NMHC
WHITE PAPERS

May 1, 2006

FROM NIMBY TO GOOD NEIGHBORS: RECENT STUDIES REINFORCE THAT APARTMENTS ARE GOOD FOR A COMMUNITY

Key Contact:
Kimberly D. Duty
VP of Communications
kduty@nmhc.org

Michael Tucker
Communications Director
mtucker@nmhc.org

Other NMHC Staff Contacts:

Douglas M. Bibby
President
dbibby@nmhc.org

James N. Arbury
Senior VP of Government Affairs
jarbury@nmhc.org

Lisa E. Blackwell
VP of State & Local
Strategic Outreach
lblackwell@nmhc.org

David Cardwell
VP of Capital Markets
and Technology
dcardwell@nmhc.org

Jeanne McGlynn Delgado
VP of Property Management
jdelgado@nmhc.org

Eileen C. Lee
VP of Environment
elee@nmhc.org

Howard Menell
Tax Advisor
hmenell@nmhc.org

Ronald G. Nickson
VP of Building Codes
rnickson@nmhc.org

Mark Obrinsky
VP of Research and Chief Economist
mobrinsky@nmhc.org

- Community leaders and public planning officials agree that the key to growing smarter is to encourage compact development, including apartments. Developers eager to meet these housing needs are often thwarted, however, by misguided local not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) activists.

- The good news is that there is an ever-increasing body of research that indicates that apartments (including affordable apartments) are not a threat to local property values and are a net plus to communities.

- This white paper is designed to help apartment firms overcome NIMBY opposition. It is organized in three sections. The first section details various tools that firms can employ in their NIMBY struggles. The second section summarizes unbiased third-party research reports that refute many of the common myths associated with rental housing, focusing primarily on the notion that apartments cause nearby property values to decline. The final section explains the importance of good design to overcome NIMBY complaints.

- Suggested distribution includes:
  - General Counsels
  - Directors of Development
  - Research Directors

© This document is intended for NMHC and NAA members only. It may not be reproduced or retransmitted electronically, in whole or in part, without permission from the National Multi Housing Council.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Tools to Overcome NIMBYism: PowerPoint Presentations 1

Tools to Overcome NIMBYism: Brochures 2

Tools to Overcome NIMBYism: Online Resources 3

Tools to Overcome NIMBYism: "How To" Resources 4

Third-Party Research: Impact on Property Values 4

Third-Party Research: The Need for Rental Housing 8

Third-Party Research: Public Perceptions of Affordable Housing 8

Using Design to Overcome NIMBYism 9

Conclusion 10

Please understand that the information discussed in this guidance is general in nature and is not intended to be legal advice. It is intended to assist owners and managers in understanding this issue area, but it may not apply to the specific fact circumstances or business situations of all owners and managers. For specific legal advice, consult your attorney.

Copyright 2006, National Multi Housing Council

All rights reserved. No portion of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission from the National Multi Housing Council.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL MULTI HOUSING COUNCIL AND NATIONAL APARTMENT ASSOCIATION

The National Multi Housing Council (NMHC) and the National Apartment Association (NAA) represent the nation's leading firms participating in the multifamily rental housing industry.

Based in Washington, DC, **NMHC** represents the interests of the nation's largest and most prominent firms in the apartment industry. NMHC members are engaged in all aspects of developing and operating apartments, including ownership, construction, management, and financing. The Council was established in 1978 as a national association to advocate for rental housing and to provide a source of vital information for the leadership of the multifamily industry. Since then, NMHC has evolved into the industry's leading national voice. The association concentrates on public policies that are of strategic importance to participants in multifamily housing, including finance, tax, property management, and environmental and building codes. NMHC benefits from a focused agenda and a membership that includes the principal officers of the most distinguished real estate organizations in the United States. For more information on joining NMHC, contact the Council at 202/974-2300 or www.nmhc.org.

