

Rose Hill Coalition

UPDATE

March 28, 2023

What Is YIMBY and Why Vote?

Over the past months, you may have become aware of YIMBY representatives and proponents who are aggressively fighting in favor of the proposal to rezone Rose Hill Plaza from commercial to mixed use. This community advocacy movement strongly supports new developments, especially ones that they claim will promote affordability or diversity.

But YIMBY is more than just citizens waving the flag for “affordable or diverse housing”. They are heavily supported by major real estate developers (and investors) who have significant financial influence in the political sphere, locally and nationally. And the original affordable and diverse moniker the movement was originally based on is now mostly a cover for high-density rental development *anywhere*. Like many movements with noble intentions, it has been hijacked for the benefit of other less noble intentions.

YIMBY proponents argue that zoning restrictions put into place in the 1970s are now outdated and no longer serve the overall good. That may be true in some instances and there are means in place to make exceptions. But more precisely, the zoning laws no longer serve the financial needs of billion-dollar real estate developers.

Ironically, those financial needs and perspectives are focused on a real estate market that no longer exists. That real estate market trend is looking in the back view mirror. Just as our real estate assessments are based on last year’s home sales. That trend does not take into consideration how the real estate markets are *today* and might be in even two or ten years. The reasons are obvious. Like most large businesses, flexibility is not in their genes. They pick their path based on the past and changing course is like trying to put the brakes on a two-year-old who wants candy.

Like water, large real estate companies also will take the shortest path to their destination. That means, bull-doing their way through any opposition, paving the road with political contributions, finding the weakest link, and quickly occupying “free space”. And if no one stands in their way, they will get what they want.

Who is best to make these decisions? Local communities. Local government. That is, if they really kept their eyes on “local”. Oftentimes, local gets pushed aside by outside forces. The attention span of a two-year-old is short and vulnerable. We have to diligently keep them focused and not let others influence them in ways that are not beneficial.

Who buys a house with a pool if they don’t want or can’t pay for liability insurance? Who keeps chickens in their yard if local ordinances prohibit them? In other words, we live within boundaries, both internal and external. Those boundaries *will* change over time, but this is a democracy, and we have a say.

You can choose to speak up or let someone else make the decisions for you. And there are lots of people and organizations that would like to make those decisions for you. In some cases, we take that option for because it's easier, we don't care, or we trust others to make the decision for us. Then if we don't like the decision, we blame someone else.

Many feel that voting is a waste of time because their voice isn't heard. The problem is not that their vote doesn't count. The problem is that we think we have done our job when we cast that vote. It's like writing a law and not enforcing it. We resign ourselves to the "inevitable" and think we'll just vote differently next time. So, between now and then, we hang up our coats and expect that next time things will be different. We all know that doesn't work in our favor.

What happens when you take your eyes off a two-year old? You can pretty much count on it they will be doing whatever they want. Even if we rely on a babysitter (a parent representative), but if that babysitter doesn't do their job, do we wait until our next kid to do anything? Someone else will take care of that child as they see fit when we choose not to.

Ever hear that saying, we are all children inside? Yes, we are! We instinctively go for the bright shiny object. How do you catch a fish? With just bait? No, with bait and a hook. So when you see a shiny object, if you learned your lesson, you will watch for that hook. But if you didn't learn and you choose to listen to the fisherman, know that they will mislead you to their advantage. Maybe the bait will be different or larger, but the hook is still there.

"Some would argue YIMBY groups are calling for too much development in urban cores, clogging streets with traffic, and overcrowding areas," says Al Maiorino, president of Public Strategy Group, a public affairs firm in Boston. "They may also feel YIMBY groups are only in search of more affordable housing. The reality is, they care for economic development and bringing affordable and other housing to urban areas. They have successfully changed zoning laws in cities to allow for more residential development."

Realtor.com, 2/21/22, "What is YIMBY?", <https://www.realtor.com/advice/buy/what-is-yimby-yes-in-my-back-yard-movement-explained/>

The final act of Congress in 2022 included passage of a new \$85 million grant program aimed at zoning reform. The \$1.7 trillion omnibus spending bill created a "Yes In My Backyard" competitive grant program at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The funding provides significant incentive and support for local zoning reform and planning for housing affordability.

American Planning Association, 1/10/23, "Congress Funds New 'YIMBY' Grants For Zoning Reform", <https://www.planning.org/blog/9262900/congress-funds-new-yimby-grants-for-zoning-reform/>

A partnership between the American Planning Association (APA) and the National League of Cities (NLC), the Housing Supply Accelerator is a national campaign to improve local capacity, identify critical solutions, and speed reforms that enable communities and developers to work together to produce, preserve and provide a diverse range of quality housing by realigning the efforts of public and private stakeholders in the housing sector to meet housing needs at the local level. The Housing Supply Accelerator brings together local governments, community planners, builders, financial institutions, housing policy associations and state and federal partners to develop, align and advance solutions for housing supply challenges at the local level.

American Planning Association, "The Housing Supply Accelerator",
<https://www.planning.org/housing-supply-accelerator/>

Jeff McKay Top Donors by Industry Sector

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https://www.vpap.org/committees/328365/donors_sector_totals/

Rodney Lusk Top Donors

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LINK to all Coalition Updates: <https://rosehillcoalition.org/coalition-updates/>

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https://www.vpap.org/candidates/104888/top_donors/?start_year=all&end_year=all