

# Approaches to Social Inclusion, Community Resilience, and Homelessness in the Context of Emerging Asocial Societies

## KNOWLEDGE SYNTHESIS GRANT

### FINAL REPORT

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Prepared for the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada

SSHRC Grant # 872-2021-0053

November 7, 2022

The *Approaches to Social Inclusion, Community Resilience, and Homelessness in the Context of Emerging Asocial Societies* knowledge synthesis is co-funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and Employment and Social Development Canada.

La synthèse des connaissances *Approaches to Social Inclusion, Community Resilience, and Homelessness in the Context of Emerging Asocial Societies* est cofinancée par le Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines et Emploi et développement social Canada.



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada



Hub Solutions is a social enterprise embedded within the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (COH). Income generated from Hub Solutions fee-for-service work is reinvested into the COH to support research, innovation, policy recommendations and knowledge mobilization.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 4 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

4	<b>BACKGROUND</b>	6	<b>RESULTS</b>
5	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	7	<b>KEY MESSAGES</b>
5	<b>METHODS</b>		

## 8 FULL REPORT

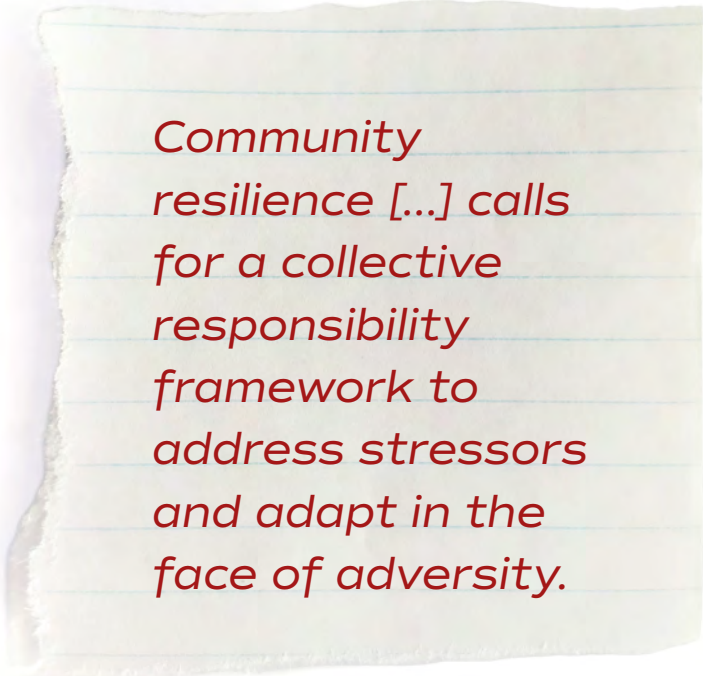
8	<b>BACKGROUND</b>	36	<b>COMMUNITY RESILIENCE</b>
9	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	37	Defining Community Resilience
11	<b>METHODS</b>	38	Structural Level Construct and Framework
14	<b>NIMBYISM</b>		
15	Defining NIMBYism and Its Core Assumptions	41	Individual and Community Level Construct And Framework
18	Dispelling NIMBY Assumptions	43	Meso-Level Construct and Framework
21	Homelessness and NIMBY Discourses	45	Programming for Promoting Community Resilience
23	NIMBYism and Inequality		
23	The Effects of NIMBYism on Public Policy	47	<b>KEY MESSAGES FOR POLICY, PRACTICE, AND RESEARCH</b>
26	<b>YIMBYISM</b>	50	<b>CONCLUSION</b>
26	Defining YIMBYism	51	Core Findings
29	Participatory Urban Governance	52	Future Research Areas
31	Examples of Successful YIMBY Campaigns	53	<b>KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION ACTIVITIES</b>
32	Promoting YIMBYism Through Media	54	<b>REFERENCES</b>
34	Critiques Of YIMBYism		

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## BACKGROUND

Over the last decade, Canada has made significant leaps in its effort to prevent and end homelessness, situating homelessness as a predominantly structural problem rather than one of individual failings (e.g., Housing First model) (Goering & Streiner, 2015; A. Smith, 2022). However, less focus has been placed on the social inclusion of people experiencing homelessness. Perceptions of and responses to homelessness are deeply contentious and can have a negative impact on community pride, sense of belonging, and the ability of people from different social locations within the community to get along (Kulig et al., 2013). Ultimately, these tensions undermine the ability of communities to adopt a community resilience approach that calls for a collective responsibility framework to address stressors and adapt in the face of adversity.

At the core of these tensions is NIMBYism (“Not in my Backyard”), which is deeply rooted in the idea that people who are homeless ought to be removed from public spaces. NIMBYism contributes to a cycle of stigma, displacement, and disruption of access to services and supports for people experiencing homelessness (Lyon-Callo, 2001), ultimately impeding social change. NIMBYism has been deemed a fundamental challenge to the right to affordable housing, as economic and social policies that are geared toward preserving property values exist at the expense of effective affordable social housing policies (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2012). In part because of these tensions, efforts to advance social inclusion are often secondary considerations for governments. Research conducted on NIMBYism and homelessness are produced in disciplinary silos (Oudshoorn, 2020), inhibiting the development of a comprehensive understanding of homelessness and negatively impacting our understanding of NIMBYism and how discourses concerning homelessness are created, perpetuated, and resisted.



*Community resilience [...] calls for a collective responsibility framework to address stressors and adapt in the face of adversity.*

Grassroots and community organizations work to counter NIMBY narratives of homelessness by advocating for compassionate and sustainable approaches to address the intersecting, systemic factors that contribute to homelessness (Fraser et al., 2019; Gibson, 2005; Scally, 2013). This movement, coined YIMBYism (“Yes in My Backyard”), centres on policies and practices that promote affordable and equitable housing for all (Stahl, 2018). YIMBYism can help to overcome NIMBY contentions and work to facilitate and foster community resilience if it is rooted in a meaningful commitment to creating diverse communities. Further, resilient communities, those that move beyond an individual community and take a “holistic view” toward the “global community,” make it “impossible for any individual to believe that they are not worthy of every consideration and support to be fully functioning, empowered community members” (Flaherty et al., 2019, p. 27). In this way, resilient communities and the prioritization of social inclusion can inform, foster, and support YIMBY-driven initiatives.

## **OBJECTIVES**

This literature review fills two significant gaps. First, it offers a meaningful synthesis of the existing literature on NIMBYism and YIMBYism that allows us to highlight the pragmatic ways communities fight against social exclusion and isolation. Second, it identifies key literature gaps and offers a comprehensive summary of strategies that address social exclusion and promote community resilience. Our scoping literature review sought to synthesize peer-reviewed academic literature contributions as well as grey literatures in the following three areas related to homelessness: (1) NIMBY discourses, narratives, and policies, (2) YIMBY and social inclusion discourses, narratives, and policies, and (3) current practices, iterations, and conceptual contributions related to community resilience.

## **METHODS**

The research team employed a scoping literature review strategy to collect, analyze, and synthesize critical action research on homelessness (e.g., Abramovich, 2017) and on practices that both contribute to and counter the narratives associated with NIMBYism and YIMBYism, as well as on the development of community resilience. We conducted a search of academic and grey literature using 14 keyword combinations related to our four key terms of “NIMBY,” “YIMBY,” “community resilience,” and “homelessness.” After removing duplicates and screening papers using a series of inclusion and exclusion criteria, we were left with 191 articles, which form the basis of this knowledge synthesis report.

## RESULTS

The existing NIMBY literature highlights the adverse effects that NIMBY narratives can have on policies and practices designed to address homelessness. NIMBYism refers to local opposition toward land uses that generally contribute to the public good but are considered to negatively influence the quality of life of local residents (Christiansen et al., 2019). NIMBYism is predominantly based on concerns regarding declining property values, preserving neighbourhood characteristics, increasing crime, protecting personal safety, and preventing infrastructure strain (Gipson, 2020; Hanson et al., 2015). These attitudes affect public policy decisions by blocking, delaying, and shutting down housing developments (Glovin, 2021). However, these assumptions are largely dispelled in the literature, demonstrating that NIMBY attitudes reinforce inequalities related to class, race, gender, and ability (McNee & Pojani, 2022).



The YIMBY movement, on the contrary, focuses on meeting the needs of all community residents, regardless of social location, and promotes affordable housing (Coy, 2018; Dej et al., 2020). For YIMBY campaigns to be successful, active support from a range of community members is required. According to the available literature, council meetings provide a setting for people to voice their support for, or concerns about, housing developments (Tapp, 2021). Media can be a tool to better educate and build support for housing developments (Dinh et al., 2018). However, a few common critiques of YIMBYism do exist, and these include the lack of a standardized approach to address housing shortages, the invisibilization of advocacy groups that focus on the displacement of racial minorities, and gentrification (Ford & Scheutz, 2019; Meronek, 2018; Rodriguez-Pose & Storper, 2020).

YIMBY-informed discourses and policies can help facilitate and foster community resilience. Community resilience is described at a structural level as an individual trait and as a meso-level construct in order to focus on the interplay between structural and individual factors in shaping community resilience (Dej et al., 2021). As such, we highlight the importance of multi-sector cooperation and the inclusion of marginalized populations for developing policies and practices that foster and support long-term community resilience.



## KEY MESSAGES

Our review of the literature highlights conceptual and practical approaches that can be used by policymakers, practitioners, and researchers to address NIMBYism, develop inclusive and equitable YIMBY strategies, and promote community resilience and belonging. The key messages from this review include:

- (1) *All orders of government should empower community organizations to play an influential role in shaping YIMBY policies by providing funding and resources to do this work.*
- (2) *All orders of government must develop housing policies that meet the needs of people from varying ages, races, ethnicities, genders, and abilities and that these factors are given meaningful consideration early on.*
- (3) *All orders of government must recognize homelessness and housing unaffordability as a crisis to expedite multi-tiered responses and combat NIMBYism.*
- (4) *Lived experts of homelessness should be consulted at every stage of the urban planning process to inform best practices related to housing, service provision, and infrastructural supports.*
- (5) *Funding agencies must provide reliable funding streams for programs that foster and promote community resilience, especially ones related to urban design.*
- (6) *Governments and policy-makers must develop creative ways of educating the public on housing and homelessness that can have a strong influence over public opinion on housing policy.*
- (7) *Promoting YIMBYism requires a multi-sector coalition, and as such all orders of government should actively consult organizations dedicated to YIMBY principles on the best ways to address community needs.*
- (8) *Policy-makers and service managers must develop holistic responses to housing needs that prioritize not only the construction of units but also strategies to foster community belonging and social inclusion.*

# FULL REPORT

## BACKGROUND

Homelessness is a “wicked social problem” in that how communities make sense of homelessness is fluid, multiple positions and stakeholders are involved, the problem is connected with other social problems (poverty, colonization, discrimination, etc.), and solutions are difficult to come by (Skaburskis, 2008). Over the last decade, Canada has made significant leaps in its effort to prevent and end homelessness, including funding and prioritizing the Housing First model (Goering & Streiner, 2015), legislating housing as a human right, and increasing federal funding to address homelessness during the pandemic. Despite these gains in situating homelessness as a predominantly structural problem rather than one of individual failing, people experiencing homelessness continue to face social exclusion.

People who are homeless face multiple and intersecting forms of exclusion, ranging from criminalization (Herring, 2021; Sylvestre, 2010), to being made to feel unwelcome in private and public spaces through intimidation, to being rendered invisible. As homelessness becomes more visible in communities across the country, we are witnessing a growing divisiveness in the narratives about people experiencing homelessness and city responses (Dej, 2020). Perceptions of homelessness, discussions about who belongs in the community, and the official and unofficial responses to homelessness are deeply contentious. Such contentions have a negative impact on community pride, people’s sense of belonging, the ability to get along, and social inclusion (Kulig et al., 2013). Ultimately, these tensions undermine community resilience, that is, the adoption of a collective responsibility framework to address stressors and adapt in the face of adversity (Buikstra et al., 2010).

*As homelessness becomes more visible in communities across the country, we are witnessing a growing divisiveness in the narratives about people experiencing homelessness and city responses.*



At the core of these tensions is NIMBYism (“Not in my Backyard”). NIMBYism is deeply rooted in the idea that homeless and street-involved people ought to be removed from public spaces. NIMBYism contributes to a cycle of stigma, displacement, and disruption of access to services and supports (Lyon-Callo, 2001). NIMBY discourses create impediments to social change. For example, the Ontario Human Rights Commission identifies NIMBYism as a fundamental challenge to the right to affordable housing, citing how economic and social policies geared toward preserving the wealth of existing property owners stifles the prospect of effective affordable social housing policies (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2012). Yet, efforts to advance social inclusion are often secondary considerations when an overburdened and under-resourced sector struggles to find housing and provide support to people in need. This means that even people who can successfully exit homelessness continue to face isolation and community rejection, which can undermine their housing stability and lead to cycles of homelessness (Kidd et al., 2016; Neale & Brown, 2016; Thulien, 2017; Voronka et al., 2014).

While the intersecting and contributing factors of NIMBYism are documented across various sectors and related to a range of issues, from wind energy to supportive housing development, each discipline produces literature in their respective silos, which prevents information sharing and causes the development of evidence-based sustainable practices and policies to address NIMBYism to stagnate. We also know that research on homelessness helps to inform understandings of NIMBYism. Yet, similar to research on NIMBYism, research on homelessness is also produced in silos (Oudshoorn, 2020). These disciplinary silos not only inhibit researchers and practitioners from developing a comprehensive understanding of homelessness, they also negatively impact our understanding of NIMBYism and the ways in which NIMBY discourses concerning homelessness are created, perpetuated, and resisted.

