

NC STATE Design

HOUSING | CULTURE, POLICY, PRODUCTION

School of Architecture | Pappas Real Estate Development Program

Professor Thomas Barrie FAIA | Fall 2025

Hopping The Fence: Promoting YIMBYism in Raleigh

Andrew Runde
Jack Doncaster
Gargi Wadodkar

COMPLETED SINCE 2015

- \$1,944,804,161 investment
- 1,828,479 SF office space
- 3,451 residential units
- 521 hotel rooms
- 496,522 SF retail

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

- \$597,400,000 investment
- 1,44,410 SF office space
- 1,469 residential units
- 259 hotel rooms
- 93,745 SF retail

IN SITE PREPARATION

- \$870,000,000 investment
- 1,3,720 SF office space
- 2,044 residential units
- 149 hotel rooms
- 90,300 SF retail

PLANNED & PROPOSED

- \$3,286,950,000 investment
- 1,535,447 SF office space
- 4,796 residential units
- 1,300 hotel rooms
- 171,025 SF retail

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Hopping The Fence:

Promoting YIMBYism in Raleigh



Executive Summary

Following the trend in many other American cities, Raleigh’s population is growing without the housing stock to accommodate this expansion. Huge portions of the city are dedicated single-family-only zones, which limit housing density and raise prices or relegate new construction to the city outskirts. While many Raleigh residents support the development of new housing nearby, in practice there is still strong opposition from vocal political groups to the development of denser housing in or around Raleigh’s existing neighborhoods. This mentality and resistance to the inclusion of new alternative housing (known as NIMBYism) stems from a range of beliefs and perceptions about the effects of affordable housing. Affordable housing advocacy groups such as YIMBY - North Carolina Research Triangle and the Raleigh 2030 Plan organize positive support for new developments, but with NIMBYist communities holding the levers of power in many neighborhoods, this is an uphill battle. We believe the solution to overcome resistance rests in the silent majority between these standpoints. Many Raleigh residents may not be aware of the specifics of

the housing crisis, its causes, ways to support new housing, and the benefits that increased development can bring to their communities. Local NIMBYist groups like Livable Raleigh have had a long history of opposing new housing developments by dissenting at council hearings, lobbying politicians, and holding protests against rezoning, resulting in the death of many new projects. However, representation by pro-housing groups and individuals has seen some success in Raleigh in the opposite direction. Therefore, with an effective campaign to persuade the silent majority to familiarize themselves with existing pro-housing movements and to show support for new development at key hearings and rallies, we believe the trend of housing stagnation and sprawl can be reversed in Raleigh. Numerous case studies (e.g. Alexandria, VA) illustrate the benefits of affordable housing and contradict the fears and perceptions which underpin NIMBYism. Affordable housing projects in a variety of scales illustrate the possibilities for densification without sacrificing the “small-town” feel of the existing neighborhood fabric.

Research Questions

What is the public understanding of “typical” new housing developments and alternative housing? Is it accurate?

How can the silent majority in Raleigh be persuaded that new development and alternative housing is generally beneficial to neighborhoods (and should be advocated for)?

Glossary of Terms

NIMBYism: “Not In My Backyard-ism”; resistance or objection to development of certain projects (often multifamily alternative housing or new development) in one’s local community.

