



Building Support for Supportive Housing vs. Support for a Specific Project

Building community support for your project should start well before you have a project. Effective developers of any kind of real estate project, whether it's a new football stadium, a Wal-Mart or a market rate condominium project begin the process by quietly building local support for their project. By the time you first read about a development in the newspaper, the developer has probably been working in the community for a year or more to lay the political and community groundwork for the project.

Supportive housing developers should start with the goal of creating public awareness of the need for supportive housing in their community. In small communities this means building support from the ground up. The development of a Core Group of people who understand the need, are able to explain supportive housing and who are willing to spend the time helping to educate others is the most important part of building community support.

As the [Nonotuck Case Study](#) shows, having the community learn about supportive housing at the same time they are learning about a specific project can have disastrous effects. Don't wait until you have a site to begin talking to people about the need for supportive housing in the community.

The [Operation HOPE Case Study](#) demonstrates the value of building credibility slowly and carefully.

Government support is not the same as Community Support. A very common mistake by Supportive Housing developers is the assumption that an important public official's support for a project or for an organization is all they need to develop a project. The Mayor's or selectman's desire to "do the right thing" may be sorely tested by angry constituents who are opposed to a project.

At the same time, it is almost impossible to do a supportive housing project without local official approval. So, while it is essential that you meet early with government officials, (town planners especially), never assume you have you have official support until you get it in writing though a zoning or building permit.