## **OBJECTIVES**

While the NIMBY narrative tends to dominate and shape how the public understands issues of homelessness (McNee & Pojani, 2022), grassroots and community organizations have countered this by advocating for compassionate and sustainable approaches to addressing the intersecting and systemic factors that contribute to homelessness (Fraser et al., 2019; Gibson, 2005; Scally, 2013). This movement has been coined YIMBYism (“Yes in My Backyard”), and centres on policies and discourses that promote affordable and equitable housing for all (Stahl, 2018). To date, no studies have conducted a comprehensive literature review related to YIMBYism or techniques for promoting community resilience.

Thus, this project will be the first to offer a comprehensive review of multidisciplinary literatures on NIMBYism and YIMBYism in concert with an analysis of the underexplored area of promoting community resilience in the face of techniques of social and physical exclusion.

This literature review offers a meaningful synthesis of existing literatures on NIMBYism and YIMBYism that will ultimately allow us to highlight pragmatic ways in which communities fight against social exclusion and isolation. This project also provides an important synthesis of grey literatures produced by community organizations in Canada and internationally, highlighting how they complement and contribute to academic and policy research on homelessness and community resilience.



***Our scoping review synthesizes peer-reviewed academic and grey literature contributions in the following three areas related to homelessness:*** (1) NIMBY discourses, narratives, and policies, (2) YIMBY and social inclusion discourses, narratives, and policies, and (3) current practices, iterations, and conceptual or theoretical contributions related to community resilience. ***The following questions guide this knowledge synthesis review:***

- (1)** How does the literature on NIMBYism articulate the problem of anti-homelessness, and how have researchers charted the movement's effects (if any) on public policy?
- (2)** What policies—both domestically and internationally—have been identified in literature as contributing to or challenging social exclusion, and how have researchers and practitioners assessed these legal and regulatory frameworks?
- (3)** What are effective and promising YIMBY approaches that promote and foster community resilience, and what factors contribute to their success?

## **METHODS**

A scoping literature review strategy was employed to collect, analyze, and synthesize critical action research on homelessness (e.g., Abramovich, 2017). We drew upon both academic and grey literatures to analyze evidence-based practices that both contribute to and counter the narratives associated with NIMBYism and YIMBYism as well as the development of community resilience. Scoping reviews are used to map a body of literature in relation to location (e.g., country), source (e.g., peer-reviewed articles or grey literature), and academic field (e.g., homelessness) (Peters et al., 2015). Unlike a systematic literature review, which synthesizes a substantial amount of literature to answer a specific research question, scoping reviews seek to examine a “broader area to identify gaps in the research knowledge base, clarify key concepts, and report on the types of evidence that address and inform practice in the field” (Peters et al., 2015, p. 142). Scoping reviews are therefore beneficial for informing evidence-based practice and for analyzing bodies of literature that are large, diverse, and complex or of which a comprehensive review has not yet been conducted (Peters et al., 2015). Implementing a similar method as that outlined by Peters et al. (2015), our scoping review consisted of the following steps:

### **ACADEMIC LITERATURE SEARCH**

We commenced our search by developing a list of search terms related to our four key terms of “NIMBY,” “YIMBY,” “community resilience,” and “homelessness.” Keyword combinations that were searched are overviewed in Table 1, below. Search terms were inputted into OMNI, Laurier’s multidisciplinary library catalogue, which searches across several large databases, including EBSCOHost, Proquest, etc. Corresponding information of all search results were uploaded to a tracking spreadsheet including the search terms utilized, database, author, journal/source, year, and full APA citation. Our search returned over 2,500 results, of which 1,724 remained after the removal of duplicates.

### **GREY LITERATURE SEARCH**

A similar process as above was utilized to search the grey literature. The same search terms were inputted into Google alongside additional terms such as “report” or “not-for-profit” to return reports and documents produced by research institutes, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community groups. Corresponding information of all search results was uploaded to a spreadsheet, including the search terms utilized, database, author, journal/source, year, and full APA citation. Our search returned 110 results with no duplicates.

## ABSTRACT AND FULL ARTICLE SCREENING

Search results (total n = 1829, comprised of n = 1724 from the academic literature search and n = 105 from the grey literature search) were divided amongst the research team, who then read the abstracts to determine which articles were relevant to our research objectives for synthesis in the final report. At this stage, duplicates were removed, and articles related to homelessness, housing, NIMBY, YIMBY, and community resilience that were published in 2012 or later were included. Articles in languages other than English were excluded. Inclusion or exclusion decisions, including the reasons for inclusion or exclusion, were recorded in the tracking spreadsheet. A total of 1162 records were excluded at this stage, with 562 records remaining.

TABLE 1. **Keyword Combinations Searched**

<b>THEME</b>	<b>KEYWORD COMBINATION</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
NIMBY	“Not in my Backyard” AND homeless*	218
	“NIMBY syndrome” AND homelessness	84
	“Not in my Backyard” OR NIMBY AND encampment*	73
	“Not in my Backyard” OR NIMBY AND (“grassroots organizing” OR “grassroots movement”)	11
	“Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything”	105
	“Not in my Backyard” AND homelessness AND policy	176
YIMBY	“Yes in my Backyard”	215
	“Yes in my Backyard” AND public policy	44
	“Yes in my Backyard” AND homelessness	18
	“Yes in my Backyard” AND (grassroots organizing OR grassroots movements)	5
Community Resilience	“Community resilienc*” OR “community belonging” AND homeless*	594
	“Community resiliency” AND encampments	47
	“Community resiliency” AND “housing crisis”	70
	“Asset based community development” AND homelessness	64

The remaining articles and reports were then divided amongst the research team for a full article screening. A stricter set of inclusion criteria was employed to ensure that only articles relevant to the research objectives would be included in the synthesis for the final report. At this stage, all articles related to NIMBY and YIMBY in the context of homelessness were included, as well as articles pertaining to community resilience in the context of homelessness or housing. Articles discussing homelessness or housing in general (i.e., unrelated to enhancing social inclusion) were excluded, as were articles dealing with community resilience in the context of disaster management, environmental sustainability, and crisis management (total excluded  $n = 428$ ).

Following all exclusions, a total of 191 records were read and synthesized for this report ( $n = 124$  from the academic literature search;  $n = 10$  from the grey literature search; and  $n = 57$  from consultations with experts in the field and scanning reference pages of articles selected for inclusion).



# NIMBYISM

Ending homelessness not only means providing housing; it requires meaningful social integration. While what constitutes a sense of social inclusion is unique to everyone, it can be described as a condition whereby people no longer have to live in survival mode, struggling to have enough food on the table and rent at the end of the month, where they have a sense of personal independence, community belonging, and overall well-being (Dej, 2020). Arguably, one of the most significant barriers to achieving social inclusion, and thereby preventing and ending homelessness, is NIMBYism. Local public opposition to people who are homeless and organizations that serve them has had a detrimental effect on the ability of support organizations and emergency shelters to deliver services and affordable and supportive housing developments. Most importantly it creates enormous barriers for people experiencing homelessness to find and nourish spaces of belonging. Despite calls from the public to do something about visible homelessness, attempts to provide housing and supports are often resoundingly objected to by those same community members (Clifford & Piston,

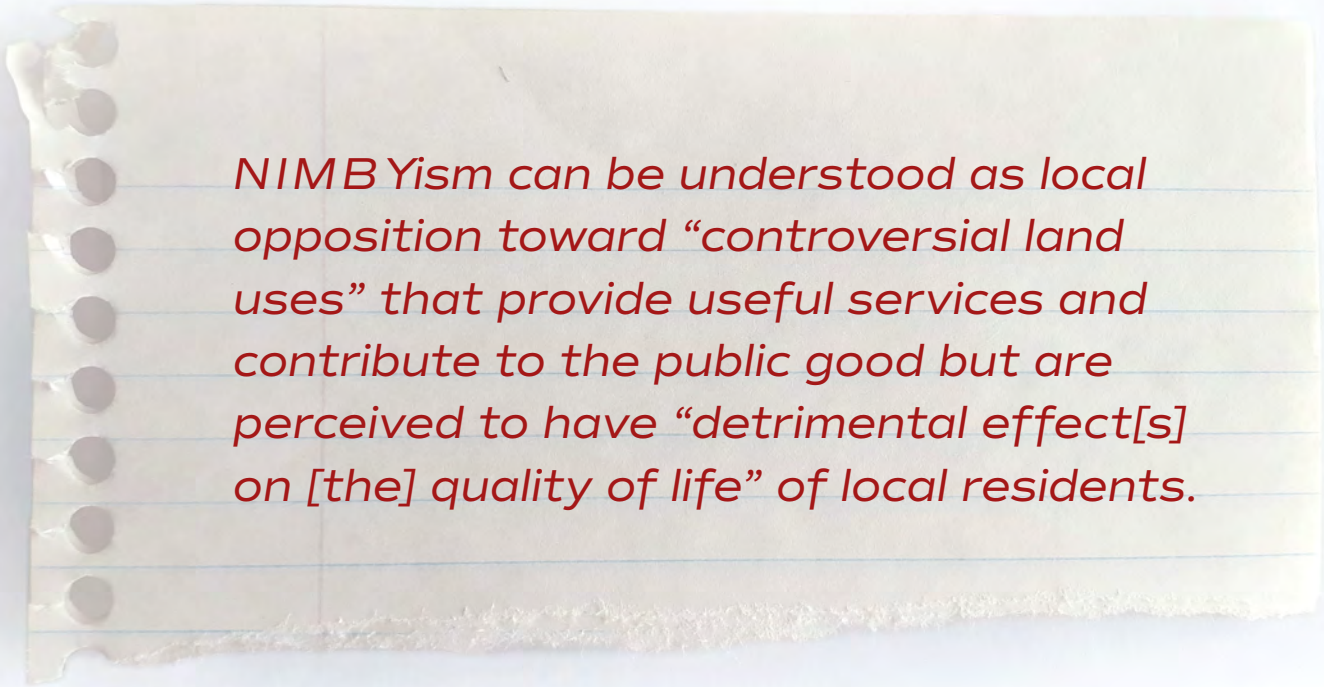


2017). NIMBY rhetoric permeates public discourses about homelessness (Calder et al., 2011) and creates an environment where people who are homeless experience stigmatization, expulsion from the community, and even violence.

NIMBYism contributes to the social exclusion of people who have experienced homelessness.

When NIMBY rhetoric overwhelms the public narrative, it has detrimental effects on policies and practices designed to reduce and ultimately end homelessness. First, it presents the NIMBY narrative as the accepted viewpoint on homelessness in a community, leaving little room for differing perspectives. It also disregards the ways organizations and people are making a positive difference in the lives of people experiencing homelessness, including solidarity among people who are homeless themselves. There is a large body of research available on individual experiences of homelessness that is essential for understanding the impact of NIMBY discourses on people's experience of social exclusion, isolation, and community resilience. Research, for example, identifies the negative impact experiences of social exclusion, loneliness, and isolation have on people experiencing homelessness and their ability to access and maintain permanent housing (Aubry et al., 2016; Cameron et al.,

2016; Nichols, 2019; Perron, 2014). As such, NIMBYism has real and significant impacts on community and governmental responses to homelessness. NIMBY discourses are a barrier to passing legislation and investing in and innovating services that would radically improve the lives of people experiencing homelessness (Brown, 2021). At times, calls for community investment in social inclusion programming (Gidley et al., 2010) is eclipsed by policies that address homelessness through the lens of “public safety,” which rely on exclusionary and criminalizing tactics (Gaetz, 2013). In the following sections, we provide a detailed understanding of the core characteristics and rationales driving NIMBY movements and engage in a critical discussion of the impacts of NIMBYism on homelessness, public policy, and social inclusion.



*NIMBYism can be understood as local opposition toward “controversial land uses” that provide useful services and contribute to the public good but are perceived to have “detrimental effect[s] on [the] quality of life” of local residents.*

## **DEFINING NIMBYISM AND ITS CORE ASSUMPTIONS**

NIMBYism can be understood as local opposition toward “controversial land uses” (Costanza et al., 2013, p. 261) that provide useful services and contribute to the public good but are perceived to have “detrimental effect[s] on [the] quality of life” of local residents (Christiansen et al., 2019, p. 599; Davidson & Howe, 2014). NIMBY opposition often occurs in response to proposed developments for hazardous waste facilities, needle distribution services and safe consumption sites (Lofaro & Miller, 2021; Oudshoorn & Kirkwood, 2017), power plants or wind farms, and transportation infrastructure (Davidson & Howe, 2014), as well as services that “serve small sectors of the population” such as affordable housing,

drug treatment centres, and homeless shelters (Costanza et al., 2013, p. 261). Diverse terminology is used within the literature to characterize NIMBY attitudes toward new land developments, including “NIMBY syndrome” (Kolla et al., 2017), “the NIMBY effect” (Christiansen et al., 2019), LULU (“Locally Unwanted Land Uses”) (Tretter & Heyman, 2022), and BANANA (“Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anyone”) (Doberstein, 2020). All of these terms underscore that NIMBYism is an organized resistance to new land developments by residents of the local community.

NIMBYs themselves (i.e., community residents in opposition to development) are described as homeowners or business owners who seek to protect or increase home values through housing supply restriction and land development prevention (S. Miller & Kiernan, 2021; Tretter & Heyman, 2022). McNee and Pojani (2022) describe NIMBYs as “active, vocal, and connected residents” who protest new housing developments even when such developments are believed to be beneficial to their city (p. 555). NIMBY supporters most commonly consist of single-family homeowners who are older in age, have a higher income, are well educated, live in socially similar neighbourhoods, and are in the immediate vicinity of proposed developments (Gipson, 2020; Hanson et al., 2015). NIMBYs oppose the development of new housing for reasons that range from “aesthetic design to pearl-clutching about crime rates” (Meronek, 2018, p. 30), often using the common discourse of “preserving ‘family’ neighbourhoods” (B. Miller & Nicholls, 2013, p. 468).

