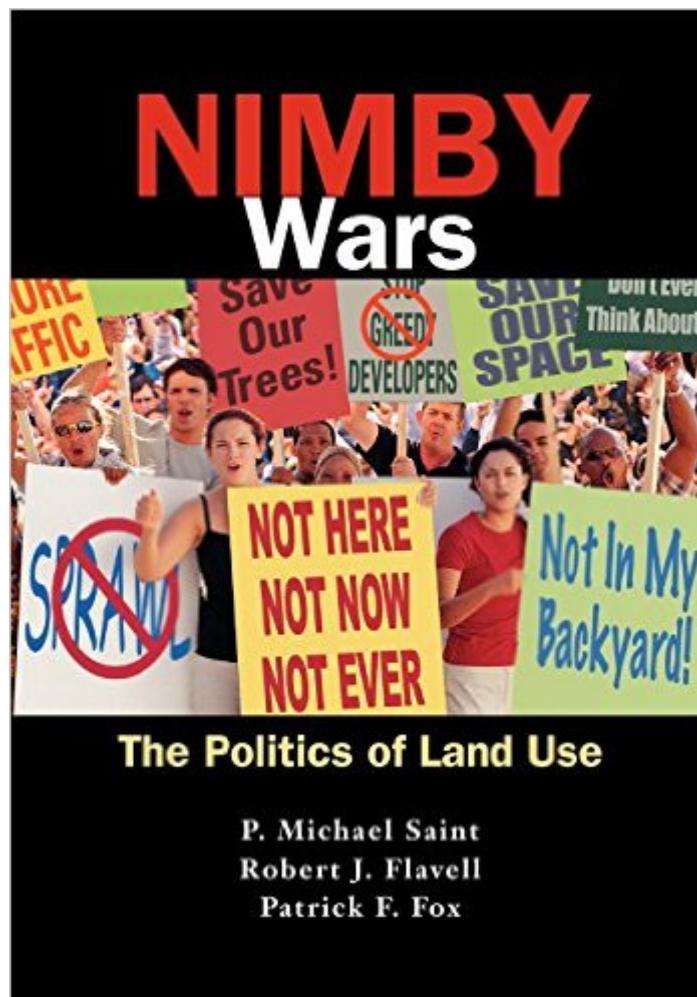


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# NIMBY Wars. The Politics Of Land Use



## Synopsis

Not long ago, few places ever said no to new real estate development. Growth meant jobs, tax revenue and progress. Smoke a cigar with the building inspector, pick up your permit, and invite the mayor to the groundbreaking photo. Then came smart growth, anti sprawl, environmental movements, historic preservationists and NIMBYs (those who said not in my backyard) At the same time, savvy business operators realized that using land use regulations to keep competitors out could protect profits far better than cutting prices after a rival's new store opened. *NIMBY Wars* shows how the arena of local land use regulation has been politicized and describes in explicit detail what developers - and their opponents - must do to win. Land use politics is a completely new and different discipline from the old-fashioned 'local fixer' method or the press release approach to project approval. Its practitioners make no effort to peddle influence, or to waste time trying to educate; people who resolutely oppose a project. They do not treat the public as a market; to whom they sell; the project, and they do not harp on the developer's vision of the benefits that the project will bring the community. Instead, practitioners of land use politics practice politics - the process by which citizens decide who gets what. Land use politics is based on citizen advocacy, not professional lobbying or presentation. The difference is considerable, and the benefits of this approach are many. *NIMBY Wars* distills more than 25 years of experience in the trenches of land use battles, both for and against projects as varied as a hospital and an oil refinery. Readers will learn exactly what works and what doesn't work when it comes to influencing local decision-makers faced with a controversial development proposal. Even veterans of real estate development permitting will be surprised by the sophistication, cutting-edge tactics and effectiveness of the strategies described in *NIMBY Wars*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There are many "ah-ha moments" in "Nimby Wars." Whether you are a developer trying to push a controversial project through the permitting and construction process, or neighbors trying to stop it, "Nimby Wars" provides invaluable insights and strategies. And for the regulators caught in the middle, the book is a "must read" that takes some of the mystery out of what seems to be the "surprise attacks." For more than three decades, I headed government planning agencies in California. I can recognize many of the controversies and scenarios the authors included in "Nimby Wars." It is a good, entertaining read. It also can serve as a "manual" for what is likely to occur as proponents and opponents bash each other with the environmental laws that "govern" most states', counties' and cities' land-use decisions. John Hardisty [...] Bakersfield

