

## Yes, In My Backyard: Identifying Strategies to Overcome NIMBY and Promote Community Housing

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The “Not In My Backyard” (NIMBY) phenomenon can create an impediment to developing mental health housing units in communities. Under NYNY3, a historic expansion of resources has been dedicated to developing supported housing units, but community opposition has created an impediment to construction of housing units. The authors conducted a series of focused interviews to explore NIMBY issues with multiple stakeholders including (1) housing providers, (2) consumers and families, and (3) community representatives. Specifically, the focus groups explored attitudes and experiences related to building housing units for people with mental illness in communities, and strategies for dealing with opposition.

Focus group findings will be presented and discussed. The first theme was proactive/ongoing engagement and relationship building: panelists recommended engaging communities proactively and persistently, becoming recognized in the community, and involving elected officials. The second theme was developing and marketing proposals that offer benefits to the community, including creating mixed models, giving communities a say in how your facilities are developed, finding out what members of the community need and offering them something in return, anticipating funding complexities with mixed models, employing people from the community, and being aware of competing alternatives from other developers. The third theme was managing opposition: interviewees recommended preparing for intensity of community opposition, managing negative communications, recruiting members of your target population to help when appropriate, and addressing multiple types of stakeholders. Finally, the fourth theme was fighting stigma: suggestions included positive reframing, knowing the facts, countering misinformation, using appropriate language, and developing public relations strategies. Focus group findings have been used to develop technical assistance materials to train and support housing providers in the development of new supportive housing units.