

Don't Let the Dominoes Fall - A Rural Communities Guide to Stopping the Renewable Energy Avalanche

Picture this: you're tending to your fields, chatting with neighbors at the grain elevator, or enjoying the peace and quiet of your small-town life when you hear about a new wind turbine or solar farm coming to town. "It's just one project," they say. "It'll barely take up any land, and think of all the green energy!" Maybe you shrug it off—how bad could it be? Well, let me tell you, it's a lot like having one fly at the picnic table. Where there's one, there are bound to be more.



The Gateway to Overload

The truth is, wind turbines and solar farms don't travel alone. Once developers get their foot in the door, they start inviting their friends. What begins as a single project can snowball into a landscape dotted with panels and turbines, transforming your open spaces, prime farmland, and quiet way of life into an industrial patchwork.

Developers love rural communities like ours because they see wide-open spaces and folks who value hard work and practicality. They bring in their fancy presentations, promising jobs and clean energy, but they're not showing the whole picture. What they're not saying is that the first project often sets the stage for a second, then a third,

and before you know it, you're surrounded. Think of it as the renewable energy version of letting one cow out of the pasture—the rest are sure to follow.

Cumulative Impact (Effect) - One Project Begets Another

Sure, one turbine might not ruin your view, and a solar farm may seem harmless enough. But let's talk about the cumulative effects of these projects piling up:

* Land Use Transformation - These developments can eat up prime farmland faster than a hog at feeding time. That's land you've worked hard to maintain, land that feeds families and sustains the community.

Environmental Strain - Turbines are tough on birds and bats, and solar farms can create drainage and soil problems that make it harder to use the land later.

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Economic Shifts - While they promise an economic boost, these projects can lower property values and disrupt traditional agricultural and residential uses. The money might roll in temporarily, but when the shine wears off, who's left holding the bag? (Hint: it's us.)

Quality of Life - Think noise from turbines, dust from construction, and the permanent sight of miles of panels reflecting the sun back at you like a field of shiny aluminum foil. It changes the landscape and how we live in it.

Developers' Trick, The One-At-A-Time Approach

Here's where developers get clever. They often approach communities with a one-at-a-time strategy, making it seem like their plans are modest and contained. What they don't tell you is that their projects are often just the start of a much larger push. Many times, renewable energy projects are even numbered—think Hardin Solar 1, Hardin Solar 2, Hardin Solar 3, Hardin Wind Farm 1, Hardin Wind Farm 2, Hardin Wind Farm 3, Hardin Wind Farm 4, (yes, all real examples) and so on. It's like they're writing chapters in a book, and they don't want you to know the story ends with your county blanketed in panels and turbines. By the time you figure out the pattern, it's too late to rewrite the ending and could involve the engulfing of your community.

Developers use this piecemeal approach because they know if they revealed the full scope of their plans upfront, communities would balk. Instead, they feed you the

projects one bite at a time, hoping you won't notice the plate getting emptier until it's gone.

A Word of Warning

The domino effect isn't just something to worry about down the line—it's already happening. Solar farms are popping up faster than weeds after a rain in counties like Hardin, Union, Pickaway, and Madison. Wind turbines are staking their claim in places like Seneca, Crawford, Van Wert, Paulding, and Putnam. What starts as "just one" can quickly take over if you don't act now.

But here's the good news: it doesn't have to go that way. Rural communities like yours can stand up, push back, and make sure local voices are heard. It starts with awareness—understanding that the decisions being made now don't just affect this generation, but the ones who will live and farm on this land long after we're gone.

Use the tools at your disposal. Talk to your county commissioners about exclusion zones under Senate Bill 52. Work with your township leaders to create zoning ordinances that protect your way of life, using the framework provided in House Bill 501. And connect with advocacy groups like Concerned Citizens of America Org to learn from others who've faced similar battles and come out stronger.

The Good News: You Have the Tools to Fight Back

Here in Ohio, we've got some tools in our shed to stop this domino effect. Thanks to Senate Bill 52 (now law), county commissioners can create exclusion zones where no wind or solar projects can be developed that are greater than 50MW. That means you can protect your fields, homes, and quiet spaces from being swallowed up by industrial projects.

And don't forget about House Bill 501, which gives local governments even more say for renewable energy developments less than 50MW. Townships and municipalities can set up restrictive zoning or outright ban these projects if they don't fit the community's goals. Think of it as putting up a good, sturdy fence to keep those renewable energy developers out of your best grazing pasture or family neighborhood.

Neighbors, It's Time to Team Up

Now, I know what you're thinking: "That's all well and good, but we're just a small town or rural community—what can we do?" The good news is you don't have to do it alone. Groups like Concerned Citizens of America Org are here to help. These folks

have been fighting the renewable energy wave for year in their own communities, and they've got resources to help you figure out your next steps. They're like that wise old neighbor who's seen it all and knows how to fix a problem with a little grit and determination.

The Choice Is Yours

At the end of the day, the choice is ours. Will we let the dominoes fall, one by one, until our communities are unrecognizable? Or will we grab the reins, protect our land, and preserve the places we call home? The power to decide is in your hands, neighbors.