 people in the four zones eligible to vote. If 901 people supported the project, it would go ahead.

This rarely used “positive referendum” process is set out in the provincial *Land Use Planning Act* (*La loi sur l'aménagement et l'urbanisme*) and the *Municipal Elections and Referendum Act* (*La loi sur les élections et référendums dans les municipalités*).

Under the *Land Use Planning Act*, if a zoning change is required, people in the district affected have the right to oppose it by asking for a referendum. If 10 % of the residents sign a register saying they want a referendum, then there is one. In Châteauguay, the NIMBY forces did just that, so the proponents turned to the use of this section of the municipal elections law:

Section 532 of the *Municipal Elections and Referendum Act* says that if 51 per cent of the citizens in the affected district and the adjacent districts agree, they can renounce their right to a referendum.

The Comité de logement social de Châteauguay went door to door for two weeks explaining the project. The proponents had an affidavit from the city for supporters to sign and obtained the support of 901 people. As a result, their positive referendum results demonstrated that a majority

⁹ The City of Montréal is an exception because the city's charter makes the referendum process optional.

of residents supported the project, so a referendum on the zoning change — as advocated by the anti-project group — was not necessary.

Strategies:

- The “positive referendum” process is beneficial. It is done by signing a form. Proponents can take the form around to all the people affected to try to get enough people willing to renounce their right to a referendum, thus approving the project.
- Keep residents informed — go door to door to inform the neighbours about the project.
- Foster positive contact with local news outlets by making them aware of the project from the beginning and informing them throughout the process.
- Obtain the support of the municipal councillor representing the jurisdiction.

Sources :

1. Interview with François Giguère, Coordinator, Comité de logement social de Châteauguay, October 3, 2005.
2. Interview with a member of the Corporation des Manoirs Châteauguay, September 30, 2005.

Case study: Quebec — Samakhi Housing Cooperative

Project name:	Samakhi Housing Cooperative
Project location:	Rivière-des-Prairies (Montréal east)
Construction type:	New construction – 39-unit, mixed housing, three-storey building.
Target residents:	Families, single persons and independent seniors (focused on the Laotian community).
Project proponents:	Regroupement des organismes du Montréal ethnique pour le logement (ROMEL); members of the Laotian community. Funded by CMHC, Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ) and the City of Montréal.
Project outcomes:	Successful completion of 39 units: five, 3_-room apartments; 15, 4_-room apartments; and 19, 5_-room apartments. The project has integrated relatively successfully into the surrounding area.
Project time frame:	<i>Start:</i> 2002 <i>Public knowledge:</i> 2003 (summer) <i>Occupancy:</i> 2003 (fall) <i>Delay from community process:</i> Several months

Background:

ROMEL, an advocacy group, helps Montréal's multicultural communities with housing issues. It helps people get services and deal effectively with the bureaucracy.

In this case ROMEL, helped a group of Laotians start a housing project and overcome obstacles, which included obtaining funding and learning how co-ops work. A group of 12 Laotians approached ROMEL in 2002 and proposed the project on a vacant lot that was zoned residential.

Neighbourhood concerns:

According to ROMEL, the first indication of NIMBY was at the sod-turning ceremony attended by the mayor of Montréal in the fall of 2003. A neighbour approached ROMEL officials accused ROMEL of “inviting criminals and poor people into the neighbourhood.”

A ROMEL official invited him to meet with ROMEL. This individual and a group of seven property owners met with ROMEL. The group wanted the co-op built somewhere else and the vacant land used for a park, even though the land was zoned residential.

Objections continued. The group of seven lobbied the City of Montréal and at one point held up a Council decision about the construction permit. The delays added \$200,000 to the project costs.

Those supporting the NIMBY activity didn't want poor people in their neighbourhood. They were also afraid that the project would attract undesirable people to the neighbourhood. Property owners from the surrounding area also said that they wanted a park and were afraid their property values would decline.

The community response:

A few property owners organized opposition and a group of six complained about the project to the district's municipal councillor.

At a district council meeting, the same group voiced its concerns, saying it wanted a park. The group members were afraid that co-op housing would decrease the value of their condominiums.

The proponent's process:

When the NIMBY response first became apparent, ROMEL began mailing letters to the City of Montréal. ROMEL also notified the media about the project and its goals, using the media to inform the public about the project.

ROMEL also met a group of property owners opposed to the project. ROMEL held a public information campaign, met with neighbours and provided as much information as possible.

Since the tone of those who objected to the project was negative and even aggressive, ROMEL made every effort to avoid conflict, so the long-term success of the project would not be jeopardized. ROMEL tried to give opponents as much information as possible and to meet them in person in a way that wasn't confrontational. The key was to find and use methods to avoid conflict.

While ROMEL was experiencing delays during the permit process, it decided to talk openly about the project. The respondent from ROMEL believes it was important for the organization to demand clarification from the City, which it did, and council approved the construction permit.

The district's councillor for the area also helped combat NIMBY. He helped the residents understand that while the project would indeed go through and emphasized ROMEL's concept and implementation, saying they would have positive aspects. This helped make the project more acceptable. By acting as the intermediary, he was able to accommodate some of the concerns of the neighbours and make sure that the discussion remained constructive. He listened to people's concerns but didn't back down in his support of the project.

