

NIMBY

Why don't we just dig more holes or use old quarries to get rid of our garbage once our present landfill sites are filled? The answer is not that simple! Apart from the irresponsible environmental consequences, many people object to new landfill sites (amongst a wide range of other facilities and developments) being established where they live. This is often due to concerns about smell, litter, pollution and reduced value of their homes and is known as the "not in my backyard" (NIMBY) phenomenon. NIMBYism is a term given specifically to local opposition of development proposals that are seen as a potential threat to the local community. For example, landfill sites, incineration plants and chemical works.

NIMBYs may recognise the value of a potentially hazardous facility as long as it is not sited near where they live. As an example, among local residents supporting a proposed nuclear-fuel waste disposal facility, concern over risk decreased, the further the distance of the facility from their place of residence (GRE TLR). Another classic example of NIMBY behaviour is of local opposition to the siting of a recycling or waste disposal facility. This aspect of NIMBYism is sometimes considered hypocritical as it is often based on self-contradicting fears.

While NIMBY attitudes are usually regarded as concerning property values and aesthetics, grounds for local opposition to facilities often do not reflect these characteristics or pigeonholed attitudes at all. For example, a hazardous waste incineration proposal had attracted opposition from residents within its vicinity. However, surveys showed that the opposition was related mostly to a lack of trust in government, as well as a fear of the health and environmental consequences (GRE TLR). Even though some of these factors can be localised (such as health consequences), these concerns cannot be overlooked as irrational or selfish in the way that property values and aesthetic concerns can sometimes be.

With effective community involvement in local or neighbourhood issues intrinsically linked to the success of environmental justice, NIMBYism, while a reality, certainly doesn't provide an adequate explanation of public attitudes. There is an urgent need to move beyond the NIMBY syndrome and to recognise the earth as everyone's backyard, and encouraging everyone to play a role in its preservation.

Reference: GRE TLR, online at <http://www.gre.ac.uk/~bj61/talessi/tlr42.html>

WHAT CAN I DO?

Stay informed! If there is a local environmental issue that you are concerned about, ask around or do your own research. There are many sites out there that list a wide range of examples of local campaigning against environmentally unfriendly developments. Places to start include:

When a product cannot be reused in its current form, recycle it. Can your current purchases be recycled in your local recycling program? Remember that buying products made from recycled materials is part of supporting recycling (check out our provide link) and helps us 'close the loop'.

- www.acfonline.org.au - Australian Conservation Foundation
- [www.org.au World Wildlife Fund Australia](http://www.worldwildlife.org/australia).
- www.oren.org.au - Otway Ranges Environment Network
- www.greenleft.org.au/back/2003/555/29494 - Sydney residents campaign against a waste transfer station.

MORE INFORMATION

- <http://www.environmentalchemistry.com/yogi/hazmat/articles/nimby.html> - a great article on the benefits and negatives of how the NIMBY principle can affect facility sitings
- <http://www.conncoll.edu/ccrec/greennet/ccbes/dianapaper.html> - an article on the fight for environmental quality issues relating to NIMBY
- <http://www.cpn.org/topics/environment/beyondnimby.html> - US and Canadian approaches to NIMBYism and hazardous waste facilities