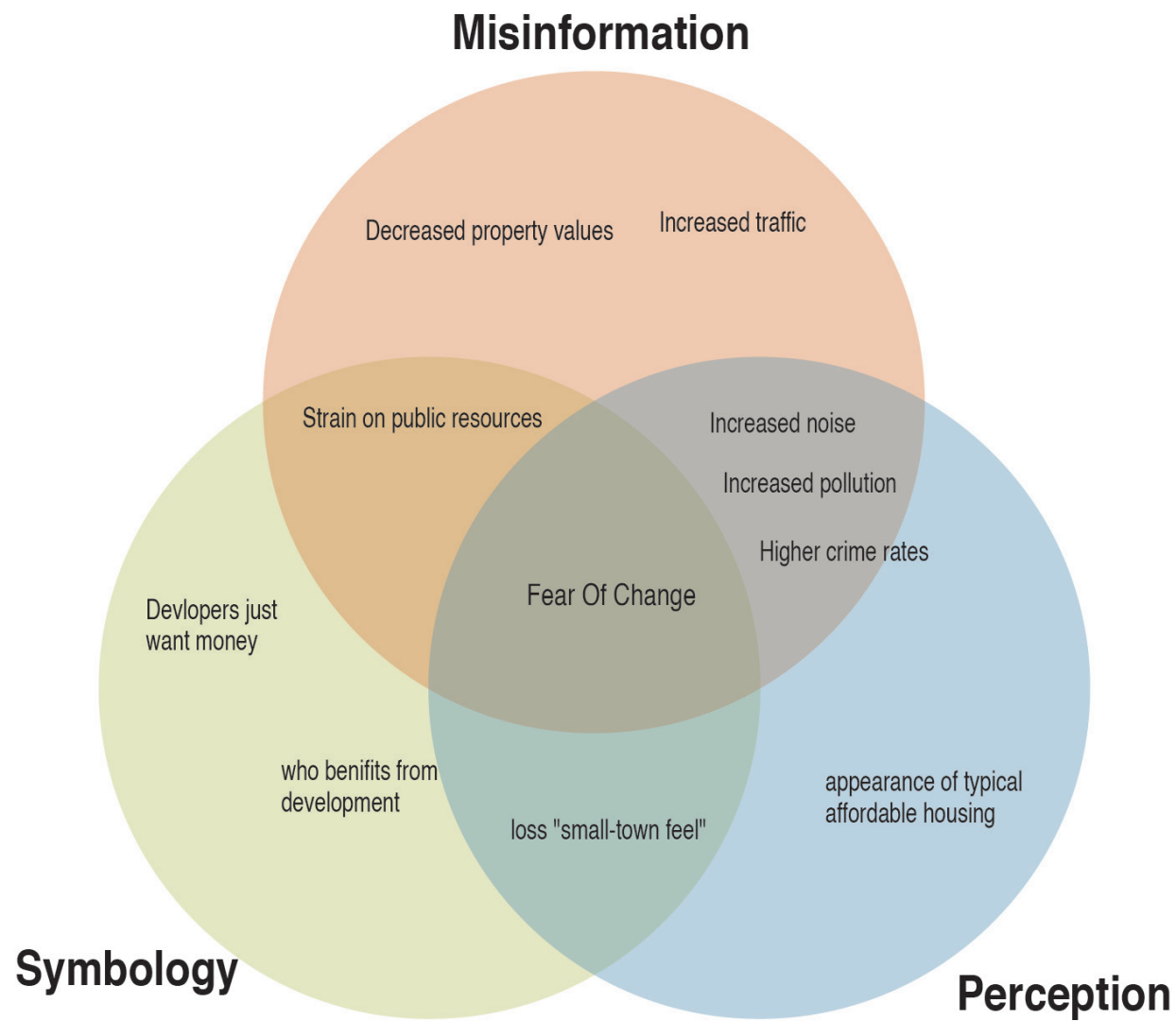
YIMBYism: “Yes In My Backyard-ism”; a pro-housing movement that encourages housing development, opposes zoned density limits, and supports public transportation.



Defining The Problem

Like many American cities, Raleigh’s population is growing without the housing stock to accommodate this expansion. While many Raleigh residents support the development of new

housing nearby, fear of change in local communities has created a history of powerful groups killing new projects in their neighborhoods, relegating them to the Raleigh city limits.