ROMEL believes that the current framework in which social housing projects are developed is restrictive because approval takes too long. ROMEL would like to see faster approvals. In Montréal, when a social housing project is presented to the city, it is studied at length. If it meets the City's criteria, the City will issue a letter of conditional acceptance. That process is supposed to take six weeks, yet ROMEL notes that it can take up to one year. In the meantime, proponents can lose a project because it gives the opposition time to get organized.

Strategies:

- Meet with the municipal housing agencies and related agencies to keep them informed and thus to reduce concerns.

- Draw on local political figures, if possible, because having a person act as an intermediary can assist in addressing some of the concerns of neighbours and make sure that the discussion remains constructive.
- Make sure the approach is effective by selling the project well, by making sure the community is consulted and well-informed in the early stages. Be prepared to positively address negative stereotyping about social housing.
- Letter-writing campaigns to local media and local government.
- Avoid conflict with objectors so long-term success is not jeopardized.

Sources:

1. Interview with Mazen Houdeib, General Director, ROMEL September 26, 2005.
2. Interview with Jean-Jacques Bohémier, political attaché to Montréal Councillor Cosmo Macciocia, September 20, 2005.
3. Interview with a member of the Samakhi Housing Cooperative, October 4, 2005.

Case study: Quebec — Église St. Étienne

Project name:	Église St. Étienne
Project location:	Petite Patrie District in Montréal
Construction type:	New construction of a 75-unit project in three separate buildings on a 4,645 m ² (50,000 sq. ft.) site.
Target residents:	Co-op Prima Vera – 16 housing units for families; Maison St. Étienne (OSBL – Organisme sans but lucratif) – 50 housing units for seniors; Les Appartements Augustine Gonzalez (OSBL) – 10 units for expectant mothers.
Project proponents:	Groupe des ressources techniques (GRT) Batir son Quartier, lead proponent; Table de concertation Logement-Aménagement de La Petite Patrie; Comité de logement de la Petite Patrie.
Project outcomes:	Successful completion of all three phases of the project.
Project time frame:	<i>Start:</i> 1999 <i>Public knowledge:</i> 2000 <i>Occupancy:</i> 2004 <i>Delay from community process:</i> No significant delays

Background:

In the late 1990s, many community workers from a number of organizations realized that people needed low-income housing in this area of Montréal. In 1999, they formed Table de concertation Logement-Aménagement de La Petite Patrie (housing roundtable), which is essentially a lobby group for housing.

The site for the development was roughly 4,645 m² (50,000 sq. ft.). A church on the site occupied half the land. As the church was no longer fully used by the congregation, the Groupe des ressources technique (GRT) identified it as a possible site for social housing. Because the project was so large and because the GRT planned to demolish a building, the group anticipated opposition. To address this, the GRT decided on a sophisticated public relations campaign to immediately counter opposition.

Neighbourhood concerns:

Neighborhood residents heard about the project early on and began to phone their municipal councillor about the plans for the church. The parishioners knew that something would be done with the church because it wasn't being used to capacity anymore.

In 2003, the GRT invited citizens to an informal meeting to learn about the project. This is when opposition began to mobilize. Property owners in the neighbourhood of the project were concerned about low-income families, young mothers and immigrants in the co-op and whether they would blend in with the neighbourhood.

A respondent noted that those who opposed the project were not long-time residents, but new arrivals who were worried that their investment would lose value. Some objections were specific: one neighbour worried about the appearance of the building and concerned that it would block their view and shadow their property.

The community response:

Neighbours, especially new arrivals, contacted their municipal councillor about potential development uses of the site. At a 2003 district council meeting, surrounding residents opposed the project and began a petition process.

Table de concertation Logement-aménagement de La Petite Patrie (housing roundtable) developed an extensive network of contacts. When problems arose with permits and other issues, there was strong lobbying group to get the problem solved.

The proponent's process:

In this case, the strategy was strongly proactive. The proponent executed a sophisticated public relations campaign to counter NIMBY as it began to appear.

Through the proponent's efforts, elected officials effectively became partners. The proponent found that these officials were very valuable for providing great amounts of information about the neighbourhood, upon which the proponents could draw for their communications strategy.

When the project was in the final planning stage, the proponent kept local journalists informed. Every six months or so there was an article in the local paper explaining the project. This also gave people a chance to learn about the project informally and to voice their opposition, which they did. A number of residents phoned the GRT to find out more and ask questions.

The proponent also held a public information session in the church and invited the community to come and learn about the project. The GRT posted drawings of the project so people would have a good idea of what it would look like. There were also representatives from the boards of the three co-ops, the idea being that people would get a chance to meet those who would be coming into their neighbourhood. There were also representatives from the local health clinic and social services centre and other community groups who supported the project.

There was a more formal meeting a week later. Ultimately, those who opposed the project gathered the support of only about eight people, so their opposition was not effective.

Strategies:

- At regular intervals, tell local media what is being done and what is coming.
- As part of the public relations campaign, make sure that local councillors know what is going on at every step. When community residents have concerns, the first thing they do is phone their councillors. That makes it important that elected people know about the project.

- Make people feel like they have input in the project and give them the right information at the right time, especially at first. First impressions are important and residents need good information from the beginning so as not to encourage conflict.
- It is also important to carefully define the project before informing the public. Talking to the public too early can result in misleading information being passed along.
- Identify potential opposition to a project early in the process. If possible, meet with these people ahead of any formal meetings to understand their objections and make them aware of the potential benefits. As a result, potential opposition can be reduced once information is provided. As well, those who still have objections are much more informed when they attend the formal meetings.