NAA, based in Alexandria, VA, is a federation of 190 state and local affiliated associations representing more than 50,000 members responsible for more than 6 million apartment homes nationwide. It is the largest broad-based organization dedicated solely to rental housing. NAA members include apartment owners, management executives, developers, builders, investors, property managers, leasing consultants, maintenance personnel, suppliers, and related business professionals throughout the United States and Canada. NAA strives to provide a wealth of information through advocacy, research, technology, education, and strategic partnerships. For more information, call 703/518-6141, e-mail information@naahq.org, or visit www.naahq.org.

INTRODUCTION

Despite our nation's pressing need for greater housing density and more apartment homes, those seeking to build apartments still encounter NIMBY behavior far too often. When a community is proposed, misguided local activists respond with NIMBY complaints so frequently that some have suggested that a better acronym might be BANANA (Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anyone).

The National Multi Housing Council/National Apartment Association (NMHC/NAA) Joint Legislative Program watches these NIMBY debates closely, sometimes filing legal briefs on behalf of members who have run up against NIMBYism. But since it is best to avoid the costly and slow legal system if possible, a much better approach is to disarm potential opposition and win local stakeholders over early.

The good news is that there is an ever-increasing body of research that indicates that apartments (including affordable apartments) are not a threat to local property values and can be a net plus to communities. This white paper is designed to help apartment firms overcome NIMBY opposition. It is organized in three sections. The first section details various tools that firms can employ in their NIMBY struggles. The second section summarizes unbiased third-party research reports that refute many of the common myths associated with rental housing, focusing primarily on the notion that apartments cause nearby property values to decline. The final section explains the importance of designing apartment communities well. A community that is integrated into its surroundings is less likely to face NIMBY complaints.

TOOLS TO OVERCOME NIMBYISM: POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS

A Plan for Tomorrow: Rethinking Density to Create Stronger, Healthier Communities (2005)

The Sierra Club, Urban Land Institute, and National Multi Housing Council

The result of unique collaboration between environmentalists and real estate advocates, *A Plan for Tomorrow* is a visually engaging, scripted PowerPoint presentation designed to show citizens who may have NIMBY ideas how compact development can help build stronger, healthier communities. (A narrated DVD version is also available.)

The presentation uses new technology to illustrate how well-designed density can literally transform unappealing places into fun, walkable neighborhoods. They also explain "what's in it for me" to those who might harbor NIMBY ideas by showing how higher-density, mixed-use development can:

- Reduce taxes by concentrating public services such as water, sewer, roads, and police and fire service over a smaller area.
- Reduce traffic and commuting time by allowing more people to walk, bike, or take public transportation to work and other destinations.
- Boost the local economy by providing housing for the workers that businesses need and creating a community that attracts a diverse range of professionals and service workers.
- Fight smog, protect clean water, and preserve parks and natural areas.
- Make communities safer by creating housing that allows firefighters and police officers to live where they work.
- Improve quality of life by creating pedestrian-friendly shopping and entertainment options.

The PowerPoint is perfect to present at meetings of planning officials, civic groups (e.g., Rotary Club, Lions Club), neighborhood groups, and chambers of commerce.

Those who are interested can download the PowerPoint presentation or request a CD/DVD (completely free of charge) at www.nmhc.org/Content/ServeContent.cfm?ContentItemID=3423.

The Truth About Affordable Housing

The Campaign for Affordable Housing

This PowerPoint presentation was created to help educate the public about current issues in affordable housing. It highlights the gap between wages and shelter costs in communities throughout the country, describes the housing needs by occupation and income categories, and illustrates the breadth of the housing crisis.

In addition, it provides a visual lesson on the design trends and diversity of approaches to affordable housing and addresses common misconceptions regarding density, traffic, property values, and infrastructure impacts. It can be downloaded at www.nmhc.org/Content/ServeContent.cfm?ContentItemID=3458.

Presentation: Apartments – The New American Dream?

