

# Long Island Business NEWS

Where Business Gets Down to Business

 [Print this article](#)

## Yes on housing

By David Winzelberg

Friday, November 30, 2007

In the face of Long Island's acute shortage of affordable places to live, the Long Island Progressive Coalition is launching a campaign that flies in the face of suburban convention.

YIMBY, which stands for Yes In My Back Yard, will bring unions, business groups, builders and community organizations to public hearings and town meetings to advocate for more affordable housing.

Lisa Tyson, director of LIPC, and YIMBY organizer Maritza Silva-Farrell said they already have the Long Island Housing Partnership and Vision Long Island's support.

Tyson said that naysayers who show up at town and village halls across the Island to speak against affordable housing initiatives represented vocal minorities and not the true sentiment in those communities. A guide to grassroots organizing will be part of the educational component of the campaign, Silva-Farrell said.

The highest fair market rents in the state are in Nassau and Suffolk, where a one-bedroom apartment averages \$1,084, which the coalition claims is unaffordable to nearly half of Long Islanders. LIPC is pushing for more diversity of housing, with a focus on rentals.

Tyson said the YIMBY campaign includes getting 20 percent of most new housing to be sold as affordable for people who make up to 120 percent of the area's median income. "We can't control where things get built," Tyson said. "But we want input on what gets built."

Before the YIMBY effort had a name, the coalition applied pressure to the Town of Southampton to help get an affordable community called Bridgehampton Mews approved. It also helped move the Town of East Hampton to create a \$3 million affordable housing fund. Most recently, LIPC lobbied to get 20 percent of the housing in the new RexCorp/Charles Wang Lighthouse project, about 400 units, to be affordably priced.

"We hope to be a catalyst for creating more affordable housing," said Matt Frank, a vice president at RexCorp. "It's a very positive sign when Long Islanders take on these kind of issues."

Besides the effort to get people to attend town meetings, the YIMBY movement will fight against exclusionary zoning in places like Smithtown, according to Tyson, where officials have expressed no desire to host affordable residences.

But the YIMBY drive may succeed even in those places because of the "enlightened self-interest" of Long Islanders who want to keep family members close to home, according to Vision Long Island's Eric Alexander. And getting those people out to meetings is essential for the success of the campaign.

"It shouldn't just be the developer's attorney and the labor unions that want to build it who support projects," Alexander said. "More people should come out."

---

© 2007 Long Island Business News