Sources:

1. Interview with M. Jean-François Gilker, Coordinator, GRT Bâtir son quartier, September 30, 2005.
2. Interview with François Purcell, District Municipal Councillor, October 5, 2005.

Case study: Quebec — La Villa de l'avenir

Project name:	La Villa de l'avenir
Project location:	Val-Bélair (suburban Québec City)
Construction type:	New construction; 33-unit social housing complex in a three building apartment complex.
Target residents:	Seniors with a loss of autonomy.
Project proponents:	GRT Action Habitation, Volunteer Board of the Corporation de la villa de l'avenir (OSBL – Organisme sans but lucratif). Funders: 50 % from Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ); 15 % from the City of Québec. The Accès Logi program (in which CMHC collaborates) was also involved.
Project outcomes:	Successful completion of the housing complex in 2004.
Project time frame:	Start: 2001 Public knowledge: 2002 Occupancy: 2004 Delay from community process: 6 months

Background:

La Villa de l'avenir is a 33-unit social housing project for older people in a three building apartment complex. It was to be built on a vacant lot in a mixed residential–commercial area. At first, GRT Action Habitation – the project leader – held an information meeting to identify neighbourhood needs and discovered that housing was needed for older people. GRT Action Habitation chose the site because it was vacant and in an appropriate area for this type of housing.

Neighbourhood concerns:

Neighbours were concerned about property values declining because of the project. They were afraid the project would be an eyesore. They were also resistant to the idea that there would be older people in the neighbourhood.

The community response:

In 2002, the public came out against the project after a district council meeting to deal with the change in zoning to residential from commercial.

Opponents circulated a petition to block the project. Local residents and property owners also got together and lobbied the opposition party at city council to vote against the project. The mayor, who supported the project, did not have a majority on city council to back up his position.

The municipal party in power favoured the project, but the opposition party did not. It soon evolved into partisan politics. The opposition was well-organized and had resources. The group ultimately formed a development corporation and succeeded in delaying the project for a few months.

The proponent's process:

GRT made sure that it made the community aware of the process and shared as much information as possible in a timely manner. As well, GRT involved the community throughout the process to ensure that the community felt that GRT considered its views.

GRT rented school buses and took a number of the people who were to live in the project to lobby Québec City Council. About 300 people filled the Council chamber. The GRT invited these people to sign a petition, which they did.

“The council soon realized that it made no sense to reject the project,” a respondent noted.

Strategies:

- Introduce the future residents to the objectors.
- Lobby city council and start a petition to gather support for the project.
- Be sure to share all information with residents in a timely manner. As well, be sure to involve them in the process so that they feel that their views have been considered.

Sources:

1. Interview with Armand St-Laurent, Coordinator, Action Habitation, September 27, 2005.
2. Interview with Jean Noël Bouchard, Secretary, Villa de l'avenir, October 10, 2005.
3. Interview with a member of the Villa de L'avenir, October 11, 2005.

Case study: Atlantic — Camden Park Cottages

Project name:	Camden Park Cottages
Project location:	Moncton, New Brunswick
Construction type:	Renovation—conversion of 18 Department of National Defence houses.
Target residents:	Low-income seniors; low-income families.
Project proponents:	APHL – formerly Atlantic People’s Housing Ltd. (trade name of Avide Developments, focusing on affordable housing and property management).
Project outcomes:	18 units converted to affordable housing. 12 are occupied by seniors; two by persons or families with disabilities; one by a person with hearing disability in a home converted with options for the hearing impaired; one by a person with environmental sensitivities in an environmentally safe home; and, one by a low-income family.
Project time frame:	<i>Start:</i> 2002 (summer) <i>Public knowledge:</i> July 2002 <i>Occupancy:</i> 2005 (fall) <i>Delay from community process:</i> Several months

Background:

In 2002, APHL applied for a cluster of 18 houses from the Department of National Defence under the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI). The development is located near Camden Park Terrace, a seniors’ independent-living complex, which APHL also operates. An application was made for funding under the federal–provincial affordable housing agreement as well. By linking the development with Camden Park Terraces, the intent was to offer a continuum of housing options, supporting the independence of residents in the housing by access to meals and medical assistance — all provided at Camden Park Terrace. No zoning change was required.

Neighbourhood concerns:

The federal government’s news release about SFRPHI created some assumptions in the community that properties would be used for shelters for the homeless, where in fact the intent was to convert the houses to affordable housing. This led to enhanced public scrutiny of the proposal for affordable housing made by APHL, which APHL revamped from the original intent (to construct a project solely for seniors) to one focused mainly on seniors, but including others.

The potential impact on property values was the main point raised by people resisting the APHL development. A secondary “below the surface” issue was the interest of another developer in obtaining the land for high-end housing. This led to behind-the-scenes political manoeuvring which affected the progress of approvals.

APHL participated and partnered with the city to develop an alternative use plan. This was not received well by opponents, as it was for higher density housing. Some councillors became involved in the criticism of the intended APHL development. One councillor stated “we do not

need a seniors' ghetto here.” APHL rebutted this by pointing out the positive value in clustering seniors near an existing seniors’ complex to provide services while at the same time integrating seniors into a neighbourhood with other kinds of families.

The initial call for proposals for the development stated the housing would be a solution for those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. This raised concerns and somewhat muddled the waters about the focus of the project — some thought it would be a shelter and strenuously resisted due in part to the stigma associated with low-income housing and its residents.