I highly recommend NIMBY Wars to anyone involved in development or the field of zoning and land use. The real estate landscape has dramatically changed over the years, with decision making and power brokering diffused to multiple different layers of government. As the book says, the days of one stop permitting or getting a quick sign off from a building inspector appear to be in the rear view mirror - especially in the North East. The Saint Index polling survey at the end of the book was of particular interest. Most of the results confirm various expectations concerning land use, and regionality of opposition to development. It does appear that while many residents are generally supportive of development, very few wish to see it occur near them. While there is support for retail, housing, or infrastructure development, it appears to evaporate the closer a subdivision is in relation to the project. It is clear that the author's have a depth of experience in development fights. The "war stories" they share about their experiences in the US, Canada, and the UK are fascinating. If you are involved in zoning or development, I highly recommend this book.

The middle of this book is an argument about why any seeking to build something controversial should hire the authors, rather than relying on attorneys or local politicians to get their project approved. Having said that, I did learn a little bit from this book. In particular: \*The authors show that a project can be approved if the developer is willing to invest the resources needed to get local support. For example, any project involving new construction might get union support (if the construction is going to involve union labor). Business groups are more likely to support projects

that will spread the tax burden away from them. A developer may get public support by promising to build amenities for nearby residents; for example, the authors gained public support for a client's office building by promising to donate nearby land to the city for a park. Of course, many of these amenities may make development more expensive, adding to some regions' high housing costs.\*Sometimes, Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) opposition is really not from neighbors at all- especially in the retail context. Sometimes, the competitor of a proposed new store will secretly create and fund a citizens group in order to defeat the project. So if you read about anti-Wal Mart agitation, be aware that it really be coming from some other big box retailer!\*The last chapter uses a survey to show the unpopularity of new development in English-speaking nations- though (somewhat to my surprise) offices and multifamily housing are supported by about half the poll respondents. The most unpopular land uses are landfills, casinos, heavy industry, and Wal-Mart.

I am getting my Master's Degree in Urban Planning and came across "Nimby Wars" while researching a term-paper and quickly became drawn into the book's content. I've worked in some small town planning offices before and have dealt with one or two disgruntled residents. This book outlines the effects several hundred residents can have on a development project. It is interesting to read how lightly some governing bodies will take this "mob mentality" and underestimate their influence. I've seen organized communities successfully stop a liquor store or fast-food chain from entering their neighborhoods but this book explains how to handle residents trying to stop an 82 acre shopping mall or 500 acre rock-quarry. As a future urban planner, this book will give me some insight and tools to better deal with residents and neighbors. It also made me realize that even good projects are stopped just because of political opposition despite their benefits. That was a little sobering.

There is a lot of common sense stuff here that anybody who has ever done community outreach on a development project already knows (e.g., learn the political lay of the land first, build ostensibly legitimate citizens groups, etc.) but the real down and dirty tactics that these guys and other land use pros use will never see the light of day in print (nor should they). All land use is local and local developers have their go-to people already, so this book appears to be a marketing piece aimed at middle managers in large companies who are tasked with managing property development projects. By presenting them with a "resource" in some local market where they have none, this allows them to cross off one more thing on their to-do list. I'm not disparaging the author(s)-- the book is laid out well and is well-written, but they are not going to give away their real secrets for free (or for the cost

of the book)-- you need to hire their firm for that!

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