

## The Truth About YIMBYs – Compilation of Articles

Despite their efforts to assume the moral high ground and appear as progressives, YIMBYs are not actually progressives. They are generally well-off, privileged people who feel very entitled and are looking out for their own interests. They generally don't care if lower- and middle-income residents suffer as a community densifies and more YIMBYs move in. They're not very open about where they get their funding and other support. Considering the major role YIMBYs are playing in the most divisive issue Arlington has seen in decades, it would be helpful for someone to take a deep dive into who they really are, who their allies are, and where their money is coming from.

A good deal of work has already been done painting the picture. Here are YIMBYs:

### What Is a YIMBY? (Hint: It's Not Good)



YIMBYs at a protest in San Francisco

<https://housinghumanrt.medium.com/what-is-a-yimby-hint-its-not-good-66ab3a199f67>

More YIMBYs:



<https://www.yimbysofnova.org/>

Here are some real progressives:



<https://www.housingisahumanright.org/why-is-california-yimby-hiding-the-names-of-big-money-contributors/>

More real progressives:



[https://www.sfexaminer.com/our\\_sections/forum/the-problem-with-yimby/article\\_30de77ae-b93f-5105-975f-6281f8f3dfe8.html](https://www.sfexaminer.com/our_sections/forum/the-problem-with-yimby/article_30de77ae-b93f-5105-975f-6281f8f3dfe8.html)

True progressives have concluded that YIMBYs are not good people and are not working in the interests of the disadvantaged.

For example, this from the group Housing Is A Human Right:

On the steps outside San Francisco City Hall, on a blue-sky Tuesday in April 2018, a group of grassroots activists and residents — many of whom were

people of color — held a press conference to denounce SB 827, a statewide, land-use deregulation bill. California State Sen. Scott Wiener introduced the controversial legislation, and a fledgling organization called California YIMBY helped craft it. The residents and activists believed SB 827 would be catastrophic, adding jet fuel to a gentrification crisis that was already decimating San Francisco’s working-class communities, especially those of color.

“We’ll keep fighting,” Charles Dupigny, the African American co-director of Affordable Divis, told the crowd. “We’ll keep moving forward. We plan to keep fighting this bill, like many times in the past in San Francisco.”

But as Dupigny talked, a young, mostly white group of self-identified “YIMBYs” aggressively inserted themselves into the press conference, refusing to listen. In fact, they were trying to silence Dupigny, yelling at him, “Read the bill! Read the bill! Read the bill!” Their brashness wasn’t surprising. . . .

The YIMBY agenda plays out this way: deregulate as much as possible, an apartment construction boom will follow, and sky-high rents will stabilize and drop since more units have come onto the market. It’s the old, possibly outdated, supply-and-demand argument.

[Housing justice activists rightly counter that developers build almost exclusively luxury housing](#), which not only does nothing to directly help middle- and working-class Californians — who are hit hardest by the housing affordability crisis — but also worsens the problem. . . .

Zillow Chief Economist Dr. Svenja Gudell added: “Apartment construction at the low end needs to start ramping up, and soon, in order to see real improvement.”

YIMBYs don’t want to hear that. In fact, [they routinely show a visceral dislike for anyone who challenges their supply-side, deregulation belief system](#) — whether it’s using Twitter to pile on critics or immediately shouting them down in public. Now, on the steps of San Francisco City Hall, that hostility was on frightful display.

After Dupigny spoke, the YIMBYs continued their menacing counter-protest. Things got so out of hand that one resident, a 77-year-old Asian woman, fainted — and was shuttled to a hospital. Sonja Trauss, a

contentious, outspoken leader among the YIMBYs, was so fierce that sheriff's deputies moved her away from the crowd.

“Our members were intimidated by YIMBY,” Wing Hoo Leung, president of the Chinatown-based Community Tenants Association, told the *San Francisco Examiner*. “They felt threatened.”

Lueng added, “I think the YIMBY have no heart.”

The showdown at San Francisco City Hall was not an aberration, but another nasty example of YIMBYs' hard-core militancy. . . .

“The YIMBY movement has a white privilege problem,” [Anya Lawler, a policy advocate with the Western Center on Law & Poverty](#), told the *Los Angeles Times*. “I don't think they recognize it. They don't understand poverty. They don't understand what that's like, who our clients really are and what their lived experience is.”