Nesbitt (2018) outlines the various ways in which economic, political, social, and spatial factors influence NIMBY attitudes. Economic factors influence NIMBY attitudes, in particular considerations of homeownership and gentrification. Homeowners, who hold more negative views toward developments, participate more frequently in local debates than renters and therefore are likely to have a larger influence. Politics influence NIMBYism through public trust in governments, ideological beliefs, and electoral cycles. The urban planning process also impacts NIMBY attitudes, as such movements can be fuelled by the lack of a growth plan. Social attitudes and stigma, racial discrimination and segregation, and media framing have been demonstrated to influence NIMBY attitudes (Nguyen & Payton Scally, 2019). And finally, spatial concerns such as a sense of place, the built environment, the visibility of homelessness, and the proximity of the proposed site to neighbours, schools, etc. have also been shown to have an impact. As such, contextual factors that are likely to exacerbate NIMBY attitudes include: rising house prices, which can create concerns that one’s property may be devalued as a result; neighbourhoods where no precedent has been set for the proposed form of housing; developments that are proposed for rental housing instead of home ownership; and developments aimed at single adults instead of families (Hanson et al., 2015).



At the core of NIMBYism is an overwhelming suspicion of and sense of opposition to any development that may negatively impact property values (whether in perception or reality) (Jun & Musso, 2013; Keating, 2019). As Nguyen et al. (2013) describe, local residents oppose both the physical infrastructure associated with homelessness programming and support (i.e., shelters, affordable housing projects, and service facilities), as well as the people who occupy those buildings and use those services. Public parks, libraries, and museums are welcomed, but waste dumps, jails, and homeless shelters are met with intense backlash

**Public parks, libraries, and museums are welcomed, but waste dumps, jails, and homeless shelters are met with intense backlash from residents who do not want such facilities in their communities.**

from residents who do not want such facilities in their communities. NIMBYs fear that the presence of such facilities would lower property values, increase pollution, noise, traffic, and crime, and change the demographic composition of their neighbourhoods (Garland et al., 2016, 2017; Halimi, 2019; PIVOT, 2015).

Other common objections to social housing developments include the presence of existing social housing in the neighbourhood, the risk of bringing “bad” people into the community, a suspicion of renters,

concerns about the “best way” to house vulnerable populations, and a lack of community consultation (Homecoming, 2016). While opposition to social housing developments are often articulated in relation to design and procedural issues, resistance is sometimes based on fears about the perceived consequences that these developments may have on neighbourhoods (HomeComing, 2005). This is often guided by pre-existing assumptions about affordable housing tenants or service users who are framed as “freeloaders, antisocial, and even potentially criminal” (McNee & Pojani, 2022, p. 555). In fact, research shows that citizens are more likely to oppose emergency housing shelters if they offer services to previously incarcerated or criminalized people (Dum et al., 2017). The above assumptions related to the social, economic, and spatial consequences of affordable housing developments underscore the preservation of community character as one of the fundamental driving forces behind NIMBYism (Bates, 2019; Bertrand, 2019; HomeComing, 2005; B. Miller & Nicholls, 2013; Nesbitt, 2018).

NIMBYism that is centred around this notion of community preservation can be understood as the conventional model of risk aversion in which NIMBYs oppose new developments to maintain aesthetic appeal and prevent congestion in their community (Monkkonen & Manville, 2019). Monkkonen and Manville (2019) contrast risk-averse NIMBYism with a new dimension that is focused on “enforcing community norms of fairness” (p. 1125) and in which development opposition stems from a desire to prevent a developer from earning a large profit. While this latter dimension seeks to prevent another’s gain, and is therefore altruistic in nature, risk-averse NIMBYism is employed in an attempt to prevent one’s own losses. At the same time, Davison et al. (2017) note that these forms of “self-interested NIMBYism” are the most common, and while individuals may indicate support for affordable housing developments within their city, they often oppose these projects if proposed in proximity to their residence. Self-interested NIMBYism has been found to present a large challenge to the development of affordable housing. It is therefore crucial to dispel the core assumptions driving NIMBYism in order to work toward increasing the acceptance of community-based and governmental initiatives that seek to expand social services and housing programming.

## **DISPELLING NIMBY ASSUMPTIONS**

As noted in the previous section, the core concerns of NIMBYism concern property values, preserving community characteristics, increased crime, protecting personal safety, and preventing infrastructure strain (Gipson, 2020; Hanson et al., 2015; Kolla et al., 2017). According to Davidson and Howe (2014), NIMBYism often stems from the desire of a community to “avoid being ‘stained’ by an association with a stigmatized population” (p. 3). While this desire may be associated with the concern of NIMBYs to prevent affordable housing from lowering property values, recent research suggests affordable housing projects have the opposite effect. As such, this desire to avoid being stained by stigmatized populations may have less to do with protecting property values and more to do with protecting the community’s image from “undesirable neighbours” (p. 13). Therefore, in order to transform public opinions about homelessness and change NIMBY attitudes, an effort needs to be made to alter society’s perceptions of stigmatized groups, such as people experiencing homelessness (Grommon, 2017). Education strategies, for example, can be used to “dispel myths, close social distances between social groups, and instill a collaborative sense of civic engagement,” with the goal of challenging and questioning common NIMBY assumptions (Grommon, 2017, p. 830).

Existing research that dispels NIMBY concerns surrounding the development of social or affordable housing should be used to educate the public and work toward building support for such developments. A report by the PIVOT Legal Society (2015) offers various suggestions to dispel the myths surrounding NIMBY attitudes by providing statistical evidence and facts in response. First, research suggests that affordable housing developments may be related to increased property values in neighbouring areas, rather than decreased values (Brunes et al., 2020). In two studies examining the impact of affordable housing on property values in British Columbia and New York, the PIVOT Legal Society (2015) discovered that the presence of supportive housing does not negatively affect the sale prices of homes in the area. Additionally, individuals were not found to have sold their homes in a panic or to have had their homes remain on the market for an extended period of time as a result of the development. Specifically, in New York, researchers found that properties within 500 feet of a supportive housing development saw a steady growth in value, and properties within 500-1000 feet of the development experienced growth, albeit at a slower pace. The size and density of the project had no impact on property values. To manage concerns regarding impacts on property values, a report from the Canadian Home Builders Association (2013) suggests providing residents with relevant studies, receiving testimony from realtors, and conducting a new property value study. Brunes et al. (2020) found similar results in their examination of infill developments, which they referred to as the “new construction of multifamily cooperative apartment buildings in urban areas” (p. 57), suggesting that affordable housing developments can increase housing prices in nearby areas, specifically in areas with lower incomes, more public housing, and greater density (Brunes et al., 2020).

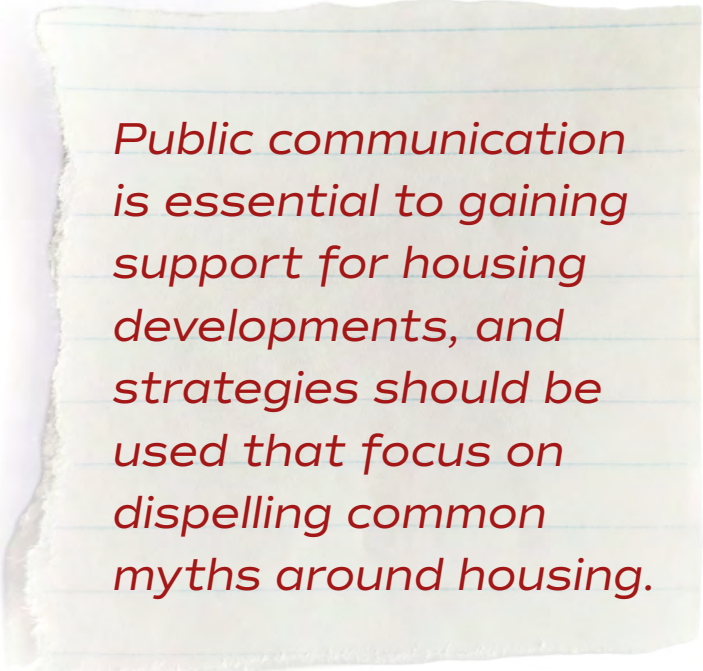
**Research suggests that affordable housing developments may be related to increased property values in neighbouring areas, rather than decreased values.**

The Canadian Home Builders Association (2013) also focused on dispelling myths related to crime and safety. Although this is a common concern, there is no evidence that criminal behaviour is higher in proximity to affordable housing, group homes, or emergency shelters. Instead, evidence suggests that affordable housing has a “stabilizing” effect on a neighbourhood by allowing people to stay in their communities, rather than displacing them elsewhere (Hanson et al., 2015). To respond to these concerns, stakeholders should offer evidence to debunk the crime myth, as well as create opportunities for neighbours and new residents to meet, enlist support of community law enforcement, and provide examples of similar developments that have not experienced increases in crime rates.

Other NIMBY concerns centre around infrastructure strain, focusing on traffic, public services, and public transit (Martin, 2013; Nesbitt, 2018). However, there is no evidence to suggest that residential intensification leads to traffic congestion. Further, higher-density housing requires less extensive infrastructure such as water, sewage, roads, and other services, when compared to planned communities on undeveloped land. High-density housing also “provides a concentration of passengers for public transit, improves efficiency of other neighbourhood services in a compact area, and can be a smart way to take advantage of underutilized infrastructure” (Canadian Home Builders’ Association, 2013, p. 19).

Finally, concerns about neighbourhood character can be addressed by reassuring the community that housing is developed using the same restrictions and design standards as other buildings in the neighbourhood, mitigating concerns about design and aesthetics (Canadian Home Builders’ Association, 2013; HomeComing, 2005). Concerns about the integration of new residents into the community violate human rights codes that are implemented to prevent “people zoning,” a form of discrimination against certain groups that attempts to stop them from moving into the community. Instead, advocates need to focus on illustrating the advantages of integrating new residents into the community.

When communicating to the public, it is important to share facts and dispel common NIMBY rationales. Public communication is essential to gaining support for housing developments, and strategies should be used that focus on dispelling common myths around housing (Gent, 2022; Grommon, 2017). It is important to emphasize the benefits of affordable housing and communicate how development proposals align with the municipality’s vision for the community (Canadian Home Builders’ Association, 2013). Online municipal engagement can also be used as a strategy to ensure residents are informed about housing in the community. Online engagement is a great way to share educational tools through workshops or courses to provide a comprehensive understanding of the development process, while



*Public communication is essential to gaining support for housing developments, and strategies should be used that focus on dispelling common myths around housing.*

also debunking some of the common concerns related to housing developments. Materials could include fact sheets and other educational materials that show successful projects and provide statistical evidence and examples of systemic public health benefits (Canadian Home Builders' Association, 2013; PIVOT, 2015). When mitigating NIMBYism and addressing these myths, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2019) suggests including the community in the planning process, using engagement and communication strategies, and implementing policies and measures that support accessible housing.

## **HOMELESSNESS AND NIMBY DISCOURSES**

NIMBY discourses often use stereotypes about people experiencing homelessness to fuel opposition to social housing and services. Gent (2018) claims the “backyard” is a metaphor for safety, purity, and privacy, which people experiencing homelessness disrupt. The stereotypes that they are “dangerous, impure threats to the neighbourhood” (Canadian Home Builders' Association, 2013) interfere with housing developments based on arguments rooted in stereotypes. According to Davidson and Howe (2014), NIMBYism stems from the desire of a community to “avoid being stained” (p. 3) by an association with a stigmatized population. Rather than centring concerns around property values, this type of opposition instead focuses on protecting the community’s image from association with “undesirable neighbours” (Davidson & Howe, 2014; see also HomeComing, 2005). Social attitudes, stigma, racial discrimination, and segregation thus influence NIMBY opposition, which promotes stereotypes about people experiencing homelessness (Nesbitt, 2018). Similarly, Belanger et al. (2019) found that Indigenous renters face direct discrimination from landlords because of common misconceptions and racist stereotypes.

Other NIMBY discourses focus on appropriate land use. According to DeVerteuil (2013), NIMBYism challenges Lefebvre’s “right to the city,” which maintains that everyone has the right to access, appropriate, and inhabit spaces within the city (see also Meanwell, 2012). However, people experiencing homelessness are excluded from these rights due to land-use debates. Bell and Walsh (2015) argue that NIMBYism is framed as a “contested landscapes debate” that functions as a control strategy for the containment of homelessness and that signifies the “powerful symbols of surveillance, hegemony, and control” (p. 1978). NIMBY attitudes are therefore impacted by spatial concerns, including sense of place, growth boundaries, environmental controls, the built environment, the visibility of homelessness, and the proximity of the site (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2020; Nesbitt, 2018).

In terms of land-use, additional research demonstrates that community members are not opposed to social developments in other communities, only those that affect them and their own community. While there is often a public call to manage homelessness, proposals are often met with opposition and the suggestion to build housing elsewhere (Gent, 2018). According to Davison et al. (2017), self-interested NIMBYism is common and refers to people who are supportive of affordable housing but are less supportive of developments in their neighbourhood. Due to land-use regulations and public opposition, social services are concentrated in high-poverty, minority neighbourhoods, where people experiencing homelessness are “corralled” (Grainger, 2021, p. 4). In these neighbourhoods, residents have less time, money, resources, and political influence to object to land developments (Halimi, 2019).