National Multi Housing Council

This presentation, originally prepared for the National Association of Real Estate Editors' (NAREE) Annual Meeting, explains why apartment living is becoming more popular among households who can afford to buy and provides statistical evidence and reasons why the trend is likely to continue in the future. It explores the demographic changes, lifestyle changes, and public policy influences driving the emergence of discretionary renters. It is available at www.nmhc.org/Content/ServeContent.cfm?IssueID=215&ContentItemID=1828.

TOOLS TO OVERCOME NIMBYISM: BROCHURES

Creating Successful Communities: A New Housing Paradigm

National Multi Housing Council/National Apartment Association

This 16-page brochure takes on the conventional wisdom about housing preferences and is perfect for use with local planning and zoning boards or to support state and local advocacy efforts. It provides evidence about:

- Who actually lives in apartments.
- How apartments impact local school systems.
- How apartments reduce traffic congestion.
- Whether apartments cause crime rates to increase.
- Whether homes located near apartments maintain their property values.
- To what degree apartment residents "pay" for the local services they use.
- Whether homeowners really are better citizens than renters.
- Whether Americans really oppose higher-density housing.

A free PDF of the brochure can be downloaded at www.nmhc.org/Content/ServeContent.cfm?ContentItemID=2242. Bulk quantities may be ordered from the National Apartment Association by calling 703/518-6141.

Higher-Density Development: Myth and Fact (2005)

Urban Land Institute

This 36-page booklet examines eight widespread misconceptions about higher-density development and dispels them with well-researched facts and examples of quality, compact developments.

Among the myths it takes on are those related to property values, traffic congestion, crime, impact on school systems, the environmental consequences of compact development, and the demand for higher-density housing. A free PDF copy and a form to purchase a hard copy are available at www.nmhc.org/Content/ServeContent.cfm?ContentItemID=3422.

The Case for Multifamily Housing (2003)

Urban Land Institute

The Case for Multifamily Housing, also published by ULI in cooperation with NMHC and NAA, effectively refutes some of the most common NIMBY objections that are raised about apartments. It features separate sections discussing such issues as the growing popularity of multifamily housing, how multifamily housing can help reduce traffic, why apartments are important to a region's overall economic development, how multifamily development is more environmentally friendly than sprawling, low-density development, and the fact that well-designed multifamily housing can be an attractive addition to communities. Copies of *The Case for Multifamily Housing* can be purchased from ULI by calling 800/321-5011 and asking for document number C64 or by visiting www.bookstore.uli.org.

TOOLS TO OVERCOME NIMBYISM: ONLINE RESOURCES

Paycheck to Paycheck: Interactive Database

National Housing Conference

Apartment firms have a powerful new tool to help them make the case for new moderate-income and affordable housing with the National Housing Conference's free, interactive "Paycheck to Paycheck" online database. This web site allows users to produce charts showing the median wage for 64 different occupations in 130 of the nation's largest housing markets as well as the wage needed to afford a one-bedroom or two-bedroom apartment in those markets. With just a few clicks, a developer in, say, Austin, Texas, could produce a chart showing how much the average elementary school teacher, police officer, or nurse earns in Austin and how much they would need to earn to afford a one- or two-bedroom apartment in that market. For most occupations in most markets, this makes a compelling case for the need for more affordable housing, which developers can use in their battles to overcome neighborhood opposition to new apartments.

The database is located at www.centerforhousingpolicy.org/p2p/.

HUD's Regulatory Barriers Clearinghouse

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

HUD maintains an online database of case studies showing how communities are combating NIMBYism and tackling regulatory reform (e.g., administrative streamlining, building codes, infill and development fee reform, and reforming zoning regulations) to encourage affordable housing production. Although the database is focused on affordable housing issues, it offers solutions that market-rate developers can urge their state and local officials to replicate to create stronger, healthier communities. The database is available at www.huduser.org/rbc/index.asp.

NMHC "Apartment Myths" Web Site

NMHC's web site includes a special section with additional documents that refute the myths about apartments and the people who live in them. You can find it at www.nmhc.org/Content/BrowseContent.cfm?IssueID=215.

