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**Economy May Be Easing NIMBY-ism: Saint Consulting; The prospect of nearby commercial development still raises the hackles of many Americans, but the economic crisis is also causing people to look more kindly on building in their communities, concludes an annual survey conducted by the Saint Consulting Group.**

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The prospect of nearby commercial development still raises the hackles of many Americans, but the economic crisis is also causing people to look more kindly on building in their communities, concludes an annual survey conducted by the Saint Consulting Group.

Opposition to development remains remarkably consistent throughout all regions of the United States, according to Saint Consulting, which advises developers on winning approval for controversial projects. Seventy-nine percent of those in the West said that they would oppose new development in their home towns; the survey found the lowest level of anti-development sentiment, 70 percent, in the Midwest. The national average is 74 percent. Sixty-nine percent agreed that the land-use approval process is unfair because of the relationship between developers and elected officials. One-quarter of those surveyed contend that local planning and zoning regulations are not strict enough.

Majorities continue to oppose several other categories of commercial projects, including casinos (77 percent) and retail centers (56 percent). Asked about projects beyond commercial real estate, 78 percent of respondents said they would object to development of a landfill in their home towns. Sixty-two percent said they would oppose an aggregate quarry, and 60 percent who would be against construction of a nuclear power plant.

But the survey also found evidence that fears about the economy are softening anti-development attitudes. Fifty-nine percent of those questioned also said that the economy has made them more likely to approve new commercial development in their home towns. A majority of respondents--56 percent--would still object to construction of a new Wal-Mart, but that number has declined from 68 percent in 2007. Department stores, major retail centers and home improvement stores all draw less opposition than they did a year ago.

On the plus side, several key types of projects won support from more than half of those surveyed. Single-family home development was the most popular category, backed by 82 percent of respondents. New grocery stores got the backing of 69 percent. Also receiving majority support were apartments and condominiums (53 percent), biotechnology projects (52 percent), department stores (52 percent), and office projects (51 percent).