<https://www.housinghumanright.org/inside-game-california-yimby-scott-wiener-and-big-tech-troubling-housing-push/>

Another article from Housing Is A Human Right asks: “Why Is California YIMBY Hiding the Names of Big-Money Contributors?”

California YIMBY, the [land-use lobbying group for Big Tech](#), continues to hide behind its nonprofit status and refuses to reveal exactly who contributes the big bucks to the organization. California YIMBY CEO Brian Hanlon has never replied to Housing Is A Human Right's demand to name the lobbying group's top 50 contributors, even though its pro-gentrification agenda harms millions of Californians.

<https://www.housingisahumanright.org/why-is-california-yimby-hiding-the-names-of-big-money-contributors/>

A third article from Housing Is A Human Right makes some key points, including:

In California, in 2017, YIMBYs started getting tons of press coverage. [The Guardian](#) described them as “angry millennials” who were fed up with the housing affordability crisis. But, they were solely concerned about themselves and their predicament — not lower-income people. Always remember that. . . .

The problem, YIMBYs believed, was that a housing shortage was driving up rent prices. They rarely, if ever, talked about [corporate landlords charging outrageous rents](#) or that [developers were demolishing rent-controlled apartments to build market-rate, luxury housing](#) or that local and state governments needed to build more affordable housing and preserve already existing affordable-housing stock, such as rent-controlled apartments.

Instead, YIMBYs simplistically concluded that the housing market needed to be flooded with more apartments, and that would ultimately drive down rents. They knew [developers built almost exclusively luxury housing](#), and that was okay with them. YIMBYs insisted that more *luxury housing* would solve California's *housing affordability crisis*. From the get-go, YIMBYs embraced trickle-down economics or what's now called ["trickle-down housing" policy](#). As middle- and working-class people have long known, trickle-down anything doesn't work — except to make the rich richer. . . .

Housing justice activists fought back, knowing that deregulation and more luxury housing in working-class communities would lead to gentrification — and less affluent residents would be forced out of their longtime homes. As a result, YIMBYs, who are known to [bully people on Twitter and use aggressive tactics](#), continually clashed with housing justice and tenants rights activists. It wasn't pretty.

In 2018, for example, [Maria Zamudio, a Bay Area activist, told \*In These Times\*](#), "They're like, 'Just build housing, you stupid brown people! I moved here last week, and I need a place to live!'" . . .

As one can guess, YIMBYs are not housing justice activists. That's super important, and must be repeated. YIMBYs are NOT housing justice activists. But for political reasons, YIMBYs are desperate to own housing justice credentials.

<https://housinghumanrt.medium.com/what-is-a-yimby-hint-its-not-good-66ab3a199f67>

The San Francisco Examiner has also weighed in on YIMBYs:

Last week, Truthout published our article, "YIMBYs: The 'Alt-Right' Darlings of the Real Estate Industry," which investigated the Bay Area's growing Yes-in-my-backyard (YIMBY) pro-development movement.

We exposed the ways that YIMBY activists have co-opted social justice movements against gentrification toward a capitalist, pro-gentrification agenda. YIMBYism's long standing affiliation with right-wing free-market, or neoclassical/neoliberal, economics is precisely what our article illuminated. Rather than a scrappy group of young, liberal-minded "housing activists," their politics are rooted in racist and anti-poor conservative neoliberal ideologies first inaugurated by Ronald Reagan. Further, they collaborate with the real estate industry to rebrand these racist and conservative policies as hip and edgy — this is the "alt-right's" method of spreading right-wing politics beyond its old white men in suits image. . . .

A recently published book, "Zoned Out! Race, Displacement, and City Planning in New York City," for example, demonstrates that YIMBY policies — such as zoning liberalization — actually furthers racial and economic inequality. Countless other scholars offer research supporting our claims . . . .

It is evident that YIMBY policies are aligned with conservative right-wing libertarianism. To be clear, YIMBYs are copying Donald Trump's pro-business "trickle down" policies on economic urban development. . . .

In the aftermath of our article's publication, we have been the subjects of a mass doxing campaign — a common tact used by the alt-right against leftists. Our personal information has been shared widely over the internet, and our employers and publishers harassed, presumably to have us fired. . . .