The community response:

In July, 2002, neighbours petitioned Claudette Bradshaw, MP for Moncton-Riverview-Dieppe and then the minister responsible for homelessness, about the type of housing that might be put in place under the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI).

From April, 2003, to April, 2004, APHL dealt with NIMBY resistance. The process of responding to the community resistance slowed the project down by several months. It caused an extension of two months to the Request for Proposal deadline. NIMBY was most evident over the one-year period before the start of construction.

Stakeholders influenced the progress of the NIMBY situation, both positively and negatively. Key supporting players included the local Member of the Legislative Assembly, who intervened with the federal minister when the issues became heated, as well as the residents of Camden Park Terrace and Peoples Park Tower, who undertook a successful letter writing campaign to Moncton City Council when encouraged to do so by APHL.

The local newspaper initially contributed to the misunderstanding of the project, which it depicted as a homelessness project (in line with the federal news release on the program). An editorial to this effect was published, which resulted in letters to the editor. The proponent had to decide whether to react to press coverage, as there was a concern that a reaction might result simply in more attention without contributing to resolving the issues.

Later, after an interview with APHL, the newspaper carried more positive coverage of the project and its funding, which more accurately described the project as being designed to assist seniors. Subsequent coverage of the funding provided through the affordable housing agreement also became more accurate in terms of intent and the target group.

The proponent’s process:

The proponent’s approach was based on a two-step process: research, planning and internal organization; and, implementation of a community relations plan.

APHL used the Internet to research other projects that had encountered NIMBY resistance. APHL developed a community relations plan, setting out the background to the project, the plan for the development and the objectives for ensuring communications with the community throughout the development process. Within a team of three, roles were assigned that resulted in

one point of contact for community inquiries. A senior manager was assigned to deal with the mayor and council and to handle internal communications on issues and positions.

A file on communications and media monitoring was maintained and updated regularly during the period of greatest public resistance. Once construction started, the resistance diminished. This file aided in tracking issues, internal and external communications and reacting effectively to the public response.

Those leading the resistance asked for a public meeting, but APHL made a strategic decision to deal with the key opponents on a one-on-one basis and through direct communications with those in the neighbourhood. The community relations plan was shared in a newsletter distributed in April, 2004, to all houses in the neighbourhood. This newsletter was updated periodically during the period leading to the start of construction and at key development milestones.

APHL encouraged residents in Camden Park Terrace to start a letter-writing campaign. This resulted in thousands of signed letters, which APHL presented to the mayor and City Council. This both helped and hurt their cause — it was concrete evidence of neighbourhood support for the project, but once the proposition was brought to Council's attention, it felt that using the land for its own development was the better path to follow.

The newsletter was also sent to councillors for the ward and to at-large councillors. There were a number of individual contacts with the mayor and councillors to try to keep communications flowing at that level. As no formal zoning approval was required from council, the focus was on garnering informal support.

Strategies:

- Clarify misconceptions as soon as possible to negate further negative publicity.
- Develop a community relations plan that clearly sets out project objectives, its design and how the neighbourhood will be informed at each step in the development process. Share the plan with the residents in the neighbourhood.
- Focus on the facts, not arguments. Deal proactively with individual complainants. Avoid dealing with opponents as a group. Do not let things get out of hand — rather, continually monitor issues and deal with them head-on. Being honest is important — stick to what you promise to do.
- Identify the positive effects of the initiative from both a community and housing environment perspective.
- Carrying out a good selection process for residents is helpful in ensuring the integrity of the project. Regularly monitor the project post-occupancy for any problems and be proactive in managing the look of the properties.
- Early communications with key stakeholders are crucial. Most importantly, keep in touch with the local member of parliament early in the process to ensure communications from both sources are clear and consistent.
- Plan for concerns raised at each step of implementation. Keep key concerns in mind; anticipate how these can be accommodated as the project rolls out and how communications can ensure no mixed messages.

- Ensure early intervention with the city council, to help avoid an adversarial relationship.
- Provide information to better educate the broader community on the need for this kind of development.
- Encourage the municipality to develop a clearly articulated municipal plan for affordable housing, including a vision of how to place and integrate such housing in the city; conditions for zoning and transportation links.

Sources:

1. Interview with Rodney Robinson, Project coordinator, APHL, September 20, 2005.
2. Interview with Bill O'Neill, Property Manager AVIDE Developments, Administrator for Camden Park Terrace (adjacent APHL development), September 29, 2005.
3. Interview with Stephen Davies, Vice President, Co-op Atlantic (APHL parent company), September 26, 2005.

Case study: Atlantic — Abe Zakem House

Project name:	Abe Zakem House
Project location:	Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island
Construction type:	22 new affordable rental units (16, one-bedroom and six, two-bedroom) and one market-rent unit.
Target residents:	Low- to moderate-income families.
Project proponents:	Kiwanis Club of Charlottetown.
Project outcomes:	The project resulted in the first multi-unit residential rental project under the Canada–P.E.I. Affordable Housing Agreement, signed in May 2003. It has contributed to an overall enhancement to the area, with another development now going up nearby. The project has garnered attention in environmental circles for its innovative remediation work on a brownfield site.
Project time frame:	<i>Start:</i> 2002 <i>Public knowledge:</i> 2003 (winter) <i>Occupancy:</i> 2004 <i>Delay from community process:</i> Several months

Background:

The City of Charlottetown donated a piece of land on the waterfront, located in a low-to-moderate income residential area that was in the process of redevelopment, to a local, non-profit Kiwanis Club. The City then undertook to facilitate a multi-partnership agreement through the Canada–P.E.I. Affordable Housing Agreement.