Reasons For Nimbyism

The pushback against new development and construction, even when it's beneficial, is FEAR. People fear change, and change is what development is at its core. Development changes the urban fabric and creates new opportunities; however, this change shakes up the status quo. This fear of change can be broken into 3 main categories being Misinformation, Perception, and Symbolism. Many of the complaints put forth by NIMBYist can be nicely put into these categories.

Misinformation: this category often includes stats and figures that are incorrect or

misinterpreted. People often spread this false information, creating widespread issues.

Perception: This is what people think of when they hear words like construction and development. These images that come to mind often don't align with the reality of new construction or development.

Symbolism: NIMBYism is not merely synonymous with supporters of one political party or the other, nor with homeowners and renters. In general, regardless of political affiliation or homeownership/rentership status.

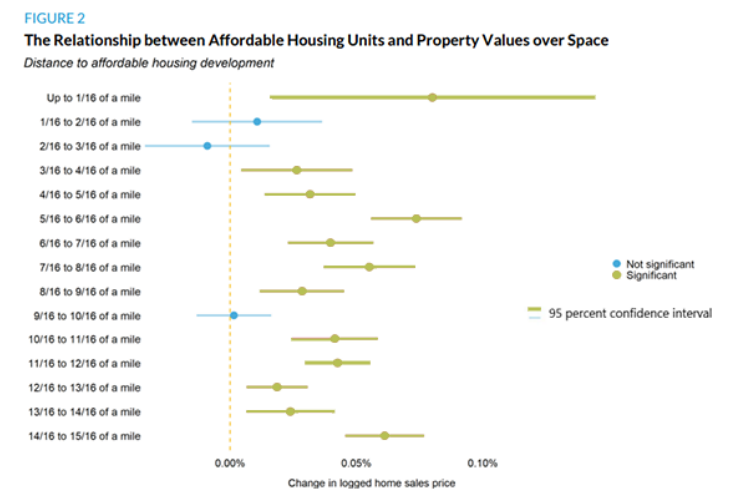
Misinformation]

A common thread from individuals and groups that oppose new development (and Affordable housing, in particular) is the fear that introducing these developments will increase local crime,

strain infrastructure and parking, and decrease local property values. However, in examining city case studies that incorporated new developments, we can see that these common fears could not be further from the truth.

Alexandria, VA - Urban Institute Study

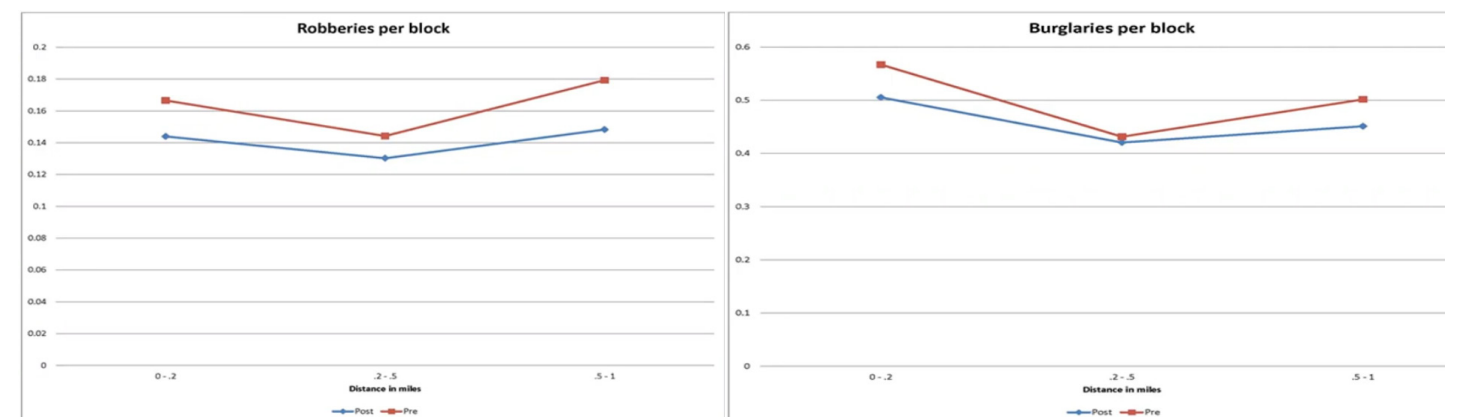
Alexandria, Virginia marks the “gold standard” for case studies that demonstrate affordable housing can work without any destructive repercussions to property values. The Urban Institute in Alexandria analyzed Zillow housing data around the city between the years 2000 - 2020, with a focus on the housing costs for properties surrounding new developed housing. What the Urban Institute actually found is a slight positive correlation for home values surrounding affordable housing - however, the key finding is that there was no observable negative impact to housing values.