TOOLS TO OVERCOME NIMBYISM: "HOW TO" RESOURCES

What Neighbors Want: Cost-Effective Strategies for Dealing with NIMBYism

By Debra Stein and John Millham

Triumphing over NIMBYism was discussed at NMHC's 2003 Annual Meeting. Debra Stein from GCA Strategies, a consulting firm, explained the five elements critical to overcoming NIMBY opposition. They include:

- Engaging in two outreach campaigns—one for opponents and one for supporters.
- Using the right message for the right constituency.
- Focusing your public information campaign on the relevant misperceptions.
- Providing the right amount of information.
- Avoiding unnecessary concessions.

John Millham from Prometheus Real Estate Group offered a case study of how Prometheus overcame NIMBYism to construct its 218-unit Metropolitan Apartment Community in San Mateo, California. His presentation identifies the influential neighborhood groups and discusses the five steps Prometheus took to obtain entitlements despite NIMBY opposition. These steps include:

- Meeting early and often with as many of the NIMBYs as possible.
- Attempting to educate/change perceptions about apartments and the development under discussion.
- Making no concessions before you absolutely have to.
- Constantly gauging the political climate and the potential for support.
- Building support.

Both presentations are posted at www.nmhc.org/Content/ServeContent.cfm?ContentItemID=2786.

NIMBYism: Navigating the Politics of Local Opposition (2005)

By Michael C. Thomsett

This book offers field-tested steps to battle local opposition, build community support, successfully manage confrontation during hearings and court battles, and effectively use communication to avoid a confrontational NIMBY movement. A sample chapter, table of contents, and online order form for the publication are posted at www.centerlinemedia.com/nimbyism.htm.

THIRD-PARTY RESEARCH: IMPACT ON PROPERTY VALUES

Effects of Mixed-Income, Multi-Family Rental Housing Developments on Single-Family Housing Values (2005)

By Henry Pollakowski, David Ritchay, and Zoe Weinrobe
Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Center for Real Estate

This rigorous study examines how mixed-income, high-density rental developments—what the authors call "a suburban homeowner's worst nightmare"—affect the property values of nearby

single-family houses. In welcome news to residents of both the high-density apartments and their single-family neighbors, the authors decisively demonstrate that "the introduction of large-scale, high-density mixed-income rental developments in single-family neighborhoods *does not* affect the value of surrounding homes." (The emphasis comes from the authors.) They go on to say, "The fear of potential asset-value loss among suburban homeowners is misplaced."

The authors examined seven different towns in the Greater Boston region and—importantly—they compared property values *over time*, because, as the study points out, "following neighborhood property values over time is a much more powerful tool" than just looking at one single point in time.

Effects of Mixed-Income, Multi-Family Rental Housing Developments on Single-Family Housing Values is available at http://web.mit.edu/cre/research/hai/pdf/40B_report_HAI_0405.pdf (large file).

America's Working Communities and the Impact of Multifamily Housing (2004)

By Alexander von Hoffman, Eric Belsky, James DeNormandie, and Rachel Bratt
Joint Center for Housing Studies (JCHS) of Harvard University and the Neighborhood Reinvestment
Corporation

According to this research by Harvard University's JCHS and the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, apartments pose no threat to the value of single-family houses nearby. Using U.S. Census data from 1970 through 2000, the researchers found that—contrary to the perception that apartments lower property values—the average value of owner-occupied houses was highest in working communities (defined as neighborhoods in which residents earn between 60 percent and 100 percent of area-wide median income) that have the *most* apartments.

The study found that working communities with apartments comprising more than 30 percent of their housing units have sustained a 30-year increase in home values in each of the largest 42 metropolitan areas.

The report is available at www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/communitydevelopment/w04-5.pdf.

A Review of Existing Research on the Effects of Federally Assisted Housing Programs on Neighboring Residential Property Values (2002)

By George Galster
Wayne State (MI) University

This report from a Wayne State University professor finds that federally assisted housing has an insignificant, or even a positive, effect on property values. Professor Galster finds that prior studies have overestimated the negative impact subsidized housing has on property values, and he uses a new methodology that measures property values both before *and* after affordable housing is constructed (not just after construction, like many studies) to determine whether such housing affected property values, or whether property values in the neighborhood may have been already declining before the housing was built.