The Canada-P.E.I. Affordable Housing Agreement provided \$566,000 to the project. The Kiwanis Club of Charlottetown contributed \$250,000. The land donated by the City of Charlottetown was valued at \$200,000. The balance of funding came from a CMHC-insured mortgage with the Royal Bank of Canada.

Neighbourhood concerns:

Two public meetings were held as part of the approval process. Three neighbours were vocal in their concerns about the development. Comments identified worries about reduced property values and the problems associated with housing “those people” in subsidized units.

These three neighbours wanted an opportunity to purchase and resell the property for an apartment building or single-family dwellings, not subsidized units. Alternatively, they wanted another developer to redevelop the land. Subsequently, another private developer came forward willing to purchase the property and build condominiums. Neighbours welcomed the proposal, as they assumed it would result in increasing their property values. There were several articles in the local paper about the development. The City Council discussed it at several meetings held as a result of the objections.

The underlying opposition was motivated largely by concerns other than the impact of affordable housing. When the City dismantled a garage that had been on the property for 35 years, it discovered contaminants on the site. This led to an extensive and expensive environmental clean-up process before it could be re-developed. It also raised concerns of about five neighbours who feared that their land had also been contaminated and who wanted the City to purchase their properties. They approached the mayor (who had represented this area as a councillor) and then their sitting councillor with their concerns.

A couple of these neighbours were renting to the same target group of low income earners. Although this was not stated publicly, it was apparent that an underlying reason for the NIMBY was a concern about competition. One key informant perceived a general assumption among the population in the community that affordable housing is for the poor and unemployed, when in actuality the working poor is also a key group needing this kind of supportive housing in the community.

The community response:

Stakeholders who resisted the project were the immediate neighbours who had specific concerns about the impacts on their properties. They voiced their concerns at a public meeting regarding rezoning of the property.

The proponent's process:

This process took a long time due to a number of factors. The numerous environmental studies took considerable time. The process also took a great deal of time as City Hall dealt with land issues. The Kiwanis Club also had to wait for the signing of the Canada-P.E.I. Affordable Housing Agreement. Overall, it took 18 months to two years to clear these obstacles.

The Kiwanis Club put together a strong team to plan and organize the project. The team worked well together, put in many volunteer hours in addressing environmental, funding and land issues, as well as dealing resistance to the development. The team listened to concerns and tried to address them. For example, one neighbour was concerned that the building would block his southern exposure and changes were made to accommodate these concerns.

A needs assessment before the project implementation showed that 600 families in P.E.I. needed affordable housing, which helped make the case for the development.

The Kiwanis Club also enlisted a number of champions for the project including the mayor of Charlottetown, a member of parliament and the provincial minister for health and social services. The Kiwanis reputation and strong track record in the community were influential in gaining public support for the development and in the success of the work done to enlist champions.

The Kiwanis Club joined this project because of the value the organization places on helping to create neighbourhoods supportive of the growing needs of seniors. The Kiwanis Club named the project for Abe Zakem, a long-time member of the Club, whose family had lived in the neigh-

bourhood for many years. The public took notice of the development and its importance once it was named for this respected member of the community.

Strategies:

- Be open to concerns as much as possible and play by the rules — if a public meeting is needed, make the best of this venue to hear concerns and make your case.
- Anticipate and prepare for resistance. Some concerns can be allayed if resistance is anticipated. Think about holding informal meetings to hear and resolve concerns prior to any formal process. This may take some debate and conflict out of the public arena and lead to a less-adversarial situation.
- Name the project to put a face on its values. The public may take notice of the development and what it stands for once it is named for a respected citizen.

Sources:

1. Interview with Douglas A. Coles, Member of Kiwanis committee for project, October 12, 2005.
2. Interview with Les Parsons, General Manager, Charlottetown Area Development Corporation Agency, October 5, 2005.
3. Interview with Donna Waddell, Director of Corporate Services, City of Charlottetown, October 20, 2005.
4. Interview with Janet Wood, Planning Officer, Social Policy Development, Department of Health and Social Services, July 19, 2005.

Case study: Atlantic — Rawlins Cross, 135 Military Road

Project name:	Rawlins Cross, 135 Military Road
Project location:	St. John's, Newfoundland
Construction type:	Renovation of a retail store and offices into one-bedroom apartment units.
Target residents:	Single adults.
Project proponents:	Stella Burry Community Services (SBCS).
Project outcomes:	On considering the report of a public meeting, City Council approved rezoning in June 2004. Capital funding was approved in the fall, 2005; the property was purchased and development will now proceed.
Project time frame:	<i>Start:</i> 2004 <i>Public knowledge:</i> May 2004 <i>Occupancy:</i> Expected to be summer, 2008 <i>Delay from community process:</i> One month

Background:

In 2004, SBCS proposed to convert a three-storey, commercial building at Rawlins Cross in the downtown area of the city into 16 units of affordable housing for single adults (including accessible units for persons with disabilities). There would be a live-in superintendent and additional support from SBCS from its headquarters across the street.