Orange County, CA - Livable Cities Lab Study

Another case study in Orange County, CA examined the correlation between affordable housing development and crime rates. Contrary to people's fears, at the county level there was a slight decrease in non-violent crimes after the

introduction of new affordable housing. Once again, the key finding in this case study is that there was no observable negative impact to the community in terms of added crime.



Preception

A negative perception can halt a project before it even begins. Often, people have an idea of what words like devel-

What Nimbyist Think

Affordable housing and New development are some of the most controversial words. Affordable housing is often considered to be a very negative thing. Words that are commonly associated with affordable housing are



The Reality

This negative perception isn't an authentic representation of Affordable housing and Development. Affordable housing can, in reality, be new well well-maintained, and beautiful with countless amenities. Affordable housing can even fit com-



opment or affordable housing look like; however, this perception doesn't match reality.

cheap, dilapidated, low budget, dangerous, and rundown. Development also has negative associations. Words like large, imposing, destructive, expensive, unnatural, and not fitting in.



fortably in smaller neighborhoods. New development in reality can fit quite comfortably in small town contexts. New development can create new living opportunities, and in reality, it is any new construction that is helpful.



Symbology

The opposition isn't so black and white; anyone could become a NIMBY. Both renters and homeowners have similar opinions on development, sharing general support for increased density in already heavily developed cities, and sharing anti-development sentiment

in suburbs and smaller historic cities. Many people who are anti-development also do not want development in communities far away, not only nearby in their backyard. This shows how fear makes anti-development sentiments hard to track.

The Loop at Mattapan Station, Mattapan, Boston

Often Nimbyist Fear manifests in the form of buzz words; An article by Yale ISPS 1 explores the idea that opposition to housing comes from the fear of ideas such as Developers, Development, and Affordable housing. As soon as these words become attached to a project, people are active to oppose the project.

One project located in Mattapan, Boston, found a clever workaround to help approve the project. The Loop at Mattapan Station is



a mixed-use project that explicitly includes units labeled as "workforce housing" alongside deeper affordable units to meet Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) restrictions and local priorities. Using a mix of labels and income bands helped get financing and political support; inclusion of workforce units made the overall project financeable while still delivering lower-AMI (affordable median income) units.



Who Benefits?

The people who rely on affordable housing are not strangers or outsiders; they're often the very people who already make our communities thrive! They're teacher who educate our children, nurses who care for our loved ones, firefighters and police officers who keep our city safe, and young professionals trying to start their careers in the very places they serve.

Cost of Living in Raleigh:	Forbes Data:
Home Price	\$454,048 Down payment
Rent	\$1,498 / mo
Raleigh Salary Snapshot:	ZipRecruiter Data:
Firefighters	\$57,942 / yr
Nurses (RN)	\$82,000 / yr
Police Officers	\$58,936 / yr
Teachers	\$45,286 / yr
Paramedics	\$52,000 / yr
Delivery Drivers	\$36,000 / yr

Local Yimby empowerment

With Raleigh's 2030 city plan, one of the first high-rise buildings set to be erected sparked a large amount of controversy. At the corner of West and Peace Streets, a 30-story mixed-use development was proposed.



