Not in My Backyard Encyclopedia Article

Not in My Backyard

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Not in My Backyard

NIMBY is an acronym for "Not In My Backyard" and is often heard in discussions of **waste management**. While every community needs a site for waste disposal, frequently no one wants it near his or her home. In the early part of this century, in fact, up until the early 1970s, the town dump was a smelly, rodent-infested place that caught fire on occasion. Loose debris from these facilities would also blow onto adjacent property. Citizens were justified in their aversion to landfills because **hazardous waste** and **chemicals** were often dumped into landfills, which contaminated **groundwater** and surface water. After the passage of the **Resource Conservation and Recovery Act** (RCRA) in 1976, many of these facilities were closed and dumps converted into sanitary landfills that required daily cover, fencing, leachate collection systems, and other design elements that made them much better neighbors. Still, many citizens refused to have landfills close to their homes.

In addition to landfills, citizens are also concerned about having other waste management facilities near them. Large open air **composting** facilities are not popular because of the odor they produce. A materials **recycling** facility (MRF) is not always a desirable neighbor because of the noise it generate.

Despite assurances by experts of the improvements and safety of modern waste management facilities, communities continue to be wary of them. In order to overcome the NIMBY attitude, professionals in the waste management field must collaborate with communities so that citizens gain understanding and ownership of **solid waste** management problems. The problem of waste is generated at the community level so the solution must be generated at the community level. With sensible planning and patience there may be less NIMBY-mentality in the future.

Resources

Books

Brion, D. J. *Essential Industry and the NIMBY Phenomenon: A Problem of Distributive Justice.* Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1991.

Piller, C. *The Fail-Safe Society: Community Defiance and the End of American Technological Optimism.* New York: Basic Books, 1991.

Periodicals

Guerra, S. "NIMBY, NIMTOF, and Solid Waste Facility Siting." *Public Management* 73 (October 1991): 11–15.

Shields, P. "Overcoming the NIMBY Syndrome." *American City and County* 105 (May 1990): 54.