The existing zoning permitted dwelling units on the upper floors of this building. Council could have authorized dwelling units on the ground floor as a discretionary use. The city planning department supported the residential conversion because no parking would be required and the proposed development would reduce the illegal vehicle stopping in front of the property, which occurred when the ground floor contained businesses. SBCS also proposed to restore the building so it would be consistent with its original, 1907 facade and heritage designation.

The neighbourhood has a mix of low-income rental properties near heritage homes that are being renovated into higher-end properties.

Neighbourhood concerns:

Concerns revolved around three main issues: the formal planning process, the nature of low-income housing and the animosity towards low-income earners. Planning concerns included the concentration of low-income housing in one location, parking and traffic. There were concerns about SBCS's funding capacity, as a nearby property, also owned by SBCS and slated for affordable housing, had not been completed. One resident felt there was going to be a low-income ghetto in the area because of the project. Other objectors expressed animosity towards low-income earners more subtly.

The community response:

The City received 10 to 12 e-mails, letters and phone calls objecting to the project or expressing concerns. The objectors were invited to a neighbourhood meeting held by the City.

The City of St. John's Planning Department was helpful in advising SBCS on what was permitted in development.

As well, the neighbourhood association and other supportive community-based groups attended the meeting to give their opinions on the need for this kind of development.

The proponent's process:

SBCS circulated a letter to the community before the meeting, explaining the project in detail and inviting the public to seek further information from SBCS.

SBCS also recommended the neighbourhood meeting take place at a community centre near the project site. About 25 people, including four city councillors, attended the public meeting on June 14, 2005.

SBCS made a presentation about the development, beginning with an overview of affordable housing trends in the centre of the city, which underscored the need for new, affordable housing in the community. The presentation used key statistics to put a face to the need. SBCS noted that 26 % of all affordable housing units had been lost over the previous five years to gentrification and there had been no construction of rental units in the neighbourhood in the previous five years. This reinforced the importance of meeting the needs of students and low-income renters. It also showed that this one development was small compared to what was really needed.

Pictures of the site in the early 1900s were included to illustrate that the planned restoration would match the original architecture of the building, which was seen as a significant improvement over the building's existing façade. The project architect also presented information at this session on the structural assessment and design plans. This illustrated that the scale of the development was not huge and that parking issues would be minimal.

To challenge the underlying, but largely unstated animosity towards "those people," proponents made the case for the rights of people to participate in their community and to have safe, affordable housing integrated within the community.

SBCS also highlighted its successful track record in engaging the community in its previous developments and its success in turning poorly managed properties into well-managed ones, such as nearby Carew Lodge, for which SBCS was nominated for a national CMHC housing award. Carew Lodge's live-in superintendent attended the meeting and spoke about the role of the superintendent in maintaining high-quality housing and good relations with neighbours — something that is planned for the proposed development.

A turning point in the meeting came when one neighbour extended a welcome, citing the positive impact of past developments by the organization in improving properties and safety in their neighbourhoods. Then the flower shop across the street from the development offered to provide flowers regularly for the café planned for an adjacent SBCS development. So there was a degree of momentum in support achieved in the meeting. By the end of the meeting, a number of those originally opposed to the project were expressing their support. Some of the city councillors who attended the public meeting said they expected more tension.

SBCS suggested that a representative of the community to sit on the team overseeing the project. One person from the neighbourhood association agreed to take on this role.

Strategies:

- As a community information strategy, use an evidence-based presentation to make the case, to allay concerns and to illustrate the potential to improve the neighbourhood — including making the architect and the design plans available.
- Make use of linkages already established in the community. Organizations and people in the community already tend to work together well. Consequently, proponents may be able to depend on their links with the city and other community groups for support in making the case for a project.
- Build credibility with the media and use it to get the message out to garner public support for the project.
- Communicate early with residents and community stakeholders so they are not surprised by the project. This can be done through an informal meeting before the formal process or by having proponents go door-to-door. This helps proponents identify and address concerns ahead of any formal announcement.
- Maintain momentum through regular communications if there are delays. An ongoing issue with some projects is the delay in funding approval. There is always a concern that projects can lose credibility because of delays that are outside the proponent's control. One strategy to offset this is regular communications with the neighbourhood about the status and continued commitment of the proponent.

Sources:

1. Interview with Jocelyn Greene, Executive Director, Stella Burry Community Services (Project proponent), October 10, 2005.
2. Interview with Bruce Pearce, Community Development Worker, St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness (Project proponent), September 21, 2005.
3. Interview with Clifford Johnston, Director of Planning City of St. John's, Zoning change process and convened neighbourhood meeting, October 12, 2005.

IV. COMMON CONCERNS

A common thread runs through all of the projects even though it is often expressed in many different ways — fear. In most instances, the fear is that affordable housing projects will draw an element considered to be undesirable (low-income individuals and families, at-risk youth, people with physical or mental disabilities) to a neighbourhood. In one case (Cates Hill), that fear focused on concerns about uncontrolled growth. In many cases, these situations often seem undesirable due to a lack of knowledge or information about a project (or its residents), which can further magnify the fear of the unknown and change.

The reasons for objecting to these projects run the gamut of NIMBY issues — from economic impacts and safety concerns to blatant discrimination. Below are a number of the key concerns raised throughout all of these projects:

Awareness:

- Lack of awareness about the project, contributing to unease when the idea is raised.
- Misconceptions about the proposed function of the structure.