The main point of contention with this project is its size and proximity to a neighborhood of townhouses and single-family homes. Resident of the neighborhood took to voicing their concerns through protest, lawn signs, and speaking at town hall meetings. While these NIMBYist were vocally organizing, YIM-



BYists were silently working to activate people in support of the development. By advocating and educating those on the fence, yimbys were able to convey the importance of Raleigh's need to expand. This massive wave of support ultimately allowed the rezoning development to pass.

What Can You Do?



Education:

The best you can do is to educate yourself and others. Have an open mind and do a re-read of the city's plans and the proposed designs that make up those city plans. When interacting with others, use facts that have evidence and are easily digestible with reputable sources.



Involvement:

The easiest way to get involved is to vote. Beyond voting, advocating, and openly supporting new development through signage, flyers, and other means to spread awareness. Attending your local city council meeting and speaking, or just showing support. Donating to local YIMBY organizations can also help in major ways.



Transparency:

All phases of design and city planning should be made public information. Helping the average citizen digest and understand the technical language used in these meetings and documents will allow informed decisions to be made properly. Attending meetings in response to new developments is the best way to learn and understand a project.

KNOWLEDGE INVOLVEMENT TRANSPARENCY FEAR OF CHANGE Local YIMBYism

YIMBYism Chapter in Raleigh (NC Research Triangle)

What YIMBY NCRT Focuses On:

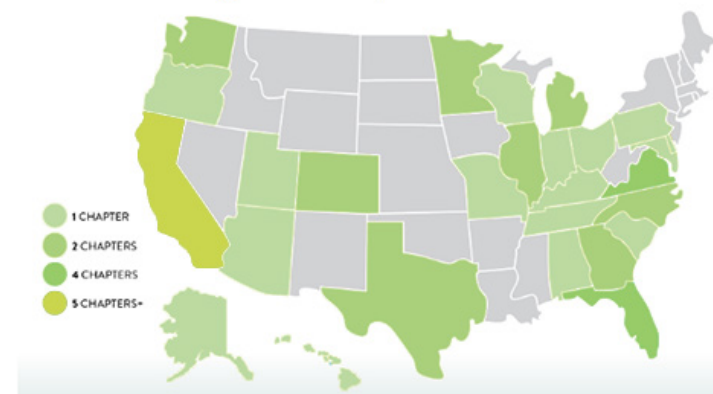
- *Local Politician Endorsements
Includes explanations of housing stances and platforms
- *Oppose Exclusionary Zoning
YIMBY NCRT highlights that this practice bans Missing Middle housing in Raleigh communities.
- *Advocate for Demolition Controls:
Require builders tearing down housing to construct new housing to provide as many or more units.
- *Revise Tax Incentives for Housing
Currently minimal and mostly benefit non-housing building types
- Streamline housing permitting

NC Research Triangle

A chapter of YIMBY Action that is dedicated to advocating for housing solutions in the Research Triangle region, including Raleigh, Durham, and surrounding areas.



72 Chapters in 28 States (Including 19 new chapters across 10 states.)



The national YIMBY action organization

This organization stretches nationwide connecting with multiple chapters and other organizations. Notable chapters are located in Clear Water Utah, San Francisco California, Alexandria Virginia. Their mission statement is "We partner with community organizations nationwide to pass pro-housing laws, get housing proposals approved and permitted, and support the election and appointment of pro-housing leaders at all levels of government."

How Fear of Change Fuels the Housing Crisis, OP ED

Across America, an insidious fear of change is deepening the housing crisis. Known as NIMBYism, short for “Not In My Back-Yard,” this mindset pushes that housing development may be necessary, but just not near me. Often framed as a desire to protect the “neighborhood character,” NIMBYism has become one of the most powerful barriers to creating affordable and inclusive communities.