NIMBY attitudes are also tied to political beliefs (Garland et al., 2017). Factors such as public trust in government, ideological beliefs, and electoral cycles influence NIMBYism (Nesbitt, 2018). According to Smith (2017), the growing political influence of right-wing populist movements indicates a “crisis of legitimacy” (p. 363) for political and economic institutions that is linked to economic inequality, financial stability, and ecological crises and that destabilizes social cohesion and community resilience. Thus, neighbourhood defenders (i.e., NIMBYs) in the United States, according to Einstein et al. (2020), tend to be Republican, while Democrats are more likely to support housing developments.

NIMBYism appears across the political spectrum. NIMBYism defends attitudes that are foundational to communities and civic engagement; however, the effect is to “exclude, perpetuate inequality, and place limits on the freedoms of others” (Gent, 2022, p. 141). While NIMBYs claim to defend democracy, they uphold only the will of people who are privileged, and they often protect their own self-interests (Gent, 2022). Marble and Nall (2021) found that attitudes toward housing developments were structured more by home ownership interests, such as property values, than by political ideology. This means that while some people identified with political groups or movements that support public housing or community resources, they too opposed such developments in their own backyards.

**While NIMBYs claim to defend democracy, they uphold only the will of people who are privileged, and they often protect their own self-interests.**

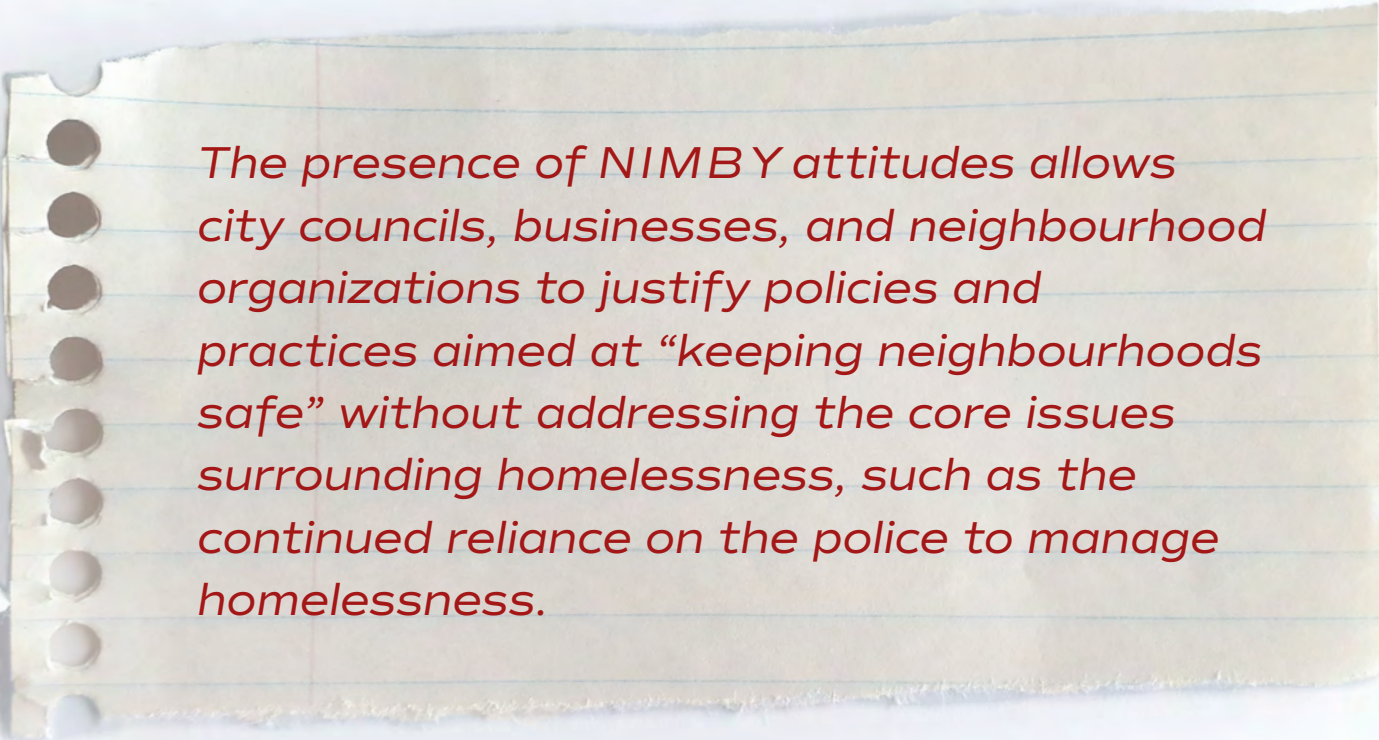
## **NIMBYISM AND INEQUALITY**

NIMBY attitudes are often reinforced by underlying notions of inequality related to race, class, gender, and (dis)ability. Although NIMBYism is focused on opposing land use, it can also be considered an exercise of power that marginalizes and exacerbates unequal power dynamics across social locations. As previously mentioned, NIMBY advocates tend to be primarily white and upper-middle-class residents, while the targets of their opposition are often from minority communities (Gipson, 2020; McNee & Pojani, 2022). As such, NIMBY advocates have more authority to oppose housing developments on the basis of spatial gatekeeping, but also to preserve and secure a neighbourhood's existing racial, class, and family structure (Gent, 2022). According to Tighe (2012), NIMBY reactions are due, in part, to anti-poverty sentiments and racial prejudice. NIMBYism thus excludes certain people because they are homeless, poor, or disabled, or because of their race and ethnicity, demonstrating that this opposition may be shaped by negative attitudes toward minorities (Tighe, 2012; see also Einstein et al., 2020; Tretter & Heyman, 2022). Further, Vallone (2020) calls NIMBYism a “form of institutional racism” (p. 2) and draws attention to exclusionary zoning policies that discriminate against low-income and racialized groups who are “priced out” (p. 3) of the community, keeping affordable housing out of their backyards.

## **THE EFFECTS OF NIMBYISM ON PUBLIC POLICY**

NIMBYs have succeeded in blocking, delaying, and shutting down housing developments at zoning and city council meetings, especially when carrying and approval costs become too burdensome (Anthony, 2022; Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2020; Garland et al., 2017; Glovin, 2021). Upzoning, the process of relaxing zoning restrictions related to building height and density, is often opposed by local residents who believe it will negatively impact the neighbourhood character (Haapaniemi, 2020). NIMBY attitudes also influence the housing supply, as NIMBYs can effectively block new housing proposed for their neighbourhoods. Homeowners are often troubled by new housing developments, because new housing is thought to have a negative effect on housing prices. Here, they argue affordable housing developments result in higher taxes and lower home values for current residents (Hankinson, 2018). Further, the presence of NIMBY attitudes allows city councils, businesses, and neighbourhood organizations to justify policies and practices aimed at “keeping neighbourhoods safe” without addressing the core issues surrounding homelessness, such as the continued reliance on the police to manage homelessness (Franklin, 2018, p. 62).

The NIMBY focus on neighbourhood safety allows for exclusionary policies to flourish. Amara (2021) examined the “political forces behind exclusionary laws” (p. 1525) that banish people experiencing homelessness from public spaces, such as laws that prohibit sitting or resting in public and those that prohibit tents or other temporary structures. Louthen (2020) also discussed anti-integrationist impulses that are associated with public housing policies, where community members can use a “local veto” (p. 569) to oppose housing developments. Attacks on affordable housing are common, with people at government meetings opposing developments and pressuring local legislators to oppose and reject such projects.



*The presence of NIMBY attitudes allows city councils, businesses, and neighbourhood organizations to justify policies and practices aimed at “keeping neighbourhoods safe” without addressing the core issues surrounding homelessness, such as the continued reliance on the police to manage homelessness.*

Further, although legal scholars have identified homeless encampments to be a viable option to negotiate some of the health harms associated with homelessness, sanctioned encampments are strongly opposed by NIMBYs (Allen & Nolan, 2022). Changes in policies that reduce the amount of public space without increasing homeless services result in the displacement of people experiencing homelessness (Allen & Nolan, 2022). Similarly, although tiny homes are often feasible options to support people experiencing homelessness, there are substantial barriers to their implementation, including policies surrounding land-use and zoning regulations, as well as strong NIMBY sentiments that take the form of local meetings and calls for opposition (Evans, 2022; Jackson et al., 2020).



In Massachusetts, for example, there are three laws related to public participation for combating NIMBYism. They are the Open Meeting Law, which requires transparency in decision-making; the Zoning Law, which gives planning commissions land-use power; and the Anti-Snob Zoning Law, which allows affordable housing developers to bypass public meetings and opposition (Glovin, 2021). These laws were created to combat the housing crisis in Massachusetts, which is fuelled by public opposition to public housing. Similarly, in England, the Localism Act gives local residents influence over developments while also enabling building corporations to gain approval more easily. As such, the goal is to prevent NIMBY attitudes in public meetings from stopping housing developments (Glovin, 2021). However, local residents still maintain anti-development sentiments, and the system remains under-representative, as only individuals from certain social locations participate in local meetings.

Public resistance is a powerful force influencing the initiation and sustainability of public policies (Garland et al., 2017). Ruming (2014) found that opposition to specific developments may occur when planning authority is removed from local residents or governments, and instead, given to higher tiers of government. If multi-government interventions are to succeed in improving housing supply and conditions, each level of government must work with local residents to ensure that they feel invested in and part of democratic processes (Ruming, 2014).

Successful policy solutions need to recognize the participatory politics of housing and the ways that citizens and bureaucrats shape the development process (Einstein et al., 2020). While public debate should not be shut down, public engagement needs to be modified in a way that encourages broader thinking about community interests and attitudes toward housing developments (Doberstein, 2020). Public engagement should also include people experiencing homelessness, who are often excluded from political representation and processes related to housing developments. According to Martin (2013), emphasis should be placed on the fact that social needs must take priority over “protectionist place identity claims” (p. 536) when developing policies related to social housing. Policies also need to focus on mitigating the divide between NIMBYs and YIMBYs at the local level (Ford & Schuetz, 2019).

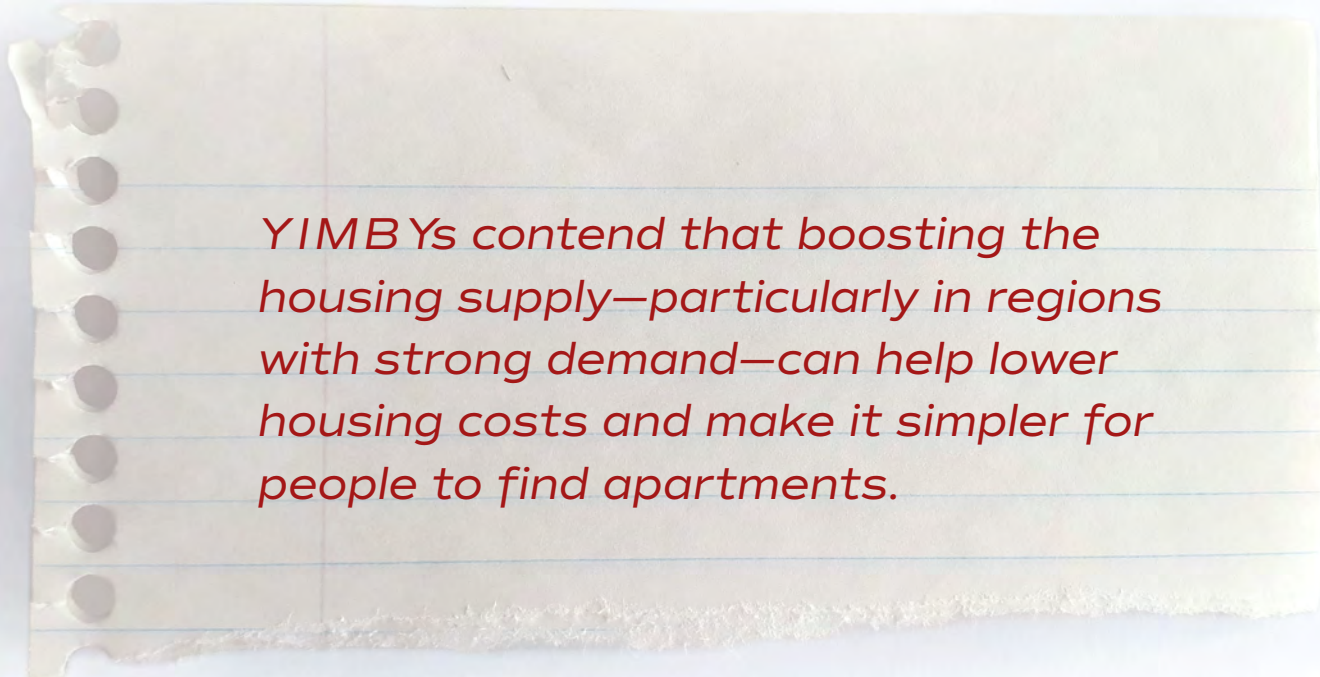
The increasing visibility of homelessness, particularly amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent pressure for communities to act quickly has come up against their ability to adapt to changing needs and to respond in a way that leads to long-term stability and equity for everyone.