Concerns about new residents:

- Concerns about new residents affecting community safety.
- Concerns that the project would attract an undesirable element.
- Discrimination against the new residents.
- A misinformed connection made by residents between low-income families and crime.

Property values:

- Concerns about a negative effect on property values.
- Concerns about high-density housing, with fears of crime or the lowering of nearby property values.
- Concerns that affordable rentals would be sold once the project receives approval.
- Demand for market-driven rather than low-income housing.

Community impact:

- A different vision for the proposed site.
- Concerns about increased traffic.
- Esthetic concerns — structures would not fit with existing residential buildings.

V. LESSONS LEARNED

The following chart focuses on the strategies that proponents of affordable housing used to overcome NIMBY. Brief concluding comments follow.

Case	Successful strategies
Lakeside Place, B.C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate the value of the project to influential stakeholders (including local service providers, the mayor and council, as well as local, provincial and national funders) so that those who wish to do so can act as advocates—champions during development. • Develop a clear plan that is open to scrutiny. • Be open and clear about sharing information and always invite people to come and have a look at any aspect of the project as it evolves. • Engage other organizations in the community so there is no sense of secrecy. • When the project is complete, ask neighbours to tour the buildings and invite them to discuss any problems with staff. • Solicit input from those who object to the project. • Proponents have to use the community connections of all the people on their boards and of their staff.
Cates Hill, Bowen Island, B.C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In planning the project, incorporate proposals that address the concerns of residents as identified through community meetings, charettes and so on. • When the plan is presented to the public, be prepared to modify the project as much as possible to address public concerns. • Provide an opportunity for community participation early in the process. • Ensure that as many people as possible are aware of the project so that you can ensure that all those in favour of it are able to show their support.
Mole Hill, Vancouver, B.C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the media to keep the issue front and centre in the mind of residents by inviting reporters to meetings, writing letters to the editor, calling radio phone-in shows and so on. • Bring like-minded groups together. A project of this nature can unify groups in working toward a common goal. • Mobilize public support for the project. Make sure that supporters attend public meetings. Work with community agencies to promote letter-writing campaigns. • Find out the concerns of those who object to the project and make an effort to resolve them, thus reducing their ability to complain. Always find a way to accommodate a reasonable request. • Be persistent.

Case	Successful strategies
My Home, Saskatoon, Sask.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the city in order to try and secure support. • Completely research all aspects of the project in advance to facilitate construction, including ensuring the project complies with zoning restrictions. • Whenever possible, work within existing zoning so objectors cannot hold up the process at a rezoning stage. • Attract the private sector to get corporate sponsorship and in-kind contributions. • Have a service provider take the lead rather than government. For the most part, service providers are able to focus on the specific issue at hand, whereas government departments and agencies may be particularly sensitive to NIMBY concerns. • Ensure that residents are aware of how the project will co-exist with the current community esthetic. Emphasize aspects such as the quality of construction, the reputation of the developer-builder and so on. • Recruit other supporters by meeting with local agencies and associations and telling them about the benefits of the project. • Work with people experienced with NIMBY-related issues to prepare for opposition. • If possible, during construction, bring the future residents to the site to be a part of the process. • Be persistent and be creative with funding, building partnerships and dealing with community opposition.
Bob Ward Residence, Calgary, Alta.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a good working relationship with the Community Association representing the community and also with the adjacent neighbours. • Allow enough time for sufficient community consultation in order to ensure that the project was well understood and any potential concerns were addressed. • Have the support of the ward alderman and the City's Planning Department for the project.
Le Manoir A. Pierre Lanctôt, Château-guay, Que.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The "positive referendum" process is beneficial. It is done by signing a form. Proponents can take the form around to all the people affected to try to get enough people willing to renounce their right to a referendum, thus approving the project. • Keep residents informed — go door to door to inform the neighbours about the project. • Foster positive contact with local news outlets by making them aware of the project from the beginning and informing them throughout the process. • Obtain the support of the municipal councillor representing the jurisdiction.

Case	Successful strategies
Samakhi Housing Cooperative, Montréal East, Que.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with the municipal housing agencies and related agencies to keep them informed and thus to reduce concerns. • Draw on local political figures, if possible, because having a person act as an intermediary can assist in addressing some of the concerns of neighbours and make sure that the discussion remains constructive. • Make sure the approach is effective by selling the project well, by making sure the community is consulted and well-informed in the early stages. Be prepared to positively address negative stereotyping about social housing. • Letter-writing campaigns to local media and local government. • Avoid conflict with objectors so long-term success is not jeopardized.
Église St. Étienne, Montréal, Que.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At regular intervals, tell local media what is being done and what is coming. • As part of the public relations campaign, make sure that local councillors know what is going on at every step. When community residents have concerns, the first thing they do is phone their councillors. That makes it important that elected people know about the project. • Make people feel like they have input in the project and give them the right information at the right time, especially at first. First impressions are important and residents need good information from the beginning so as not to encourage conflict. • It is also important to carefully define the project before informing the public. Talking to the public too early can result in misleading information being passed along. • Identify potential opposition to a project early in the process. If possible, meet with these people ahead of any formal meetings to understand their objections and make them aware of the potential benefits. As a result, potential opposition can be reduced once information is provided. As well, those who still have objections are much more informed when they attend the formal meetings.
La Villa de l'avenir, Val-Bélair, Que.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the future residents to the objectors. • Lobby city council and start a petition to gather support for the project. • Be sure to share all information with residents in a timely manner. As well, be sure to involve them in the process so that they feel that their views have been considered.