Galster finds that assisted housing had insignificant or positive effects on property values in higher-value, less vulnerable neighborhoods. It was more likely to improve property values in lower-value, more vulnerable neighborhoods. Any negative impacts were directly related to the size and scale of the subsidized housing.

The report *A Review of Existing Research on the Effects of Federally Assisted Housing Programs on Neighboring Residential Property Values* is available at www.culma.wayne.edu/pubs/galster/NAR_report.pdf.

Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Housing Developments and Property Values (2002)

By Richard K. Green, Stephen Malpezzi, and Kiat-Ying Seah
University of Wisconsin Center for Urban Land Economics Research

This study, which reviewed eight prior studies on Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) properties and property values, found no evidence that LIHTC properties cause property values to deteriorate. Instead, contrary to conventional wisdom, this study's authors discovered that Low-Income Housing Tax Credit developments often cause surrounding property values to increase. They note with interest that past research has generally found that such developments have a more positive impact in higher-income areas.

The researchers then tested those conclusions by measuring the appreciation rates of houses in one Wisconsin city and two counties near LIHTC properties between 1991 and 2000. Their analysis also found no evidence that LIHTC properties caused property values to depreciate, and they found evidence that in Madison, Wisconsin, properties near LIHTC developments actually appreciated more rapidly.

Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Housing Developments and Property Values is available at www.wheda.com/cat_tca/uw_study.pdf.

A Study of the Relationship Between Affordable Family Rental Housing and Home Values in the Twin Cities (2000)

Family Housing Fund and Maxfield Research, Inc.

Minnesota's Family Housing Fund, a non-profit agency that supports affordable housing throughout Minneapolis and its twin city of St. Paul, commissioned this survey of 12 Twin City neighborhoods in which a tax-credit rental housing development was located within an area of owner-occupied homes. Looking at three standards of single-family house performance—sales price per square foot, percentage of sales price to asking price, and time on the market—the study found nearly no negative impacts, and many positives to integrating tax credit rental housing into these neighborhoods.

For example, the single-family homes around the tax credit property displayed similar or stronger market performance after the rental properties were built, and similar or stronger market performance than houses not located near a tax credit property.

Though this study is a few years old, tax-credit property developers will still find it a valuable resource. *A Study of the Relationship Between Affordable Family Rental Housing and Home Values in the Twin Cities* is available at www.fhfund.org/_dnld/reports/Property%20Values_Summary.pdf.

Price Effects of Apartments on Nearby Single-Family Residential Housing

Arthur C. Nelson, FAICP, and Mitch Moody
(Not yet published)

This study, which has not yet been publicly published, looks to suburban Atlanta, Georgia, for a case study of the relationship between apartments and house values nearby. Prepared with support from NMHC and the National Association of Realtors, it analyzes Gwinnett County, Georgia, and concludes that in that area apartments did affect nearby property values, sometimes adversely and sometimes adding value.

Examining all homes sold in the county in the 1990s as well as 158 apartment complexes, the authors find that Gwinnett house prices per square foot are lower within one-quarter mile of an apartment complex, but that those *farther* than one-half mile away sell for *less* than those that are one-quarter mile away from an apartment building. They theorize that this means that apartments generally create value in an area, suggesting that apartments may provide the critical mass needed to support the local shopping and services that nearby homeowners value. They also believe that most apartment residents are in a transitionary period; they may be new to the area and want to learn about the area before purchasing, or may be waiting until they have sufficient income to buy. Finally, the authors theorize that apartments may lead demand rather than follow it. That is, they say, the presence of apartments may signal more demand for residential development in the area.

This study concludes with several observations, including that locating apartment buildings near major transportation access points minimizes traffic congestion, which is a favorite NIMBY rallying cry. Positioning an apartment building as a visual or noise buffer to separate retail or commercial sites from a residential neighborhood also minimizes the effect apartments have on neighboring detached houses.