# YIMBYISM

YIMBYism promotes the building of new homes, especially in metropolitan areas, to lower the cost of housing. The trend contrasts with NIMBY views, which frequently oppose new housing construction because they are worried about adverse effects like traffic, noise, or changes to a neighbourhood's character. YIMBYs contend that boosting the housing supply—particularly in regions with strong demand—can help lower housing costs and make it simpler for people to find apartments. As the housing affordability crisis has worsened in many cities around the world, the YIMBY movement has gained ground. YIMBYism also aims to create dynamic, inclusive communities. This can include creating affordable housing for a variety of income levels and amenities and public areas that promote community. YIMBYs want to establish livable, sustainable neighbourhoods by supporting varied and inclusive communities.

## DEFINING YIMBYISM

The “Yes in my Backyard” (YIMBY) movement positions itself as quite literally the opposite of NIMBYism. While YIMBY groups and campaigns take on varying forms, but at its core, the movement presents itself as the antithesis of policies, practices, and discourses that seek to deny and restrict community diversity and growth (McNee & Pojani, 2022). YIMBY movements seek to meet the needs of all community members (Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021) and “accepting our community’s collective responsibility to make our shared space welcoming to everyone” (PIVOT, 2015, p. 8). YIMBY campaigns are premised on designing intentional communities that promote housing affordability and localized capacity building.



*YIMBYs contend that boosting the housing supply—particularly in regions with strong demand—can help lower housing costs and make it simpler for people to find apartments.*

The literature on YIMBYism situates the movement as inherently political and intimately connected with other social movements, such as climate change advocacy, environmentalism, human rights, and political progressiveness (Tapp, 2021; Tretter & Heyman, 2022; WRYIMBY [Waterloo Region Yes In My Backyard], 2022). Scholars on the issue of YIMBYism articulate a deep connection between YIMBY campaigning and the concerns of the millennial generation specifically, who, as they have grown into adulthood and middle age, are struggling to make ends meet, find affordable housing, and ultimately delve into home ownership (Beyer, 2017; Tapp, 2021). Bogusz suggests that both NIMBYism and YIMBYism are tied to localism—that is, “the notion that individuals share not only a geographical or spatial connection but that, within a defined area, they share socio-economic and legal relationships which bind them together” (2018, p. 56). Localism thereby contributes to NIMBYism but also provides the solution to the problematics of “space attachment” (Bogusz, 2018, p. 57) by empowering local communities to have a voice in shaping their respective neighbourhoods.

To date, YIMBY campaigns are largely situated within individual municipalities, offering a space for political and social mobilizing. Indeed, local YIMBY campaigns have grown exponentially over the last five years (Meronek, 2018). The origin of the YIMBY movement is in San Francisco and has spread from there to urban centres across the United States, Canada, and throughout the global North (Beyer, 2017). More recently, however, leaders in local YIMBY movements have collectivized to build off one another, with the YIMBY Action collective in the United States acting as an example of large-scale organizing around the issues of building more affordable housing, increasing housing stability, and streamlining development and zoning regulations to do so quickly and efficiently (YIMBY Action, 2021). Still, Beyer (2017) contends that YIMBY movements remain highly decentralized and thereby limited in the kinds of transformative work they achieve.

There is tension in the literature about the fundamental nature of YIMBY campaigns, their politics, and the breadth of issues they cover. Tapp (2021), for example, distinguishes the YIMBY movement from other forms of justice-led community and housing affordability activism because YIMBYs focus exclusively on market-based solutions to the housing supply and affordability issue. Tretter and Heyman (2022) agree, arguing that the key tenet of the YIMBY movement is “the belief that the housing crisis can be solved by increasing housing supply, density, and diversity” (p. 288). The argument here is that YIMBY campaigns consistently focus on housing development and housing affordability (see Bronstein, 2018; Coy, 2018; Tapp, 2021) to the detriment of other issues related to housing. Conversely, others contend YIMBYism is an important strategy for homelessness prevention. Homelessness prevention refers to “policies, practices, and interventions that reduce the likelihood that

someone will experience homelessness” (Dej et al., 2020, p. 402) and includes a continuum of strategies ranging from upstream structural policies to housing stabilization efforts for people who have previously experienced homelessness. Abdel-Samad et al. (2021) see YIMBY campaigns as promoting distinct techniques to respond to pre-homelessness, whereby people are supported to find and maintain housing prior to becoming homeless, with the aim of preventing homelessness altogether. For Abdel-Samad et al. (2021), YIMBYism can advocate for strategies around city planning and housing affordability as well as broader systems level change in health, criminal justice, and child protection, all of which have the objective of ensuring that people have a safe, affordable, and permanent place to live (Dej et al., 2020).



## **YIMBYISM AND HOUSING**

The YIMBY movement’s roots lie in its focus on rapidly building and maintaining a strong housing supply and increasing housing density, predominantly in large urban centres. Closely related to that aim is an effort to make housing and communities work for everyone and not only people who hold social and economic privilege (Coy, 2018). Efforts to reach these goals take on different shapes, and many YIMBY campaigns pursue multiple tactics to effect policy and practice change. *Examples of these strategies include:*

- ***Establishing municipal density requirements*** that promote maximizing housing growth on available land (Bronstein, 2018)
- ***Devising innovative models*** to increase the housing supply, including multiple-unit builds and secondary suites (Merriam, 2020; Tolfo & Doucet, 2021)
- ***Prioritizing affordable housing development*** in areas with close proximity to public transportation (Bronstein, 2018; McNee & Pojani, 2022)
- ***Designing mixed-income housing that promotes social inclusion*** across the socio-economic continuum (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2020)

This emphasis on market housing has led some community mobilizers to develop a new acronym, PHIMBYism—Public Housing in my Backyard.

The overarching drive of most YIMBY campaigns is, as Bronstein (2018) describes it, “build baby, build.” This emphasis on market housing has led some community mobilizers to develop a new acronym, PHIMBYism—Public Housing in my Backyard. This advocacy model does not simply focus on building more housing but is dedicated to prioritizing public and truly affordable housing. Included

in the PHIMBYism model are ensuring that housing is available for everyone from a range of social locations and using empty lots as opportunities for increased housing development and density (McNee & Pojani, 2022). These strategies, both within market housing and public, affordable models, work to make neighbourhoods more liveable for everyone in need of housing and will lead to increased diversity and inclusion as people are able to put down roots in their communities. As Merriam (2020) describes, “The YIMBY movement is not the end all for the problems that we must surmount, but it may serve us well” (p. 8).

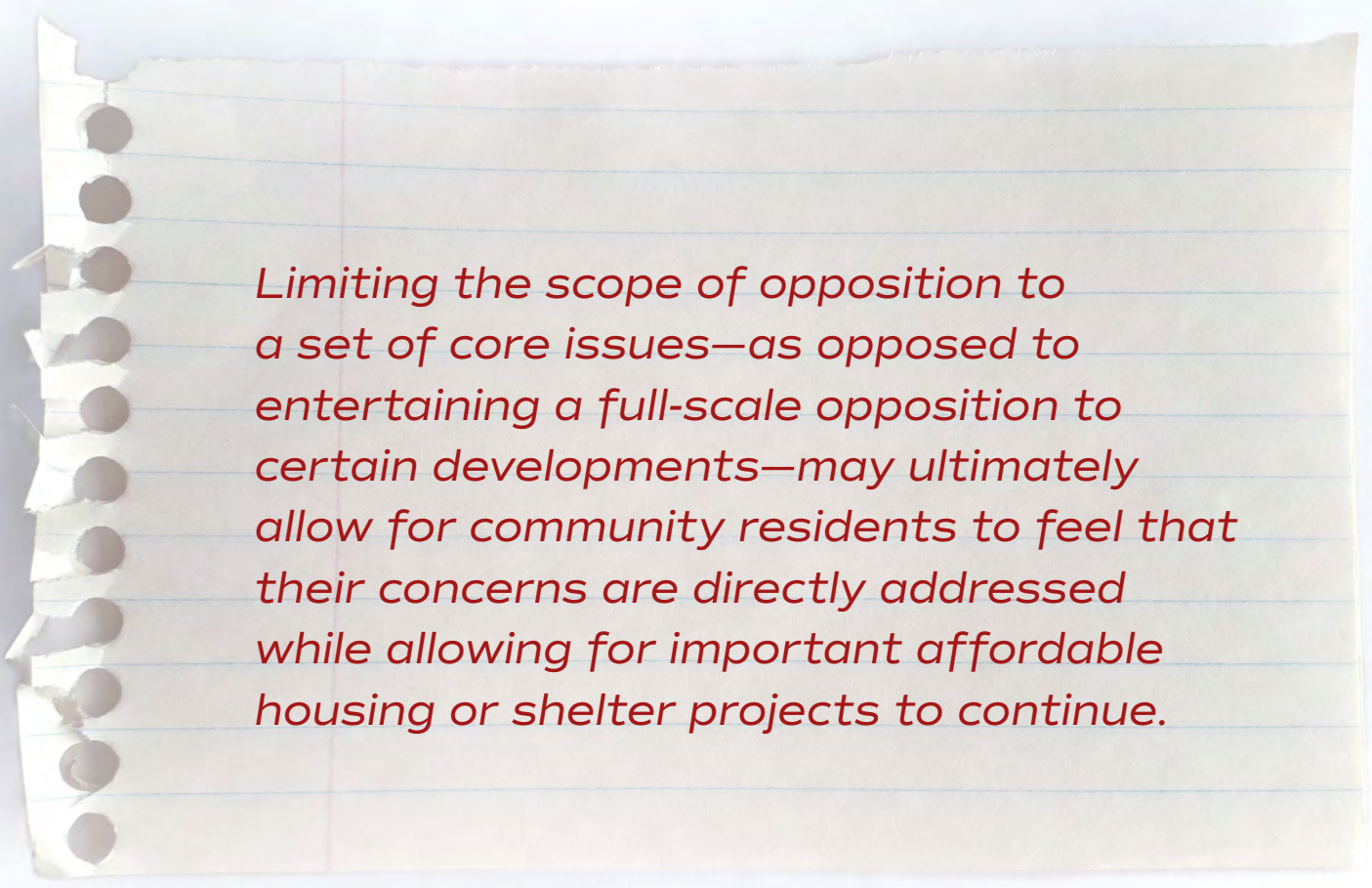
## **PARTICIPATORY URBAN GOVERNANCE**

Building more inclusive and diverse neighbourhoods requires active support from community members. The ability to turn YIMBYism from an ideological or political concept into a social movement requires active civic participation in local government and advocacy. Since the 1960s, the U.S. federal government has taken active steps to incentivize local participation in the planning and development processes by requiring active citizen participation in order to receive federal funding (Hankinson, 2018). Klement et al. (2022) found that among the most prominent reasons for opposing development were a lack of transparency and an overwhelming distrust toward developers. These can be remedied not only through an active consultation process and dialogue between developers, city planners, and residents, but through other ways of building trust such as giving back to the community through mechanisms like profit sharing (Klement et al., 2022).

Though garnering civic participation among individuals may be challenging, Jun and Musso (2013) note that the use of secondary associations (such as NGOs, neighbourhood councils, and service providing organizations) can make up for the relative lack of enthusiasm around city planning and service provisioning at local levels. These organizations, they argue, have the potential to influence spatial preferences and “provide a forum for community networks to mobilize around spatially differentiated preferences and to exert political pressure on city officials” (Jun & Musso, 2013, p. 75).

Tapp (2021) found that neighbourhood councils had a significant impact in advocating for an increased housing supply by placing political pressures on local governments to deregulate land use. Local organizing can be extremely effective, because local governments will often defer to neighbourhood councils on zoning proposals, which empowers local residents over the makeup of their respective neighbourhoods. One thing to consider, however, is that neighbourhood councils have a tremendously low barrier to entry, allowing for almost anyone to participate. Councils can recruit pro-development citizens who will actively campaign and advocate for increased housing supply, multi-dwelling residences, or other local planning strategies they feel will benefit their communities. At the same time, the lack of experience or consultation with planning or housing experts may pose a significant challenge to achieving sustainable and equitable housing solutions (Lerch, 2017).

Gaining support for non-market housing can be a challenge. The BC Housing Research Centre (2019) recognizes that while community input is important, setting limits and timelines on how feedback is collected can prevent unnecessary delays in the development process. Limiting the scope of opposition to a set of core issues—as opposed to entertaining a full-scale opposition to certain developments—may ultimately allow for community residents to feel that their concerns are directly addressed while allowing for important affordable housing or shelter projects to continue (see also Legacy et al., 2016).



*Limiting the scope of opposition to a set of core issues—as opposed to entertaining a full-scale opposition to certain developments—may ultimately allow for community residents to feel that their concerns are directly addressed while allowing for important affordable housing or shelter projects to continue.*

## EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL YIMBY CAMPAIGNS

There are numerous examples of successful YIMBY campaigns across North America that highlight the *range of tools available to communities* for building inclusive and social neighbourhoods. Among those examples are:

- (1) *Los Angeles County piloted new accessory dwelling units.* These sponsored units allow a homeowner to create a “granny flat” that provides a unit for someone who is unstably housed (Dinh et al., 2018; Han, 2018).
- (2) *Guelph, Ontario, developed a YIMBY campaign during the COVID-19 pandemic that met two objectives:* it built two supportive housing buildings, and it engaged community in the planning process to get people involved in *YIMBY* efforts (Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021).
- (3) *A study from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2020) provided a series of strategies to develop social and affordable housing projects from a YIMBY perspective,* including techniques for building a rapport and sharing information with current neighbourhood residents, for addressing concerns neighbours might have, and for integrating affordable housing projects into municipal plans to increase the housing stock.
- (4) In their efforts to build supportive housing in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, the *Union Gospel Mission created a good neighbour agreement that provides tools for people to speak up for social inclusion and diversity,* including how to connect with their local government and how to break down stereotypes about supportive housing (Larkin, 2015).
- (5) *Communities can also develop strategies that promote dialogue but discourage discrimination and exclusionary rhetoric,* including building *YIMBY* principles into municipal housing plans, challenging discriminatory narratives, and meaningfully addressing opposition to housing projects (Hanson et al., 2015; HomeComing, 2005).