Case	Successful strategies
Camden Park Cottages, Moncton, N.B.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify misconceptions as soon as possible to negate further negative publicity. • Develop a community relations plan that clearly sets out project objectives, its design and how the neighbourhood will be informed at each step in the development process. Share the plan with the residents in the neighbourhood. • Focus on the facts, not arguments. Deal proactively with individual complainants. Avoid dealing with opponents as a group. Do not let things get out of hand — rather, continually monitor issues and deal with them head-on. Being honest is important — stick to what you promise to do. • Identify the positive effects of the initiative from both a community and housing environment perspective. • Carrying out a good selection process for residents is helpful in ensuring the integrity of the project. Regularly monitor the project post-occupancy for any problems and be proactive in managing the look of the properties. • Early communications with key stakeholders are crucial. Most importantly, keep in touch with the local member of parliament early in the process to ensure communications from both sources are clear and consistent. • Plan for concerns raised at each step of implementation. Keep key concerns in mind; anticipate how these can be accommodated as the project rolls out and how communications can ensure no mixed messages. • Ensure early intervention with the city council to help avoid an adversarial relationship. • Provide information to better educate the broader community on the need for this kind of development. • Encourage the municipality to develop a clearly articulated municipal plan for affordable housing, including a vision of how to place and integrate such housing in the city; conditions for zoning and transportation links.
Abe Zakem House, Charlottetown, P.E.I.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be open to concerns as much as possible and play by the rules — if a public meeting is needed, make the best of this venue to hear concerns and make your case. • Anticipate and prepare for resistance. Some concerns can be allayed if resistance is anticipated. Think about holding informal meetings to hear and resolve concerns prior to any formal process. This may take some debate and conflict out of the public arena and lead to a less-adversarial situation. • Name the project to put a face on its values. The public may take notice of the development and what it stands for once it is named for a respected citizen.

Case	Successful strategies
Rawlins Cross, St. John's, N.L.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a community information strategy, use an evidence-based presentation to make the case, to allay concerns and to illustrate the potential to improve the neighbourhood — including making the architect and the design plans available. • Make use of linkages already established in the community. Organizations and people in the community already tend to work together well. Consequently, proponents may be able to depend on their links with the city and other community groups for support in making the case for a project. • Build credibility with the media and use it to get the message out to garner public support for the project. • Communicate early with residents and community stakeholders so they are not surprised by the project. This can be done through an informal meeting before the formal process or by having proponents go door-to-door. This helps proponents identify and address concerns ahead of any formal announcement. • Maintain momentum through regular communications if there are delays. An ongoing issue with some projects is the delay in funding approval. There is always a concern that projects can lose credibility because of delays that are outside the proponent's control. One strategy to offset this is regular communications with the neighbourhood about the status and continued commitment of the proponent.

The lessons from this research are clear. The key concepts centre on communication, inclusion, planning, anticipation of problems and persistence. The core strategies, central to any affordable housing project are:

Communication – early, open, frequent, clear and accurate: The key to any successful project is an open and honest communication with residents. The purpose of this communication is to:

- Demonstrate the value of the project.
- Create a transparent process.
- Provide an opportunity for community input – especially those who may object to the process.
- Maintain a regular flow of information and ensure as many people as possible are aware of the project.
- Build support through community connections – bring like-minded agencies together to support the project.
- Allay community concerns about the project.
- Focus on the facts not on the arguments.

The various strategies for community consultations include public meetings, one-on-one consultations, flyers/poster distribution and media exposure.

As well, the development of a communication strategy will assist community groups in preparing for objections to affordable housing projects.

Effective Use of the Media: The media is an effective tool in informing the public and combating NIMBY.

- Maintain regular contact with the media through news releases or articles to ensure the project is “front and centre” in the mind of the community.
- Positive exposure in the media can also bring credibility to a project.

Develop Relationships with Local Politicians: Both sides of NIMBY disputes draw on political influence in order to achieve their goals. The key for proponents is to:

- Consult with local politicians very early in the process to gauge support.
- Ensure that local politicians are informed of any “sensitive” issues and are updated throughout the process.
- If necessary, lobby for the support of local politicians through letter writing campaigns, attendance at council meetings and other community events.
- Identify political “champions” who can act as an intermediary.

Develop a Clear Plan: Many of the concerns by residents arise out of a lack of knowledge. As a result, developing a comprehensive plan can address these concerns.

- Ensure the plan is open to the public.
- Clearly define all aspects of the project prior to building.
- Make sure that the proponent team is aware of all requirements before starting the process.
- Develop a community relations and communication plan.
- Plan in advance for concerns that may be raised. If possible, address these concerns in early communications with the community.

Understand Your Community Process: While being open and honest can build credibility in the community, it is often necessary to work within existing community constraints in order to reduce delays.

- Understand existing zoning regulations and whenever possible work within them.
- Work with the city staff to identify potential pitfalls and seek their advice on how to address them.
- Work with those who have experienced NIMBY in the past.
- Have community agencies rather than government act as proponents. This reduces the opportunity for delays related to political influence.
- Understand local bylaws and how they can be used for (and against) the project.

Be Persistent: Probably more important than any other strategy is ensuring that proponents are aware that these types of projects take time. As a result, it is essential that supporting groups not only maintain momentum within their own organizations, but also within the community.

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