The authors conclude that over the long run, a well-located apartment building with attractive landscaping and entranceways probably raises the overall value of detached homes compared with having no apartment buildings.

Study authors Nelson and Moody wrote about their *Apartments and Detached Home Values* study in the magazine *On Common Ground*, a publication of the National Association of Realtors. Individual copies of the study are available from NMHC at 202/974-2349 or info@nmhc.org.

Investing in a Better Future: A Review of the Fiscal and Competitive Advantages of Smarter Growth Development Patterns (2004)

By Mark Muro and Robert Puentes
Brookings Institution

Directly related to the effect that new development has on property values is the effect that new development has on the finances of local governments. This report from the Brookings Institution finds that the cost of providing public infrastructure and services such as roads, water and sewer service, and police and fire protection can be reduced by using thoughtful design and planning and encouraging compact development.

The authors suggest that the rational use of more compact development patterns from 2000 to 2025 could yield huge savings for governments across the country; they calculate possible savings of 11 percent, or $110 billion, from 25-year road-building costs; 6 percent, or $12.6 billion, from 25-year water and sewer costs; and roughly 3 percent, or $4 billion, for annual operations and service delivery.

The report offers much research that developers can employ to their benefit. For instance, one study documents the dramatic difference in the cost to service a new family of four (police, fire, highway, schools, and sewer) achievable with compact development. In sprawling Pendleton County, Kentucky, the cost is $1,222.39, compared with just $88.27 for compact suburban Shelby County, Kentucky.

The report is available at www.brookings.edu/metro/publications/200403_smartgrowth.htm.

THIRD-PARTY RESEARCH: THE NEED FOR RENTAL HOUSING

America's Rental Housing: Homes for a Diverse Nation (2006)

Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University

The state of rental housing in the United States is summarized in this 30-page report, which provides a clear and concise overview for a general audience of many of the trends and patterns in the rental market. Primarily, the authors call for less emphasis in policy at all levels on promoting ownership over rental housing. *America's Rental Housing* provides compelling evidence of the need for more support of new rental housing construction, and finds that while demand for rental housing has remained fairly stable, growing slightly over the past decade, the supply of the most affordable housing has diminished. According to the report, some 200,000 rental housing units are demolished or otherwise removed from the housing stock every year, nearly twice as many as are produced annually by the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program and other initiatives.

America's Rental Housing: Homes for a Diverse Nation is available at www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh06_americas_rental_housing.pdf.

THIRD-PARTY RESEARCH: PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The worsening affordable housing shortage has created a new awareness among many policymakers about the importance of building more rental housing. But when it comes time to approve proposed projects, many are afraid to support them because they fear they will lose the support of their local citizens. Here are some resources you can use to help policymakers understand how important affordable housing is.

Public Perceptions of Affordable Housing in the Chicago Region (2003)

Conducted in 2003, this public opinion poll found surprising public support for affordable housing in Chicago. In a "YIMBY" twist, a poll of 1,000 residents in a six-county area found that two-thirds would support more low- and moderate-income housing in the neighborhoods *where they live*. Only 17 percent would strongly oppose it. The poll was sponsored by Housing Illinois, a coalition of business, civic, and religious groups formed to raise public awareness about the affordable housing shortage. Housing Illinois was pleasantly surprised by the results, and says there is a "silent majority" of support for high-quality projects.

That said, the report also pointed to significant challenges that must be overcome before we can start planning NIMBY's funeral. Two-thirds of the residents worry that low- and moderate-income housing is poorly maintained, and half believe crime usually accompanies it or that property values will fall in areas with such housing. Nearly half also said that the design of housing for low-income people is usually unattractive. Advocates say these are the key concerns they must address to make the silent majority of YIMBYs for affordable housing proposals more vocal than the NIMBYs.