## PROMOTING YIMBYISM THROUGH MEDIA

YIMBYism should also be understood as a discursive concept that can be mobilized to publicly advocate for increased housing, shelters, and other social services. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2006) notes that a lack of awareness about community development projects can pose a significant barrier to community support for housing projects. To counter this, local councillors, city officials, and YIMBY advocates should make “regular contact with the media through news releases, articles and interviews to ensure the project is ‘front and centre’ in the mind of the community” (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2006, p. 3).

According to Moorhead (2022), encouraging journalists to take a more active role in their communities—acting as stakeholders and not just fact finders—could motivate individuals in news media to hold those in power accountable on their housing promises and mandates. Moorhead (2022) goes on to write:

In addition to issuing press releases and reports that influence journalists’ coverage, non-profits, advocates, and government officials can partner with journalists in more creative ways (e.g., directories, fundraisers, and training events) that might combine tangible steps forward (e.g., policy change that mandates more affordable housing) with community backing and engagement. (p. 1913)

YIMBYism should also be understood as a discursive concept that can be mobilized to publicly advocate for increased housing, shelters, and other social services.





Dinh (2018) also finds that the media can be an effective tool for educating and building community support for different housing proposals, such as accessory dwelling units (ADUs). This can be mobilized in a proactive or reactive sense. Organizations can seek out the media to advocate for proposed developments or can use the media to respond to concerns over certain projects (Canadian Home Builders' Association, 2013).

Mass media can also be an influential tool for educating the public on issues related to homelessness. Abdel-Samad et al. (2021) write:

Mass media and communications scholars can contribute to solutions-based approaches to homelessness in several ways, including correcting false narratives about who is experiencing homelessness. Becoming more conscious of the impact of textual and visual messaging has the power to more fully engage community and policymaking stakeholders with the diverse lived experiences of people experiencing homelessness.... Centering research on insider perspectives (the storytellers) values and respects their positionality, elevates the narratives that the storytellers generate into community and policy dialogue, and recognizes those voices as the authority on their situation. (p. 12)

There is tremendous value for scholars to share their research with news media in order to create a counter-narrative to NIMBYism, using and offering research findings to mobilize knowledge to a broader audience. This can also be useful for community organizations who produce a regular flow of information or maintain their own research agendas. As the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Association (2020) suggests:

The purpose is to: Demonstrate the value of the project. Create a transparent process. Educate and inform the community. 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 the arguments. (p. 3)

The prioritization of facts over other forms of housing rhetoric can ultimately serve to ground people in evidence-based solutions. This, coupled with highlighting the personal narratives of those who experience homelessness or housing precarity, serves to provide the public with a fact-based intervention that also includes the experiential knowledge of lived experts.

## CRITIQUES OF YIMBYISM

A major critique of YIMBYism is centred on its over-reliance on “free-market logic of supply and demand” in which building more housing is thought to reduce housing costs (Meronek, 2018, p. 30). Since there is no universally agreed upon strategy for increasing affordable housing, YIMBYs tend to be divided in their approach. Some YIMBY groups in California, for example, advocate for increased luxury developments as a way to entice middle-class residents to newer, upscale properties in an effort to create vacant older buildings for lower-income residents (Ford & Schuetz, 2019). Other YIMBY advocates have critiqued this market-rate approach, arguing that it concentrates poverty and reinforces ideas around class and racial spatial divisions (Ford & Schuetz, 2019; Pill, 2020).

This focus on countering NIMBYism by removing housing restrictions and increasing housing supply tends to prioritize the housing supply aspects of YIMBYism at the cost of overshadowing the role of advocacy groups that have long been working to fight the “displacement of working-class communities of color for decades” (Meronek, 2018, p. 31). In fact, “YIMBYs, who advocate for luxury and market-rate housing but not public housing, conflate housing activists’ affordability campaigns with NIMBY preservationist battles. These false connotations and binaries, we argue, are best understood within a framework of racial capitalism” (McElroy & Szeto, 2018, p. 31).



Importantly, Rodríguez-Pose & Storper (2020) note that academia has become dominated by a “housing as opportunity” school of thought whereby scholars have “captured the public imagination with its claims about the benefits of housing deregulation to prosperous and less prosperous areas alike and to the national economy as a whole” (p. 226). They critique this view, arguing that there is little evidence to support that more housing in already prosperous areas will lead to greater housing equality. They argue that “upzoning generally involves replacing older and lower quality housing stock in areas highly favoured by the market, effectively decreasing housing supply for lower-income households in desirable areas. This is gentrification” (p. 240). In some cases, upzoning and deregulating had the direct consequence of raising housing prices without creating the demand for new (and more affordable) construction homes (Freemark, 2020). Finally, Rodríguez-Pose & Storper (2020) suggest that each regional context is unique and an aggregated or blanket approach to deregulation misses important socio-cultural, geographic, and historical factors related to each proposed development area.

They argue that more regulation—not less—may be the key to equitable building practices:

Most importantly, undifferentiated aggregate supply policies do essentially nothing to abate the underlying structural causes of the housing crisis in prosperous metro areas that we have identified: high demand from highly skilled, high-income people; increasing income inequality; and a rise in construction and land costs due to the growth and maturation of metropolitan regions and demands for a higher quality urban environment. The targeted policies that would be needed to reduce spatial economic segregation may involve increased regulation and other forms of public intervention into the housing market, exactly the opposite of the deregulation approach. The evidence from cities with active public/social housing programs (such as New York, Paris and London) is that this requires high public subsidies for construction of affordable housing. (Rodríguez-Pose & Storper, 2020, p. 241–242)

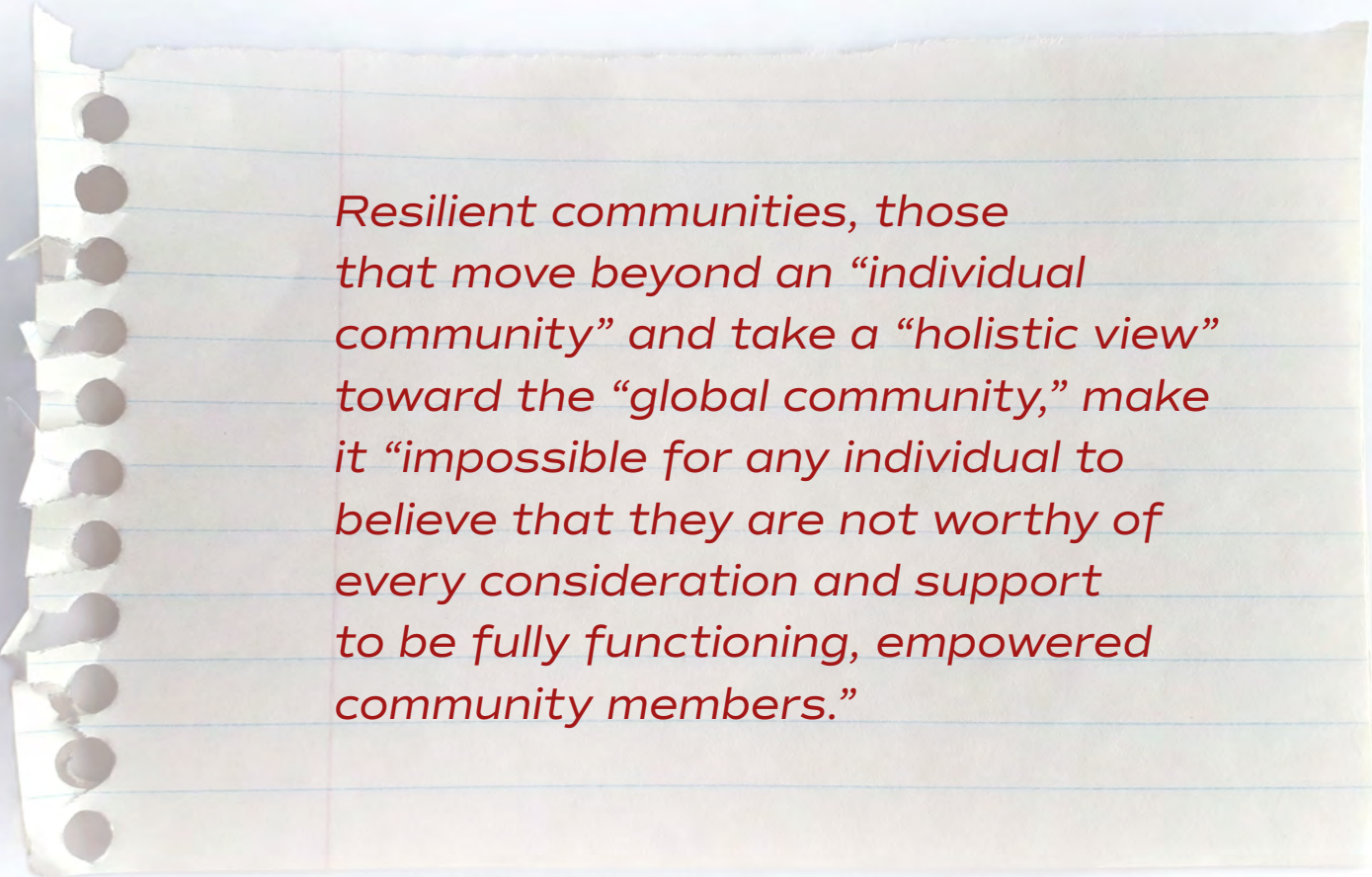
Imbroscio (2021) contributes to this critique by arguing that though NIMBYs are the ones pushing for greater land-use restrictions to ensure a greater preservation over the spatial and racial dynamics of their neighbourhoods, YIMBYs can often times be developers looking to deregulate zoning in order “to realize profits by capturing rents” (p. 232).

One way in which YIMBYs have advocated for increased deregulation is by depoliticizing housing and focusing on development-specific concerns (Legacy et al., 2016). By identifying key issues related to proposed development or building projects, YIMBYs and NIMBYs can work toward negotiating or compromising on specific issues rather than having larger ideological debates (such as those related to the right to housing). While useful in a pragmatic sense, such depoliticization may oversimplify and obfuscate the racist, classist, and ableist histories of certain kinds of exclusionary community-building practices. According to McNee and Pojani (2022), critics have deemed this depoliticized and market-oriented approach as “supporting unrestrained capitalism, anti-regulation, whitewashing, neoliberal multi-culturalism, and racialized gentrification” (p. 559). These kinds of narratives are also largely reproduced by the news media, who tend to support and amplify the voices of those who support deregulation and capitalist expansion. As Meronek (2018) writes, “YIMBY seem to offer a straightforward prescription that doesn’t upend the free market, and national media outlets love it” (p. 31).

## COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

As discussed above, NIMBY discourses, practices, and policies reinforce social exclusion and erode a sense of community belonging. Such contentions negatively impact community resilience—that is community harmony, sense of belonging, and ability to get along (Brodsky & Cattaneo, 2013). However, YIMBY-informed discourses, practices, and policies can help to overcome such contentions and work to foster community resilience. Further, resilient communities, those that move beyond an “individual community” and take a “holistic view” toward the “global community,” make it “impossible for any individual to believe that they are not worthy of every consideration and support to be fully functioning, empowered community members” (Flaherty et al., 2019, p. 27). In this way, resilient communities and social inclusion inform, foster, and support YIMBY-driven initiatives.

To date, the bulk of research available on community resilience has been conducted in silos and in the context of natural disasters (e.g., responses to floods, hurricanes, tsunamis), public health (e.g., pandemics), and public safety concerns (e.g., terrorist attacks), with little attention to community resilience in the face of homelessness (see, for example, Adger, 2000; Chandra et al., 2013; Cutter et al., 2008; Herrmann-Lunecke & Villagra, 2020; Imperiale &



*Resilient communities, those that move beyond an “individual community” and take a “holistic view” toward the “global community,” make it “impossible for any individual to believe that they are not worthy of every consideration and support to be fully functioning, empowered community members.”*

Vanclay, 2016; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Masten, 2001; Pfefferbaum et al., 2015; Rapaport et al., 2018). Yet, as many researchers have convincingly shown, homelessness should be treated and responded to as a disaster (Doll et al., 2022; Karabanow et al., 2022). Further, much of the research available on community resilience has been reactionary in nature, focusing on the use of resilient frameworks, policies, and practices for responding to, or recovering from, incidents, thereby focusing on returning communities to the status quo (Carpenter et al., 2021; Genik & Chouinard, 2015). Yet, a focus on disaster or emergency response does not build long-term stability and resilience but instead focuses on temporary and short-term stability. As such, much of the research available on community resilience has provided little evidence-based research to inform community responses to homelessness.

In what follows, we provide an overview of the available research on community resilience to identify ways in which this research could be used to inform long-term stability and foster YIMBY discourses, practices, and policies that work to entrench a sense of community belonging and social inclusion. We begin by reviewing the diverse ways in which community resilience has been used as a construct and theory.

Specifically, we identify three different, yet overlapping, ways in which community resilience is presented in the literature: a systems construct/framework, an individual construct/framework, and a meso-level construct/framework. Based on this review, we identify the importance of multi-sector cooperation and the inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable populations for developing policies and practices that support long-term community resilience in a way that promotes a sense of community belonging and social inclusion writ large.