At its core, NIMBYism is a paradox of modern urban life in America. People demand affordable housing, walkable neighborhoods, and better public transit, yet oppose the very projects that make those things possible. When new apartment buildings, duplexes or even accessory dwelling units are proposed, they often face fierce opposition at public hearings. Opponents may argue that such development will cause an increase in traffic, strain local infrastructure, or, most commonly, “bring down our property value.” However, at the root of these specific objections lies a fear of change and, too often, unspoken class or racial biases.

The truth is that introducing new affordable housing poses no threat to a community’s stability or safety. On the contrary, it’s what keeps our community alive and vibrant. The people who rely on affordable housing are not strangers or community outsiders; they’re the teachers who educate our children, nurses who care for our loved ones, firefighters and police officers

who keep our communities safe, and young professionals beginning their careers to serve their community. They are the very people that make our neighborhoods thrive!

When residents fight proposals for affordable or mixed-income housing, they’re not preserving their community; they’re pushing out the people who help our communities function. Families looking to save up for their first home can’t find entry-level housing because of zoning restrictions or neighborhood opposition, which prevents it from ever being built. Young adults are forced to move further away where rent is affordable, spending hours commuting, now placing a strain on infrastructure through increased traffic. Over time, the preserved neighborhoods become homogeneous enclaves of aging homeowners, voluntarily disconnected from the social and economic diversity that once made their neighborhoods vibrant and safe.

Such aversion to change has tangible, harmful consequences. In Raleigh and across the United States, cities are failing to build enough homes to support the growing population. Recent housing studies suggest that many metropolitan areas would need to double their annual housing production just to keep pace with the population, yet these projects are delayed or canceled due to zoning laws, lawsuits, and public opposition. The result is a bottleneck, with fewer homes and higher prices, widening economic inequality. Ironically, NIMBYism even harms its advocates. servants can no

longer afford to live within the community they serve. When the housing supply bottlenecks, costs rise for everyone including longtime residents through increased property taxes. Small businesses struggle to find workers who can afford to live nearby, forcing longtime residents to drive further to reach essential services, and younger generations are priced out of the city altogether. The “small-town feel” that residents fight to preserve becomes unsustainable when teachers, baristas, EMTs, and public

Cities like Raleigh, San Francisco, and Boston have begun to recognize this. Through zoning reform and advocacy, these cities are taking steps to reframe density as a tool for sustainability and accessibility, not congestion. Nonetheless, these efforts still face uphill battles against a deeply rooted mindset that equates change with loss. We must begin to see new development not as an invasion, but as an evolution. Cities are living systems that grow, adapt, and respond to the needs of their citizens. To resist that growth is to kill the city.

Affordable housing doesn’t lower the value of neighborhoods. By supporting people of all backgrounds in our communities, affordable housing brings vitality, diversity, and opportunity. A street filled with diverse peoples and backgrounds is one where local shops thrive, where schools stay staffed and attended, and where communities remain dynamic rather than static. When we talk about affordability, we’re talking about access, the ability for people from

all walks of life to live, work, and belong in the same place.

To those who say, “Change is fine, just not here,” we ask: if not here, then where? Every neighborhood that refuses new growth pushes that responsibility elsewhere, until nowhere remains. The housing crisis is not caused by one bad development, but by thousands of small refusals. Each “no” to a proposed apartment or duplex is, in effect, a “no” to someone’s future in that community, and “no” to the services they could bring.

Overcoming NIMBYism requires more than new policies; it demands imagination and empathy. We must recognize that affordability is not charity, but infrastructure. Housing is what allows the people who make our cities function to stay in them. It’s the foundation of economic resilience and social connection.

Change will come, whether we invite it or not. The choice then is whether our communities are reshaped by fear or reason. To promote cities that are vibrant, livable, and equitable, we must learn to see growth not as a threat, but as an act of care for our neighbors, for our workforce, and for future generations.

The housing crisis isn’t just a failure of policy; it’s a failure of imagination. And until we overcome our fear of change, the solution will remain just outside our backyards.

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