



Economy May Sputter; NIMBY Still Refuses to Let Up

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By Barbra Murray

Though a new mall down the road would create jobs and revenue, the NIMBY movement remains strong. Communities are still reluctant to roll out the red carpet for real estate projects targeting their neighborhoods, despite the potential economic rewards.

According to the national **Saint Index Snapshot poll**, only 29 percent of Americans support new development in the disagreeable economic climate. And 75 percent of U.S. residents object to loosening land-use regulations.

Why shun new projects that would create revenue and bolster the local economy? The poll shows that people do favor new development—as long as it does not rise in their neighborhoods. "People understand that we have a bad economic situation, but does the current state of the economy outweigh NIMBYism? No," **said Patrick Fox, president of The Saint Consulting Group Inc.**, which sponsored the poll. "People are still acting in their own self-interest. They're worrying about the value of their homes."

Infrastructure development registers as no more attractive than, say, a new mixed-use complex. "There's an increase in support for power plants," Fox conceded. "People understand the need, but they still don't want them nearby."

And power plants are not the only concern. According to an Economic Development Research Group Inc. spokesperson, "The need for capacity in the nation's infrastructure, particularly in freight, is past the point of crisis if we're going to compete with China. No one wants the rail ports and marina shipping yards in their neighborhood, but the economy needs those facilities. Congestion is the cholesterol of national commerce."

Fox points out that the majority of citizens see the need for development. However, welcoming it is another thing altogether. It seems the support is based on theory, not practice. People are willing to forego the economic advantages in order to preserve their own backyards. And those who are most against it make themselves known. "They're the ones who show up to meetings," Fox said. "Politicians understand that if they stand with developers, they get the tax dollars but they won't get the votes. ... They're not going to commit political suicide for a really great mall."