## **DEFINING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE**

Community resilience, as a construct, was first established in South America by Elbio Nestor Suarez Ojeda after conducting observational research on community responses following natural disasters (Juliano & Yunes, 2014). From these observations, the research found “that at the same time as pain and loss of lives and resources are processed, these factors often generate a mobilizing effect on the supportive capabilities that allow the damage to be repaired and make recovery possible” (Juliano & Yunes, 2014, p. 141). To date, the literature on resilience offers multiple perspectives that interrogate the capacity of communities to overcome difficult or stressful life situations (see Henderson & Milstein, 2003). As a construct, community resilience has been used in a variety of diverse contexts and disciplines, leading to what some argue to be “imprecise use” (Wulff et al., 2015, p. 363). In fact, there is no consensus in definition, and the use of the term in theory and practice has been found to lack precision: “That is, resilience has been defined in numerous ways, including as an outcome, as a coping strategy, and as a trait” (Liu et al., 2017, p. 113).

The inability to clearly define and operationalize community resilience has impeded scientific testing and, subsequently, the ability to inform evidence-based policies and practices (Liu et al., 2017). Based on a review of the literature, we found community resilience to be discussed at a structural/systems level, as a psychological/individual trait, and as a community (meso) level construct. As illustrated through our review of the literature, the wide adoption and imprecise application of community resilience have made it difficult to identify “concrete actions people, organizations, and institutions can take to promote the sustainable and long-term well-being of communities in the face of adversity and disaster” (Wulff et al., 2015, p. 363). Below we provide a brief review of each of these frameworks and conclude our review by advocating for a meso-level framework for defining community resilience.

### **STRUCTURAL LEVEL CONSTRUCT AND FRAMEWORK**

The largest body of research available on community resilience has explored, operationalized, and studied the concept through disaster emergency management (Imperiale & Vanclay, 2016; Pfefferbaum et al., 2015; Rapaport et al., 2018). As much of this research was outside the purview of our interest in community resilience in the face of homelessness, we provide a brief overview of the existing research, recognizing that much more has been written about community resilience from a structural response framework. Within this framework, community resilience is defined as a positive outcome in the face of adversity or serious threat to personal or collective safety (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Masten, 2001). Adger (2000), for example, defines resiliency as “the ability of groups or communities to cope with external stresses and disturbances as a result of social, political and environmental change” (p. 347). Whereas Wulff et al. (2015) define it as “an approach to preparedness that connects our ability to withstand a disaster with efforts to strengthen day-to-day systems to improve the public’s health and vitality” (p. 368). In this framework, community resilience is recognized as helping communities to mitigate the damage caused by disasters in order to heal, because “actions taken before, during, and after events, be it a natural disaster or an act of terror, can clearly mitigate damage and help communities and individuals to heal and even thrive” (Wulff et al., 2015, p. 361).

Community resilience in the wake of disasters has frequently focused on a systems- and infrastructure-level approach. A systems approach recognizes that components of complex systems interact and change together, often in unpredictable ways, when faced with external pressures and forces (Lerch, 2017). Resilience within this context is “the capacity of a system to undergo disturbance and maintain its function and controls” (Jabareen, 2015, p. 2).

According to a resilient city framework, a resilient city is defined by the overall abilities of its governance, physical, economic and social systems and entities that are exposed to hazards to learn, be ready in advance, plan for uncertainties, resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions. (Jabareen, 2015, p. 19)

*When communities have healthy partnerships with local government agencies, are educated on threats to health and safety, and are able to access resources effectively, they fare more positively when faced with a natural disaster or public health threat as compared to communities where bonds are weaker.*

As illustrated by the definition above, a structural and systems approach to community resilience focuses on returning a community back to its original state in the wake of disaster. Such research shows that when communities have healthy partnerships with local government agencies, are educated on threats to health and safety, and are able to access resources effectively, they fare more positively when faced with a natural disaster or public health threat as compared to communities where bonds are weaker (Chandra et al., 2013; Cutter et al., 2008; Herrmann-Lunecke & Villagra, 2020). Such an approach prioritizes structural, economic, and political factors of resilience, with significantly less attention paid to individual and community-level factors.

For example, when discussing resilient community frameworks, Lerch (2017) argues:

The built environment is really the physical manifestation of decisions about how we occupy land, played out over decades and centuries. Governments decide who can own and what it can be used for. Landowners decide what they want to do with the land. Financial institutions decide what kinds of land uses they are willing to lend money for (and who they are willing to lend money to). Architects and planners decide how a structure will be designed and situated; engineers decide how a structure will be constructed. Owners and managers decide how a structure will be operated, maintained, repaired, and retrofitted.... Multiply this pattern by hundreds or thousands of buildings—and many more individual pieces of infrastructure—and you have the built environment of a community. (Lerch, 2017, p. 294)

Problematic within the above perspective is the way in which a systems approach prioritizes the voices and agency of those with power. The “community,” as represented above, constitutes and prioritizes the agency of those with social, political, and economic power. If a resilient communities framework prioritizes the voices and experiences of those with power when developing structural policies and practices, it inevitably excludes and invisibilizes the needs, experiences, and voices of those who are marginalized, vulnerable, and underserved. Further, community resilience frameworks that focus on returning communities back to “normalcy” will do little to address underlying structural issues of vulnerability (Sledge & Thomas, 2019).

Finally, in the context of homelessness, a structural framework may negate the important roles individual- and community-level factors play in fostering and sustaining community resilience. When homelessness is conceived as solely a lack of housing, it may lead communities to build houses as the solution. However, research available on homelessness and housing has identified that it takes more than just a house to help those experiencing homelessness “thrive” (Marshall et al., 2021, 2022). When simply placed in a home without social integration and supports, many people “languish,” have psychosocial needs that remain unmet, and, as a result, live in a continued state of survival (Marshall et al., 2021, 2022). In this way, a structural framework of community resilience pays inadequate attention to the import of social and psychological supports.



## INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY LEVEL CONSTRUCT AND FRAMEWORK

Another line of inquiry has focused on individual and community group levels of resilience to understand what makes some people and groups of people more resilient than others in the face of adversity. In this framework, it is recognized that individual resilience is an important component of community resilience. This framework is particularly salient in the research looking at community responses to mental health, addictions, and to a lesser extent, homelessness. Here, it is argued that building long-term resilience offers promise for addressing mental illness in communities outside of a disaster-relief context (Flaherty et al., 2019). For Bowling et al. (2020), community resilience is made up of both the context (e.g., psychosocial boundaries) and networks of relationships. For example, in their study of community resilience among gender diverse individuals, they found community resilience to be significantly affected and shaped by individual-level experiences, such as one's ability

Community resilience must include strategies that not only address the basic physical needs of community members [...], but also “the creation of safe places where good mental health and full social inclusion are part of the fabric of peaceful, strong communities.”

to share experiences with other group members and engage in self-reflection, and community-level factors, such as the leadership approach of the group, group norms, and climate (Bowling et al., 2020). Of significant importance within this framework are the roles of social inclusion and community belonging in building resilient communities. Community resilience, therefore, must include strategies that not only address the basic physical needs of community members (such as safety and security), but also “the creation of safe places where good mental health and full social inclusion are part of the fabric of peaceful, strong communities” (Flaherty et al., 2019, p. 27).

Thus, social integration is a key element of community resilience because,

opportunities for social integration can contribute to proximity bridging and bonding with other people outside the mental health system (Ornelas, Duarte et al., 2014; Ware et al., 2007). The recent community science literature suggests the relevance of objective indicators for the integration of people with mental illness related to employment, housing, and the size and interactions of social support. (Ornelas et al., 2019, p. 45)

While much of the research within this framework has focused on community resilience in response to mental health and addictions, there is a smaller body of work that looks at the importance of individual and community factors for fostering community resilience among those precariously housed or homeless.

**While housing is critically important, it is not the solution on its own.**

For example, Bell and Walsh (2015) conducted qualitative field research to understand how residents of homeless shelters perceive and, subsequently, overcome social exclusion and marginalization within their community. In their study, they identify the difference between “rooflessness” and “rootlessness” to describe homelessness as “more than the absence of shelter, but rather ... the absence of support and inclusion in one’s community” (p. 1977). Drawing on the work of McMillan and Chavis (1986), Bell and Walsh (2015) identify four elements of community that shape one’s social inclusion and belonging: membership, influence, reinforcement, and shared emotional connection. This research underscores the importance of shared experiences for creating a sense of community. Bell and Walsh’s study found homeless shelters provide all four elements to residents and uncovered how one’s transition from a shelter into housing was described as “leaving your home for a house” (p. 1987). Their findings led them to advocate for a reimagination of housing that moves away from a heteronormative and nuclear conception of the “home” toward community housing options that foster “a less radical transition” (p. 1987) to allow housing residents to learn to live on their own while still providing social contact and relations that instill a sense of community. These findings are in line with more recent Canadian scholarship that shows that individuals who secure housing after being homeless often do not thrive, but instead live in a constant state of survival (Marshall et al., 2021). This research identifies that while housing is critically important, it is not the solution on its own. Rather, “other aspects of a person’s life including being integrated in their community, having enough money to pay for basic needs, attaining mental well-being, and having opportunities to engage in meaningful activities are similarly important” (Marshall et al., 2021, p. 5).

In this framework, attention is placed on micro-level factors that facilitate or impede resilience within individuals, and by extension, the community. While such work has provided important insights into the role psychosocial factors play in the development and sustainability of resilience, it has given less attention to the role structural factors play within resilience. As Liu et al., argue, while “the emphasis placed on the individual is important in dictating resilient outcomes, it is also an important limitation as these measures assume resilience to be nested within an individual, with little consideration for other variables that may influence the outcome” (2017, p. 112). Thus, when looking at community resilience from

an individual framework, we risk placing blame and responsibility on individual actors or groups for failing to be resilient, without being attentive to the structural elements that shape and inform those very experiences. Further, studying community resilience among specific populations of people can make the findings difficult to generalize across communities in ways that can inform evidence-based policy and practice developments (Liu et al., 2017).

## **MESO-LEVEL CONSTRUCT AND FRAMEWORK**

While important insights have been gained about the structural and individual factors that inform and foster community resilience, such frameworks prioritize one factor (i.e., structural vs. individual) over another and give little attention to the interplay among structural and individual factors. There is a smaller body of scholarship that has taken a meso-level framework to empirically examine the interplay among structural-, individual-, and community-level factors in order to identify what communities need to in order to develop resilience. This line of scholarship has focused on the interactions between political and economic conditions and social networks within communities to demonstrate how the strength of these interactions enhance or negate a community's capacity for resilience (Currie, 2018). For example, the Australian government established a Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) to improve the mental and physical health of its consumers by facilitating access to mental health services, secure housing, and social supports. Sayers et al. write, "HASI programs recognize that people with a mental illness require support not only with access to mental health services and housing, but also more basic support associated with daily living, such as managing their money, health, and participating in community life" (2017, p. 143). This research highlights the need for integrated and collaborative responses—specifically among essential services (health supports), infrastructure (stable housing), and community supports for fostering community resilience among Indigenous mental health clients.

In a study on mid-size community responses to homelessness in British Columbia, Canada, Dej et al. (2021) define community resilience as,

a multi-dimensional, dynamic and iterative process that involves collective awareness, action, reflection, adaptation and social inclusion. Community resilience is influenced by social, cultural and structural resources, constraints and opportunities. Central to developing community resilience is the ability to address sustainable, affordable housing, poverty reduction, and access to a continuum of healthcare and mental health resources. (p. 51)

Their definition identifies the social, cultural, political, and structural factors needed to develop community resilience. Drawing on the work of Brodsky and Cattaneo (2013), Dej et al. (2021) argue that community resilience requires communities to:

(1) Develop conscious collective awareness of the root causes of problems.

(2) Develop an intention to set and maintain goals that aim at addressing problems in a long-term, sustainable way.

(3) Develop thoughtful actions that locate and utilize appropriate and accessible resources.

(4) Continually acquire collective feedback and reflection on the initiative to allow for adjustments and refinement.... It is essential to build feedback loops to solicit reflection from all community members (Dej et al., 2021, p. 52).

*Within this framework, community resilience is something that is built through the inclusion of all community members—including those who are vulnerable, marginalized and underserved.*

Within this framework, community resilience is something that is built through the inclusion of all community members—including those who are vulnerable, marginalized and underserved. Such an approach identifies the importance of investing in participatory action research to identify what supports are needed and what impact policies and practices are having on experiential outcomes. For example, in a study on the development of social capital and community resilience in affordable housing communities, Currie (2018) found that “a lack of pre-existing resources in neighbourhoods hindered the development of social capital and community resilience” and that building such resources into the environment produces better outcomes (p. 100). Some of the benefits of community participation—which means including the voices and experiences of vulnerable, marginalized, and underserved groups—include a better understanding of community needs, identifying differential access to resources and help within your community, improve accountability and problem-solving, and developing trust and cooperation (Mayers et al., 2021).

