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Community Outreach for Heath

Our proposals for the redevelopment of 444 Hebron Road are both very community oriented. The solar manufacturing plant would create numerous jobs for the areas around Newark and Heath, which could help unify the community, taking it back to its rust-belt roots while building something important for the future of Ohio and the world. A redevelopment revolving around the Earthworks would also have huge benefits for the community, because it would bring more people to the area, helping tourists stay longer and thus boosting the local economy. And a solar array on the property would definitely be a community benefit, because it would bring the renewable revolution right to the doorstep of Licking County and begin the transition away from coal and natural gas.

Since these projects are all community-oriented, we need a special focus on community outreach for these projects. This is especially true as not all of these are immediate sells for this area. Since renewable energy is new to the region, convincing the public that it is a good idea might be hard. This increases the need for smart advertising and publicity to make this happen. Everyone has to be on board in order for this to be a success. This report lays out some of the considerations I think would be necessary to make this happen.

As its name suggests, the Earthworks Destination development idea would derive its benefits mainly from the Earthworks becoming a World Heritage site across the street. Our research on UNESCO World Heritage Sites earlier in the semester shows that there are often economic gains to the community as a result of increased tourism and property maintenance (unesco.org). A closer comparison to the Cahokia Mounds property shows that this had a “major flow of economic benefits to local communities from activities in and around the World Heritage property” (UNESCO report p. 6). This shows that we can expect economic gains from the Earthworks. Concentrated into a development based around them, as our Destination group has proposed, this would increase these benefits even more, because it centralizes spending and creates a tourist attraction. Beyond economics, having a development of this sort would make the property more attractive than it currently is, sitting as a demolished brownfield.

The industrial plant would also have several benefits to the community, the most obvious being job creation. According to the group that focused on this idea in the report, the industrial plant would create around 375 jobs. This would allow the community to return to some of its economy when Meritor was there, while at the same time contributing to a progressive and necessary cause—renewable energy. Since Ohio currently lacks major renewable installations, having a manufacturing plant in Heath would allow Heath and Newark to pave the way on solar in the state going forward. This will hopefully accelerate the decarbonization of the state and make solar a major piece of Ohio’s energy transition as coal declines.

An added benefit to both properties is the solar array. This array would not create many additional jobs (though there would be a few for maintenance, construction, and education for the community). Instead, the array would stand as an example of renewable energy, giving the manufacturing plant context and the destination more credit for being sustainable. Excess power on this array could be transferred onto the grid, which would be genuine progress in Licking County's transition away from coal and gas. This arrangement would actually benefit the owners of the property, thanks to net metering (puco.ohio.gov).

Although these ideas have benefits, none of them will avoid confrontation with the local residents of Heath. First and foremost is the political nature of the property. According to election results, in 2016 Licking County voted by 61% to elect President Trump (nytimes.com). Trump has denied climate change is real and has eliminated many government programs aimed at helping get renewable energy off the ground (Rinfret and Pautz 354). The implication of this is that renewable energy, and even environmental politics in general, have a perception of being a liberal agenda. Ohio, meanwhile, is not a liberal part of the country (the state as a whole voted for Trump), and Licking County is one of the more conservative parts of Ohio (voting 10% more for Trump than the state average) (nytimes.com). Thus, the more conservative members of the county might oppose a solar facility in spite of the benefits, simply due to politics.

An additional issue comes in the fact that this was proposed by Denison students. This is partly a political issue, as mentioned above. Denison is a politically diverse school, but it still is more progressive than the surrounding area in Licking

County. Equally important is the divide between the age groups and backgrounds of Denison students. Very few students from Denison are from Licking County, and while there are many from Ohio, a lot are from the larger cities or suburbs. Furthermore, since all of us are around ages 20 to 21, we are young and less experienced in the real world. What this means is that none of us were around to see the Meritor factory in its prime, and few of us are aware of the general views and values of Licking County residents. From this, a resident of Licking County could easily (and justifiably) say that we are outsiders trying to stamp our liberal agenda on Licking County and are forcing something on the community that they do not want.

More specifically for the destination development, residents may also be concerned about its impact on pre-existing businesses. In theory, increased economic activity to the property would also lead to more people shopping at other stores further down Hebron Road (of which there are many, many stores). But if this new development were to be wildly successful, it could also keep people away from the other businesses farther down the road. Tourists may not be concerned about this, but those who work in Heath might be if it means that they lose their job. This is something that is worth addressing, even if the overall economy in the region improves.

Addressing these problems requires carefully planned community outreach on the part of Denison and the other proponents of the plan. There are several different strategies that this could take up. One approach would be to make persuasive arguments based on the perspectives and views of the community. This is the focus of Citizen's Climate Lobby, a nonprofit looking for bipartisan political action on climate

change. While their strategy mainly focuses on building support for carbon pricing, part of this involves talking to small businesses and local communities (citizensclimatelobby.org). Their model of looking for opposite opinions and common values is one that we should take into account in convincing people in Licking County to take action here (citizensclimatelobby.org). For both the industrial and destination proposals, this approach might focus less on the environmental benefits of solar, and more on the jobs and economic activity these developments would provide, which I am still confident would convince a lot of residents to be on board with it. We could also return to the argument of prestige that Heath could be a solar pioneer in Ohio.