If YIMBYs truly want to house people, why are they not lobbying for the houseless and others to be housed, first? Where are they when our communities are getting evicted? The answer is obvious. . . .

Instead of the pro-displacement politics of YIMBYism, we should center and follow radical housing justice groups led by those most impacted like the national Right to the City Alliance and the Movement for Black Lives. These groups offer visions and policy platforms that clearly demonstrate that ending inequality, transforming our society and fighting for our right to The City requires going beyond neoliberal capitalism — and YIMBYism.

[https://www.sfexaminer.com/our\\_sections/forum/the-problem-with-yimby/article\\_30de77ae-b93f-5105-975f-6281f8f3dfe8.html](https://www.sfexaminer.com/our_sections/forum/the-problem-with-yimby/article_30de77ae-b93f-5105-975f-6281f8f3dfe8.html)

And Washington Socialist recently raised its own concerns about YIMBYs, focusing on Missing Middle and Arlington. It discusses YIMBYs of Northern Virginia, including its founding and its libertarian connections and funding sources. Some excerpts:

In general, we don't know a whole lot about how *YIMBYs of NOVA* is directly funded, but when we check out their tax ID on their website, they appear to be a chapter of the organization called *YIMBY ACTION*, a California-based group that has received funding from the likes of the [Chan Zuckerberg Initiative Advocacy](#) (yes that Zuckerberg). We don't know how that funding is diverted to *YIMBYs of NOVA*, but since the funding we do know of (e.g., the Emergent Ventures grant) is backed by far-right actors, it's fair to say that residents concerned about corporate influence should be skeptical. Similar tactics —of business interests banking the YIMBY position to spur development— have been used elsewhere, most notably in California (see a [breakdown here](#)).

YIMBYs of NOVA's other co-founders also fall on the political right. Adam Theo, who ran a failed campaign for the Arlington County Council this term, made [missing middle a chief part of his campaign](#), calling it a policy to help disenfranchised residents from being squeezed out by gentrification. But that rhetoric may be deceiving, with even the report of the missing middle study indicating that this is about increasing a type of housing, not about price. . . .

When we look at the men and women involved in YIMBYs of NOVA, concerns arise. Missing middle advocates are operating under the assumption that supply and market forces are the most important factors in the housing debate, and if you are skeptical of that idea at all (it's essentially Reaganomics), then that should probably start giving you pause.

I go into this point in greater detail in our breakdown on missing middle (see our piece [here](#)), but expecting supply alone to solve this problem is a big mistake. If the government does not pursue policies that confront the systemic roots of access and procurement of housing (i.e., public housing, rent control, prioritizing first-time buyers, a moratorium on new short-term rentals, etc.), you are just going to give the larger buyers and developers more rental and investment properties to swoop up. . . .

Regardless of their intentions, the market-minded stewards of NOVA's YIMBY movement do not inspire confidence that this push will clearly



benefit NOVA's working-class, those displaced by high rents, and the chronically unhoused. If we fail to move away from these profit-driven development models, the majority of Arlington's residents will continue to be left behind and out of sight.

<https://washingtonsocialist.mdcda.org/ws-articles/22-12-nova-yimbys>

Current Affairs did a deep dive into YIMBYs – “The Only Thing Worse Than A NIMBY Is A YIMBY,” which can be summed up in this quote: “Pro-development activists try to trick you into thinking it helps the poor to destroy neighborhoods to make way for luxury condos. We need a radically democratic preservationism.”

<https://www.currentaffairs.org/2021/01/the-only-thing-worse-than-a-nimby-is-a-yimby>

Truthout ran this article: **“YIMBY Movement Is Not the Answer to Housing Crisis, Grassroots Activists Say”**

The answer to the U.S. housing crisis is simple and widely adopted elsewhere: more public housing.

<https://truthout.org/articles/yimby-movement-is-not-the-answer-to-housing-crisis-grassroots-activists-say/>

The Village sun ran a piece recently: “Opinion: Putting the lie to YIMBY mantra ‘Build, baby, build!’... Facts show unbridled market-rate development spurs gentrification.” Excerpts:

One school of thought loosely self-identified as “YIMBY” (“Yes In My Backyard,” implying people happy to do their fair share for the greater good, unlike their opponents) forcefully espouses the theory that the problem is a constraint in supply. They argue that simply removing barriers to increased housing production will bring prices down for everyone, putting more good housing within reach for a more socioeconomically and racially diverse group of people, especially in increasingly expensive cities.