## PROGRAMMING FOR PROMOTING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Balancing the individual and structural needs of people and communities is central for developing resilient communities. Research has shown that programming focused on multi-tiered interventions can systematically enhance how people interact not only with their built environments, but with other community members. Community sports and music programming, for example, can have beneficial effects on bringing together mixed-income residents and contribute to a vibrant community. In Edmonton, recreational floor hockey programming created a “network of mutuality and solidarity among a group of young men experiencing homelessness” (Koch et al., 2020, p. 2). The sports program was developed by a local community member who was also actively involved in harm reduction services. The program served to not only bring community members together, but also contribute to the identification of root problems. Koch et al. (2018) also notes the importance of sports programs for bringing together community members and carving out a space for friendship and belonging. They write:

Creating spaces where men can show affection and kinship is also important for countering negative stereotypes related to masculinity in the context of homelessness. These sporting programs can also provide an opportunity for engagement by the wider community and social service providers to identify the needs of their clients in a setting that is not clinical or bureaucratic. (Koch et al., 2018, p. 19)

There is also a body of literature that addresses the importance of recreation and community bonding in the context of musical interventions and vulnerable populations (e.g., Kriegel et al., 2022; Lenette et al., 2016). Like sports, music programming can be an effective way to carve out spaces where marginalized or vulnerable groups can develop a sense of attachment and “place” while bringing together a wide range of community members. As Lenette et al. (2016) note in the context of working with detained asylum seekers, “musical activities contributed to creating a sense of solidarity among participants, who, due to diverse backgrounds, were unlikely to have come together outside the detention context” (p. 131). Similarly, Kriegel et al. (2022) also found that

While creativity was a significant draw, so was social diversity. Participants often referred to the opportunities to engage with people they would not meet otherwise, including those with different health problems (e.g., substance use or mental illnesses), different socioeconomic statuses (e.g. homeless and housed; class-based; criminal justice involvement) and a range of demographics (e.g., age, race, gender, sexuality, and religion). (p. 12)

As noted above in the discussion on the systemic and built environment aspects of resilience, it is important to consider how spatial design contributes to (or works against) community belonging. Jones (2015) notes that the simple act of removing one's fence in favour of a shared neighbourhood garden or outdoor space can work toward challenging the deeply engrained spatial design that homeownership has to be closed off and completely privatized. In fact, Laniyonu and Byerly (2021) found that residents' support for housing and shelter programming is positively linked to their interactions with people experiencing homelessness. Those who interact with precariously housed people are more likely to vote in favour of public housing programs. Thus, fighting against the displacement of people experiencing homelessness can, in turn, create greater support for social programming and increased public funding for vulnerable groups.

Evidence suggests that the presence of urban green spaces has significantly positive effects on people experiencing homelessness. Green space provides places to sleep for those living rough and offers opportunity for some to build shelters in more secluded areas (Koprowska et al., 2020). People experiencing homelessness also use land along riverbeds and waterways as places to shelter. They offer access to running water, and as Flanigan and Welsh (2020) suggest, offer a place for those sleeping rough to avoid contact with law enforcement or other agencies. Though these natural landscapes can offer temporary reprieve for people experiencing homelessness, it is important to consider and invest in how spatial design can work toward bringing people together, creating a sense of place, and ultimately strengthen the structural and individual aspects of resilience.

## KEY MESSAGES FOR POLICY, PRACTICE, AND RESEARCH

The following section highlights eight practical and research-based approaches noted in this report. It offers a succinct summary of key findings from this knowledge synthesis that will help policymakers, practitioners, and researchers continue to develop ways for challenging NIMBYism, developing inclusive and equitable YIMBY strategies, and promoting community resilience and belonging.

- (1) *All orders of government should empower community organizations to play a more influential role in shaping YIMBY policies by providing funding and resources to do this work.*** Having community organizations, rather than government entities, take the lead on needed community developments and services could expedite processes by reducing delays related to political influence (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2006). Empowering non-governmental organizations in the planning and development stages could reduce delays related to involving several jurisdictions. Organizations can be effective players in placing pressure on multiple levels of government to enact zoning provisions and also acquire funding from a number of sources simultaneously (see, for example, Oakley, 2002).
- (2) *All orders of government must develop housing policies that meet the needs of people of varying ages, races, ethnicities, genders, and abilities, and these factors must be given meaningful consideration early on.*** YIMBY policies that promote social inclusion, offer harm reduction services (including mental health, substance use treatment, etc.), and provide adequate and affordable housing solutions can be seen as proactive commitments to address things “happening in my backyard” (Bergen, 2019). Factors such as age, race, gender, and ability, must be given meaningful consideration from the earliest stages of community development projects.
- (3) *All orders of government must recognize homelessness and housing unaffordability as a crisis in order to expedite multi-tiered responses and combat NIMBYism.*** To create and strengthen resilient communities, governments can adopt a disaster and emergency management approach to policy as well as practices that are forward-looking, consider multiple response scenarios, and complement efforts between government and non-governmental agencies.

**(4) *Lived experts of housing precarity and homelessness should be consulted at every stage of urban planning and design process to inform best practices related to housing, service provision, and infrastructure supports.*** Lived experts hold the experiential knowledge needed to inform best practices related to housing, service provision, and infrastructure supports that are needed within their respective communities. Collaboratively developed and driven policies and programs are necessary for fostering a sense of community belonging and social inclusion (Marshall et al., 2021, 2022; Sayers et al., 2017). Any approach to building and sustaining community resilience requires a focus on, and inclusion of, peer support specialists and people with lived experience.

**(5) *Funding agencies must provide reliable funding streams for programs that foster and promote community resilience, especially in urban design.*** This includes programs that promote and incentivize community-based, participatory policy and evaluation. By recognizing the expertise of community members and the unique and specific needs they identify, governments can work to support those at the grassroots to meaningfully carry out their work on a long-term basis (Wulff et al., 2015).



**(6) *Governments and policymakers must develop creative ways of educating the public on housing and homelessness, as this can have a strong influence over public opinion on housing policy.*** Evidence suggests that members of the public are seldom influenced by economists and other professional experts when it comes to fact-based approaches to housing policy. This is why governments and policymakers should collaborate with grassroots community members to create more effective tools (Marble & Nall, 2021).



**(7)** *Promoting YIMBYism requires a multi-sector coalition, and as such all orders of government should actively consult organizations dedicated to YIMBY principles on the best ways to address community needs.* Governments at all levels should actively consult with other governmental sectors and organizations that are dedicated to building resilient communities on ways to address the specific and unique needs of those communities.

**(8)** *Policy-makers and service managers must develop holistic responses to address housing needs that prioritizes not only building units, but also strategies to foster community belonging and social inclusion.* While exclusionary zoning practices can limit housing supply and exacerbate class and racial divisions, public policy related to zoning is not enough to build and strengthen communities (Imbroscio, 2021; Rodríguez-Pose & Storper, 2020). Fostering community belonging requires a strong investment with community leaders, stakeholders, and lived experts. Investing in creative ways to foster emotional connections among housed and unhoused residents can strengthen community members' bonds and promote resilience (Koch et al., 2018, 2020; Koprowska et al., 2020; Lenette et al., 2016).

## CONCLUSION

A scoping literature review strategy was employed to collect, analyze, and synthesize research (Abramovich, 2017) related to NIMBYism, YIMBYism, and community resilience in the context of homelessness. Both academic and grey literature were drawn upon to analyze research and practices that contribute to, and counter, narratives related to NIMBYism and YIMBYism, as well as the development of community resilience in terms of social exclusion and inclusion. After conducting a scoping academic and grey literature search, the research team used a set of inclusion criteria to ensure only relevant articles were included in the synthesis. Following exclusions, a total of 191 records were read for synthesis in the final report, including literature focusing on NIMBY, YIMBY, and community resilience in the context of housing or homelessness.

The YIMBY (“Yes in My Backyard”) movement focuses on policies and discourses that promote affordable, social, and equitable housing for all. To counter NIMBY narratives of homelessness, YIMBY attitudes have become prevalent among grassroots and community organizations to advocate for compassionate and sustainable approaches to address the intersecting and systemic factors that contribute to homelessness (Fraser et al., 2019; Gibson, 2005; Scally, 2013). However, no studies have conducted a scoping literature review of the research on NIMBYism and YIMBYism, as well as the promotion of community resilience when considering social and physical exclusion. This report addresses this gap, first by offering a synthesis of literature on NIMBYism and YIMBYism, allowing us to identify the methods communities use to combat social exclusion and isolation. It also synthesizes grey literature to complement and contribute to academic and policy research on homelessness and community resilience. Second, this report identifies literature gaps and offers a comprehensive summary of evidence-based strategies that address social exclusion and promote community resilience. Our literature review synthesizes peer-reviewed academic and grey literature in the following three areas related to homelessness: (1) NIMBY discourses, narratives, and policies, (2) YIMBY and social inclusion discourses, narratives, and policies, and (3) current practices, iterations, and conceptual and theoretical contributions around community resilience.

**191 records were read for synthesis in the final report, including literature focusing on NIMBY, YIMBY, and community resilience in the context of housing or homelessness.**

## **CORE FINDINGS**

The literature on NIMBYism demonstrated how NIMBY attitudes can have detrimental effects on policies and practices designed to address homelessness. NIMBYism is described as a local opposition toward controversial land uses that contribute to the public good but are considered to have a negative influence on the quality of life of local residents (Christiansen et al., 2019; Costanza et al., 2013; Davidson & Howe, 2014). NIMBYs, or community residents in opposition to development, are usually homeowners or business owners that want to protect or increase home values through housing supply restriction and land development prevention (S. Miller & Kiernan, 2021; Tretter & Heyman, 2022). These active, vocal, and connected residents base their NIMBY opposition around concerns such as property values, preserving neighbourhood characteristics, crime, personal safety, and infrastructure strain (Gipson, 2020; Hanson et al., 2015; Kolla et al., 2017). However, these NIMBY assumptions are easily dispelled by research that focuses on social and housing developments and the impact these developments have on neighbourhood communities. Research suggests that NIMBY discourse is instead framed around stereotypes about people experiencing homelessness, which are used to fuel opposition to social housing and services. NIMBY attitudes are thereby reinforced by notions of inequality related to race, class, gender, and ability, due to anti-poor sentiments and racial prejudice (Gipson, 2020; McNee & Pojani, 2022; Tighe, 2012). Regardless, NIMBY attitudes affect public policy decisions, and NIMBYs have successfully blocked and delayed housing developments by participating in zoning and city council meetings (Anthony, 2022; Garland et al., 2017; Glovin, 2021). The influence of these attitudes demonstrates that successful policy solutions should recognize the participatory politics of housing and the ways citizens shape the development process (Einstein et al., 2020).

The “Yes in My Backyard” (YIMBY) movement is the opposite of NIMBYism, focusing on meeting the needs of all community members and promoting affordable housing (Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2021). YIMBY campaigns are usually situated in municipalities, providing a space for political and social mobilization. While some argue that YIMBY’s main focus is housing development and affordability (Coy, 2018; Tapp, 2021), others contend that YIMBYism is an important strategy to prevent homelessness (Dej et al., 2020). A new acronym, PHIMBYism—Public Housing in my Backyard—focuses specifically on public and affordable housing, demonstrating the importance that housing be available to everyone, regardless of social location (McNee & Pojani, 2022). For YIMBY campaigns to be successful, active support from community members is needed. Housing developments are usually supported or opposed through local participation in council meetings, offering residents opportunities for engagement (Tapp, 2021). Research suggests that a lack of awareness about development projects can pose barriers to housing developments, and as such, the media should be mobilized to educate the public and build support for housing (Dinh, 2018).

YIMBY-informed discourses, practices, and policies can help facilitate and foster community resilience. Promoting community resilience should focus on multi-tier interventions to enhance how people interact and their built environments. Some successful programs include community sports and music programming to facilitate recreation and community bonding (Koch et al., 2020; Lennette et al., 2016).

## **FUTURE RESEARCH AREAS**

While this scoping literature review synthesized research related to NIMBY, YIMBY, and community resilience in the context of housing and homelessness, future research is needed in the following areas. More research needs to focus on community resilience and homelessness. To date, much of the research available on community resilience has been conducted with a focus on natural disasters, public health, and public safety, with minimal attention on social exclusion and homelessness. Further, the current research on community resilience is primarily reactionary, focusing on policies and practices for responding to incidents in order to return to the status quo. However, these types of responses emphasize

temporary and short-term stability, providing minimal evidence-based research to inform community responses to homelessness, which requires long-term solutions.

### **More research needs to focus on community resilience and homelessness.**

Further, much of the research on NIMBYism focused on different issues, ranging from wind energy to supportive housing development. Research related to NIMBYism and homelessness are often produced

in silos (Oudshoorn, 2020), which prohibits information sharing and disrupts the development of practices and policies to address NIMBYism and social exclusion. This form of siloing needs to be addressed in future research to ensure that NIMBYism is properly understood, further enabling evidence-based solutions to NIMBYism and homelessness.

While the literature addresses how exclusionary practices tend to be drawn along class and racial lines, little research has been conducted as to the impacts of NIMBYism in or near Indigenous communities. Current and historical colonial practices of land dispossession are inextricably tied to homelessness and social exclusion, and more research into how these legacies inform and shape exclusionary practices is needed.



## KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION ACTIVITIES

Our knowledge mobilization efforts will contribute to our existing research networks and expand multi-sector approaches to combating NIMBYism and promoting social inclusion. *As a result of our research, we will:*

**(1)** Publish our knowledge synthesis findings on the Homeless Hub website. The Homeless Hub is an invaluable resource for those in the homeless sector and contributes to important policy research.

**(2)** Develop and share infographics and research briefs focused on: (1) approaches to combating community level NIMBY discourses and practices; (2) discourses, policies, and practices to promote YIMBYism; and (3) policies and practices to foster community resilience.

**(3)** Develop and create a podcast episode for the series CRSP Talk—a podcast series designed to promote research at the Centre for Research on Security Practices (CRSP) at Wilfrid Laurier University. The podcast episode and the full knowledge synthesis report will be sent to all members of CRSP.

**(4)** The report will also be sent within our “From NIMBY to Neighbour Network.” Our ongoing project, funded by a SSHRC Partnership Development Grant, explores perceptions of homelessness in three mid-size Ontario cities. Through this project, we have developed connections with city partners, community organizations, and local residents and businesses. We will distribute our report to these stakeholders.

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