

Protecting the **dignity** – and the **rights** – of the people you serve

When new shelters, affordable or supportive housing come to a neighbourhood, the response from local homeowners and businesses is sometimes “Not In My Back Yard.”

These neighbours can put enormous pressure on proponents of these developments to make concessions to gain public support. In some cases, these concessions can lead to better buildings – a “win-win” situation for everyone. But sometimes proponents, worn down by opposition and pressure from the local councillor, make concessions that undermine the well-being, rights and dignity of their tenants.

For example, we have seen housing proponents pressured into making these unacceptable concessions:

- Revealing confidential information about applicants, tenants or clients including names, contact information, personal histories, medical diagnoses or income
- Changing application criteria or the way applicants are chosen
- Promising not to serve people with specific disabilities, diagnoses or backgrounds
- Agreeing to police checks on applicants, tenants or clients
- Allowing neighbourhood representatives to review applications, participate in applicant screening, or receive reports on tenants selected
- Making design or management changes based on prejudices or fears about the people housed, such as:

- Frosting windows so “they” can’t look out
 - Removing balconies or decks
 - Ensuring windows can’t open
 - Preventing tenants from using back yards or other outdoor common areas
 - Erecting high brick walls, fences, hedges or other “visual buffers”
 - Enclosing the site with iron gates at night
 - Imposing curfews
- Imposing rules above and beyond those for neighbouring residents (e.g. no chatting with friends on the street, no sitting on park benches, requiring all residents to be employed or in school)
 - Allowing neighbours to make decisions about staff levels or the types of support services offered
 - Taking money that would have been used for support services to fund measures requested by neighbours.

Speak up for the rights of the people you serve

1. **Speak up in the moment.** If someone asks for these concessions say, “You know, no-one else in this neighbourhood has been asked to do what you ask. Let’s show the same respect for the rights of our new neighbours.”
2. **Speak to your local councillor.** Remind them the Ontario Human Right Commission has named “discriminatory NIMBY” – including the types of requests you have encountered – as a human rights violation. Ask them how they will ensure their ward is a “discrimination-free zone” on their watch.
3. **Speak to City staff.** Ask them, and anyone else who funds you, to refuse to support any concessions that undermine the rights or dignity of the people you serve.
4. **Contact HomeComing** for support and advice.