Unfortunately, most of the reasons that would work in this strategy revolve around money. The reality is that money is a major part of most people's decisions, and that the economic development potential of our ideas was a major factor in why they got the support they did. However, as Mike Berners-Lee points out in *There Is No Planet B*, this is a dangerous path to go down. "Whilst you might get some immediate behavioral change," he quotes, "more importantly you have strengthened the idea that all actions revolve around money." (Berners-Lee 174). In other words, if we were to convince Licking County residents that our development ideas were good ones entirely based on money, then the residents would support *this* project, but would even more quickly reject future sustainability goals that were more expensive (such as my original idea of reforesting the property, which has good environmental value but less economic value). On the other hand, if we move away from basing our reasoning for these properties on money, then this project in itself would lose a lot of support.

I am not a psychologist, so I cannot give a definitive answer on what will convince the residents of Licking County that this is a good idea—and whether what convinces them for this project will convince them for future projects. What I personally think is that we should do our best to convince the residents of Newark and Heath based on the environmental benefits of the two properties. This is particularly true of the solar manufacturing plant, where the factory is producing the renewable energy that will allow us to have better environments in the future. If “this development is the right thing to do for the planet” doesn’t work, then we can return to the monetary and economic benefits of the property, because these are also significant. We should look at it from the perspective of the jobs, however, and less about the money. A message along the lines of “YOU can work to make a difference in Ohio’s clean energy picture” would be a much better motivator, one that might extend beyond the job and also to making environmentally conscious decisions in other parts of people’s lives.

Once we have decided what arguments we will make in spreading the word about this project, the next step is to determine where and how these arguments are going to be made. This concerns the format and style of the project, such as a press release or an advertisement. It also concerns the medium of presentation, which could be in the local newspaper or an online source or social media platform. Lastly, there is the question of which parties will be responsible for doing this outreach.

Writing a press release about our redevelopment would be a good first step. A good press release, according to Forbes.com, should have a strong, catchy headline, with a related but separate topic sentence, and a concise, thorough body section

(“How to Write A Press Release”). This would be useful in getting local businesses on board, who may be valuable allies in the future. This is especially important in the destination group, where it could help prepare these businesses for the increase in competition. If businesses are the audience, shifting some of the rhetoric to discussing economic benefits is probably a good idea.

An advertisement, either online or in print, would be another interesting way to write up the development ideas. The advertisement would have to be colorful, catchy, and informative. Doing an advertisement would probably be aimed more at the general public, where it should focus on personal significance and job creation. I have included a sample of what a print advertisement could look like at the end of this document.

Both a press release and an advertisement could be located in the Newark Advocate. A press release could be sent as a letter to the editor (at advocate@newarkadvocate.com) (newarkadvocate.com). Whoever made an advertisement for the property could probably pay for this to be included in the newspaper. Using the Advocate would not only get our ideas to the attention of the general public of Newark and Licking County, but it would also catch the eye of the writers of the newspaper, who could be valuable allies themselves if they write more positive information about the property. A similar effect could happen if this was presented in TV or radio news outlets, and these might have the advantage of extending to areas farther away from Heath and Newark.

People have increasingly resorted to online sources of media for information, so we will need to utilize these as well. Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter,

and Instagram are frequently used by people of most age groups, which means that if the word was spread over them it would get a lot of support. This would be the logical site for an advertisement, but not necessarily a press release. I am not particularly social media savvy, so I do not know as many specifics on this. I also believe that the Newark Advocate would be able to provide more information, so while more people would read a social media advertisement, they would not learn as much. Nonetheless, social media is a crucial step to any community outreach plan.

Several people could be responsible for doing this community outreach. First and foremost, we as students could be responsible. This would have the advantage of us having the greatest knowledge of our own ideas, which will make it more authentic and convincing. On the other hand, it may bring back my previous concern about Denison students not knowing the area as well and having different opinions. We could also have some of the consultants and associates advertise the property, such as Nate Strum and Grow Licking County. This would convince the public that people from Licking County support the plans and want to help improve commerce in the region. Probably the best-case scenario would be to have the mayor, or another government official advertise the idea. This would probably create the most trust and support, assuming the project then can get completed.

In conclusion, community outreach will be necessary in order to get this property forward. This is based on the ideological and cultural differences arising between Denison students and the community at large, which could lead to concerns about the project in spite of the economic and environmental benefits either idea would provide. Addressing these differences will require reasoning that will get the

project off the ground, and hopefully one that will keep the residents of Heath thinking about sustainability beyond simply the benefits of the project. This can reach the public in the form of advertisements and press releases, spread through social media and the local newspaper, and championed by the local governments and Grow Licking County. Hopefully the community can get on board with these projects, and get them to benefit the community in the future.

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