

“Indiana Farmland: Fight or Flight?”

Classroom Activity

Objective: By the end of this activity, secondary US Government students will decide on land appropriation and preservation issues as they choose where in three counties to place a new factory.

Materials: Video, “Indiana Farmland: Fight or Flight?”
Computer access (optional)

Activity:

1. Watch video. Have students do accompanying worksheet if you’d like. Once the video is completed, answer any questions students might have about what they saw and lead the discussion into the activity. Ask questions about how the video relates to the county the school is in, recent changes to the community, if they know any farmers who have re-zoned their land for residential or live in a re-zoned subdivision, etc.
2. Distribute packet to each student. Read directions to the class for the solo activity and inform the students that they will work on the group activity the next class period.
3. Once the students have completed their solo assignments, have the students break up into small groups. The students have several tasks to do while in the group:
 - a. Each student must first defend their position on where they chose to put the factory.
 - b. Once each student has stated where they would want to put the factory, the group must come to a consensus as to where they think it should go as a group.
 - c. Once a decision has been made by all the groups, each group will present their decision to the class and defend it as a group. This can be done by either writing the information on the board, using large sheets of paper, or even something as complex as a PowerPoint presentation. It is important to have the students show how the good points outweigh the bad points of building in that location. A list of possible questions you can use to ask students during their presentations can be found on the next page.
4. Once the students have presented their decisions, discuss as a class where they believe the factory should be built and why. It’s important to have the students realize that there really is no correct answer to the question—all locations have their merits and their faults. It’s a question of what’s the greatest opportunity for the company.

Questions for teachers to ask students:

Urban:

- Why should I build near the airport when it will mean the demolition of a historic church and community center?
- Is the location of the airport a positive or negative in placing the factory?
- Will this factory affect air and water quality in the city?
- Will the quality of life be affected for those who live around the factory?
- How will traffic be affected?
- What are the benefits of building in the city?
 - Employment?
 - Revenue?
 - Property value?
- Would you live in this area? Why?

Rural Transition:

- What are the benefits of building in this area?
- What about the environmental concerns?
- How will this affect the local economy?
- Is the infrastructure in place for an industry of this size?
- Is this factory going to be a catalyst for more growth?
 - Is this good?
- What about farms?
- Open space?
- Property value?
- Would you live in this area? Why?

Rural:

- What about the pollution concerns for the river?
- How will you get enough people to work there?
- Will this have a positive or negative effect on the local economy?
- Will this affect the already existing farming economy?
- What about the quality of life? Small town atmosphere?
- How will this affect local wildlife?
- Property value?
- Would you live in this area? Why?

Additional Information:

Brownfields are abandoned, under-utilized, or inactive pieces of real estate on which redevelopment or reuse is complicated because of the existence or perceived existence of environmental contamination. Brownfields are everywhere. They can be found in urban areas, suburban areas, and rural areas. Common brownfields include abandoned gas stations (the underground storage tanks that hold the gasoline), dry cleaners (especially old ones where chemicals were dumped out the back door instead of disposed of properly), and old industrial areas that have ceased production.

Brownfields cause problems because they can be safety hazards and eyesores. They contribute to urban blight and decay. Local governments can be hurt by brownfields as well. They often times do not produce any property tax revenue and frequently become a municipality's property because no one else wants to claim the brownfield site. Cleaning up brownfields and getting them back to productive use is difficult because of legal concerns surrounding the environmental contamination at the site.

Despite these problems, there are many advantages to redeveloping brownfields. Brownfields can often be acquired cheaply, and there are some tax incentives for voluntarily cleaning up a brownfield. There are also many local, state, and federal funding programs available to provide money and assistance in cleaning up brownfields, which can reduce costs to a company wishing to redevelop a brownfield. There are also positive publicity and marketing impacts from taking on a brownfields project. A company redeveloping a brownfield, by helping to eliminate urban blight and cleaning up a public health and safety hazard, can project a positive image to the community.

State Standards:

- USG.3.11 Define the relationship between the public agenda, special interest agendas, and the political agenda acted on by the national, state, and local government. (Economics; History; Individuals, Society, and Culture)
- USG.3.12 Give examples of the fiscal and monetary policies of the United States government and Indiana government and explain how they affect individuals, groups, and businesses. (Economics)
- USG.5.2 Describe roles of citizens in Indiana and the United States, including voting in public elections, participating in voluntary associations of civil society to promote the common good, and participating in political activities to influence public policy decisions of government. (Individuals, Society, and Culture)
- USG.5.7 Describe the ways that individuals can serve their communities and participate responsibly in civil society and the political process at local, state, and national levels of government.
- USG.5.12 Identify a significant issue in the community, gather information about the issue, and make a justifiable decision to resolve the issue. (Individuals, Society, and Culture)
- USG.5.13 Practice civic skills and dispositions by participating in a group of activities, such as simulated public hearings, mock trials, and debates. (Individuals, Society, and Culture)