Problem is, time and again, this is shown not to be the case — that unfettered market-rate housing production not only doesn't bring housing prices down, but can actually drive it up, and drive out lower-income residents and decrease diversity. In spite of this overwhelming evidence,

however, these YIMBYs cling to this belief, heaping scorn upon anyone who disagrees.

The latest evidence? For years local YIMBYs have praised Jersey City as the shining example of YIMBYism within the New York metropolitan area, where new housing has been churned out at a much higher rate than in New York City or almost anywhere else in the region. According to them, Jersey City is doing what's needed to bring housing prices down.

But now [a new study](#) shows that Jersey City, with its copious new housing production, is now the most expensive city in the United States — surpassing New York City, which has what YIMBYs would argue is the lower housing production that should be driving prices up.

And more than housing prices have changed in Jersey City. According to Census figures, during the 2010-to-2020 period of explosive housing production there, both the percentage and raw number of African American residents of the city decreased markedly, while both the number and percentage of non-Hispanic whites increased. . . .

And lest one thinks this is some odd New York-area phenomenon, Austin, Texas, has reportedly [produced the most new housing units](#) per capita of any major city in the United States. As it's done so, it's also become [one of the least affordable places](#) in the country, with the steepest increases in housing prices. . . .

So who and what are behind this misinformation campaign that consistently ignores empirical data and facts on the ground? Some of its proponents are those who genuinely care about affordability and diversity, and are desperately latching on to any promise of relief wherever they may find it. But a large share of the impetus behind this approach comes from big real estate interests, who benefit the most from removing barriers to their unfettered ability to build as much of the most expensive housing as possible. And, as we know, the real estate industry holds tremendous sway over the levers of government, which ultimately makes these decisions.

Of course the answer to the affordability crisis is not to do nothing, nor is it simply to prevent any new market-rate housing from being built. But the overwhelming evidence shows that just letting more market-rate housing be built not only won't help the cause of affordability — it may hurt it. Clearly,

we need a more targeted and varied approach, that actually results in the creation of new affordable housing, while taking steps to preserve existing affordable housing — which is disappearing in increasing numbers every day, often to make way for the new expensive housing that YIMBY policies create.

<https://thevillagesun.com/opinion-putting-the-lie-to-yimby-mantra-build-baby-build-facts-show-unbridled-market-rate-development-spurs-gentrification>

Finally, Governing has an article on “The YIMBY Agenda We Aren’t Talking About”:

No one disputes that we need more housing. But the YIMBY movement has a broader set of goals that would threaten the tradition of local land use decisions in America. . . .

[I]n the past, I was sympathetic to the YIMBYs on the assumption that they were primarily interested in building more densely in popular areas like San Francisco and the north side of Chicago, in other cities along commercial corridors, near commuter rail stops, and in suburban town centers.

But this common view of the YIMBY movement is wrong. The YIMBYs have much bigger aims. They seek to fundamentally alter zoning in the entire United States, not just in cities, near commuter rail stops or in suburban downtowns, as commonly believed.

While theirs is not a monolithic movement with uniform views, by and large YIMBYs want to totally eliminate any zoning for exclusively single-family districts — everywhere. Not even outer exurbs would be allowed to have subdivisions that were zoned exclusively for single-family homes.

This is what YIMBYs actually achieved in Oregon, where [a state law has eliminated single-family zoning](#) in the areas where 70 percent of the state’s population lives. Municipalities with more than 10,000 people (1,000 in metro Portland) must allow duplexes or fourplexes in current single-family neighborhoods. In other words, YIMBY is not so much “Yes in My Backyard” as it is “Yes in Your Backyard.” . . .

In sum, YIMBYs want states to take local land use power away from local governments, transfer it to the state, and then use state legislation to ban

single-family zoning everywhere. This is a much more far-reaching and expansive agenda than most people realize.

<https://www.governing.com/community/the-yimby-agenda-we-arent-talking-about>