Public Perceptions of Affordable Housing in the Chicago Region is available at www.chicagorehab.org/valuing/pdfs/SummaryResearch%20Report.pdf.

The Campaign for Affordable Housing

In an effort to swing all-important public opinion in favor of affordable housing (particularly high-density rental housing), the non-profit organization The Campaign for Affordable Housing (TCAH)

dedicates itself to combating NIMBYism and building grassroots support for government affordable housing initiatives. The Campaign also seeks to dispel the myths about and publicize the benefits of affordable housing, conducts research on affordable housing's impact, and provides materials and advice for housing organizations and others seeking affordable project approvals.

More information on *The Campaign for Affordable Housing* is available at www.tcah.org or 323/330-0540.

USING DESIGN TO OVERCOME NIMBYISM

Joint Forum on Housing Density/Compact Development (2002)

National Multi Housing Council (NMHC), American Institute of Architects (AIA), and Urban Land Institute (ULI)

NMHC, AIA, and ULI convened a forum in 2002 to move the discussion about more compact development forward. The 40-plus diverse stakeholders included architects, apartment developers, urban planners, elected officials, and environmentalists.

One conclusion was unanimous: Good design is one of the most effective ways to overcome community opposition to apartment properties (for more on this, see "Good Design Can Make Apartment Living More than a Low-Rent Alternative to a House" below). Another is that a simple change in terminology from the word "density" to the phrase "compact development" or "efficient, walkable community" may help to allay the NIMBY concerns of existing neighbors. Finally, it was agreed that visual aids are much more effective than written descriptions alone when persuading citizens that apartment communities can be a well-designed benefit to their community. (For an example of a visual tool to help persuade citizens that compact development can be beautiful development, see *A Plan for Tomorrow* in the "Tools to Overcome NIMBYism" section above.)

A white paper detailing the proceedings and conclusions of the joint forum is available at www.nmhc.org/Content/ServeContent.cfm?ContentItemID=2555.

"Good Design Can Make Apartment Living More than a Low-Rent Alternative to a House" and Other "Shaping the City" Columns

Roger K. Lewis, FAIA

Echoing the consensus of the *Joint Forum on Housing Density/Compact Development* attendees mentioned above, a July 13, 2002, article in *The Washington Post* by architecture professor and regular *Post* columnist Roger K. Lewis stressed the importance of good design "if Americans are to be convinced that apartment living is a desirable—not merely acceptable—dwelling choice."

Professor Lewis, a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and professor at the University of Maryland College Park, writes that as we strive to grow smarter, "like it or not, more and more Americans will be living in apartments in the decades ahead" and that good design is the best way to make "high-density livable and likable." A copy of the article is available at www.nmhc.org/Content/ServeContent.cfm?ContentItemID=2564.

Professor Lewis's *Washington Post* "Shaping the City" column on Saturdays is a must-read for anyone who is interested in housing and in improving our country's built environment. An archive of his past columns is available at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/linkset/2005/03/24/LI2005032400526.html (free registration is required).

CONCLUSION

Our nation's population is growing. Immigrants arrive daily and seek apartments, and a large wave of children of baby boomers is approaching their prime renting years. Clearly, the need for quality housing for all Americans is becoming critical. Vital workers in our communities are being pushed farther and farther from the cities where they work by NIMBY opposition, resulting in greater sprawl, worse traffic congestion, and horrendous commutes in cities across the country.

Though apartments are necessary to fill this need, it seems that the smallest, most vocal minority of local activists too often can keep a proposed project from ever reaching fruition. The good news is this: You are not alone in your frustration with the NIMBY phenomenon. In fact, U.S. Senator Mel Martinez put it best when, in his former role as U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, he said, "Whether by intent—through the so-called NIMBY syndrome of exclusionary zoning, expensive building fees, and burdensome regulatory barriers—or unintentionally, local governments are driving up housing costs and driving out affordable housing."

Let us hope that the recent research collected here and the acknowledgment from the highest levels of government that the "not in my backyard" phenomenon presents a problem are big steps toward victory over NIMBYism in America.