

URBANITY 2017: THE GREAT DEBATE – NIMBY Vs YIMBY

The YIMBY Case, by Natalie Rayment

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TOPIC 1: WHERE DO I STAND? (THE YIMBY CASE)

I co-founded YIMBY Qld with my colleagues at Wolter Consulting Group 18 months ago, so I'm clearly Team YIMBY. We're now an **independent not-for-profit organisation** and part of a growing **global YIMBY network**. We say **yes in my back yard to good development** that makes for **better living**.

I'm here to persuade you that YIMBYs should not only be the **standout winner today**, but it's the **only responsible way forward** for our cities. I have dealt with the NIMBY factor throughout my 20+ year town planning career working on the front line (development assessment), on both sides of the table, and it is this experience that has driven me to become an avid YIMBY campaigner.

What do YIMBYs stand for?

YIMBY has become a **global movement** in response to the escalating cost of housing in major cities around the world. YIMBYs have become a **voice for young people** asking "**What is my future in this City?**", as housing prices and rents escalate We want **housing to be available to everyone** and so our message is simple, we say **YES. We want 3 things: more housing, different types of housing**, and the businesses and services that support housing and make our city's work.

The key differences in our positions

Now I know Cr Sri doesn't profess to be a NIMBY and perhaps it may seem as though we share some ideals around housing for everyone and sustainable development outcomes, I'm here to tell you that we have some pretty big differences. The true divide is in how we intend to deliver on those ideals. We have very different realities.

YIMBYs are about getting to yes. NIMBYs say No. We're the **positive voice** in this community conversation. **By their own testimony, the NIMBY message is negative - not in my back yard.** There's an innate **hypocrisy** – it's not saying no in principle, we might agree with the ideals, but its saying no, not near me, not if it will change the character of my neighbourhood! It's the people who enjoy taking the moral high ground and support sustainable development of their city, just not in their neighbourhood. The '*socially conscious until my skin's in the game*. We believe these NIMBY behaviours **increase housing costs, reduce productivity and stifle innovation**. And that does not equal good development.

What we want

There's never been a more important time to be a YIMBY. From population growth to the decade of disruption, the theme of this year's conference, we need to embrace development and find new ways to be innovative. Whether that's delivered by the private or public sector, large corporations or mums and dads, we don't mind, as long as we get out of the way and stop continually shooting down new projects, delaying projects and raising the hoops to be jumped through to get a new project off the ground.

I'm sure we all want our cities to be great places to live, sustainable, and innovative. We don't think every building is great, but the difference is that we want to have a discussion about it, not a fight. For us it's about **Finding Your Yes!**

TOPIC 2: WHY ARE YIMBYS BETTER FOR THE COMMUNITY? (What values underpin sustainable development in the community?)

4 YIMBY Qld qualities of good development

YIMBYs support **good development that makes for better living**. To break that down, we talk about the 4 YIMBY qualities of good development, which we catalogued early on in discussion with our readers. We say that good development **exhibits one of these 4 YIMBY qualities**– design excellence, sustainability, innovation or community dividend. We have a list of examples of these qualities and attributes on our website, showcase projects which exhibit them on Instagram and have published them in our **‘Reasons for Approval’ poster**, to start a conversation with the community about the positive outcomes of new developments.

While we might agree with Cr Sri about examples of, or even a definition of, sustainable development outcomes, our point of difference again is in the delivery. We don’t think the best way to achieve these outcomes is by putting up barriers to development and advocating for rules based planning.

We understand the **virtues of**, and advocate for, **our performance based planning** system. The great irony is that the often mediocre “tick and flick” outcomes are quickly achieved and generally travel below the NIMBY radar; yet bring on something slightly out of the box and all hell breaks loose. Why is it that some of our best examples of creative, innovative, world class development are the most controversial? We need to incentivise innovation, rather than demonise each extra storey.

Having worked on **many great projects** that contribute to making Brisbane a better place, none more so than Sunland’s Grace on Coronation at Toowong which is still held up in the Courts almost two and a half years after approval, I’ve witnessed first hand the true cost of NIMBYism. Beware the billionaire NIMBY living next door to your project!

NIMBYism increases the cost of housing

NIMBY campaigning comes at a **cost**. A **cost we can’t afford**. That **cost is on housing** and as a result is a cost to the community, particularly the younger generation.

These costs include:

- the **holding costs** of delayed projects
- the lost economies of scale when there is downward pressure on **yields**
- the **costs of appeal** not only on the developer but the public purse in defending development decisions, and
- the **mounting cost of increasingly restrictive nannying rules** and regulations written in response to every complaint. I don’t think many people would realise that there are now over 100 pages of applicable local planning codes under Brisbane’s City Plan to be addressed in every DA for a new townhouse or apartment. That’s mind boggling, and ultimately unproductive.

TOPIC 3: HOW DO WE GET THERE? (When it comes to planning, design and delivery of safe and inclusive cities, how does the development industry, planning authorities and elected officials measure our strategic objectives?)

What YIMBYs want is simple: to get to YES!

In getting to Yes to more housing and good development outcomes, we want to:

1. **Balance the conversation**
2. **Even up the 'information' playing field** and **dispel the many urban myths** around the DA process
3. **Remove barriers** to good development and **support laws that encourage innovation**, and
4. **Showcase** the projects that display the **4 YIMBY Qld qualities**.

Measures that would say to us that we are **reaching our strategic goals** would be:

1. For **balancing the conversation**, I'd like to see:
 - the **media talking about the positives** of development. Right now, the media (other than Urban Developer) creates a sense of danger around the topic of density, painting a picture of a **city under siege**, amid **floods of development, ripping the heart out** of our communities. I'd like to see more about the need for development, the need to partner with the development industry who delivers development and more showcasing of the positive attributes of developments
 - people and community groups **using our positive submission tool kit** to make submissions in support of development outcomes or attributes and
 - consultation on development projects where we can have a discussion and work together to get to YES.
2. In **evening up the 'information' playing field**, I'd like to see:
 - Planners and politicians **stop talking about height limits** when we have a performance based planning system that sets heights as acceptable outcomes only, that is examples, one way in which to achieve the performance outcome. We all need to watch our language around development and planning rules, or no wonder people get confused
 - Communities, and politicians, that understand the **virtues of our performance based planning** system and
 - A **dispelling of the myths** around how development gets approved – we want to get beyond the rhetoric that development is bad and only gets through with a brown paper bag. We want people to understand how developments gets approved and the reasons for approval.
3. For **removing barriers** to new development, I'd like to see:
 - A **breaking down of the rules** that stand in the way of building new housing
 - More **as of right** development
 - **Faster** approvals and
 - **Less appeals** – let's get to YES.
4. Ultimately, I'd like to **see more housing, more types of housing and more services** that support housing. And I'd like these **new developments to exhibit a least one of the 4 YIMBY Qld qualities**, design excellence, innovation, sustainability or community dividend.

So, I hope you'll agree with me that YIMBYs are the hero in the urban development story. *Don't let the car parking space in front of your house become more important than the opportunity to make a new friend.* Get on board Team YIMBY, be the positive force in this conversation.