

Rezoning for Heavy Industry

Righting the Wrong

Jefferson County Foundation, Inc.

The Economic Impact of Rezoning this Area

Tourism, agriculture, and the equine industry are the largest industries in Jefferson County and have all played an important role in our economy for hundreds of years. Jefferson County has always recognized and supported these key industries and, as a result, we have always had what the remainder of the country is now striving to achieve: a local economy based on productive, sustainable business. Across the country, considerable effort is now being expended to promote and support these types of industries, as their exponential benefit to the local and regional economies is only now being fully realized. Heavy industry in the heart of Jefferson county will have detrimental effects on these traditional, sustainable industries. It simply does not make sense to allow the degradation of industries widely recognized to be foundational elements of an adaptable, enduring economy by inviting into Jefferson County the culprit of this degradation and a symbol of a bygone era.

Heavy industry, as a goal for job creation, is a solution of the past. We are more than 100 years on from the days of JP Morgan, Carnegie, and Rockefeller. In the Comprehensive Plan of Ranson it even states, “the end of Ranson’s traditional industrial period was signaled by the closure of AB&C Corporation, Dixie Narco and the Kidde Foundry (Badger Powhatan).” This demonstrates that heavy industry in Ranson is no longer desired here. It goes on to say that open space, local agriculture, and quality of life are now more important, all things provided for by the tourism, agriculture, and equine industries. Heavy industry has numerous negative effects on these industries and is simply no longer the goal we are striving for.

The tourism, agriculture, and equine industries are synergistic and support, protect, and promote one another in a way that creates long-term stability and profitability in our local economy. The equine and agricultural industries through pasture and crop land provide for a profitable maintenance of the bucolic nature of our county that draws many tourists. The equine industry provides evening entertainment for tourists. The agriculture industry provides local products many tourists now seek. The tourism industry provides customers and markets to both the equine and agricultural industries. But it is so much more than just this. There are many examples of deep interdependence and symbiosis. The equine industry brings outside money into our economy in the form of out of state owners and breeders, creating jobs in the equine industry in Jefferson County. The attractive nature of the county combined with the quality and accessibility of accommodations and other attractions make Jefferson county an even more desirable location for out of state equine investors. In many ways like this, the equine, agricultural, and tourism industries work hand in glove to bring money into our state, create jobs, and grow our local economy.



These industries are large conglomerates of small businesses, which has a multitude of economic benefits over having a few large businesses, as is commonly the case in heavy industry. Professor of agricultural and regional economics at Penn State and director of the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, Stephan Goetz, Ph.D., was quoted in a recent article saying¹, “small, locally owned businesses and startups tend to generate higher incomes for people in a community than big, non-local firms, which can actually depress local economies.” Small businesses create jobs, cultivate innovation, and provide opportunities for individuals that would otherwise not exist, while large businesses’ concentration on efficiency and increasing profitability decreases jobs and stifles innovation and individuality. Goetz went on to say, “we can’t look outside of the community for our economic salvation. The best strategy is to help people start new businesses and firms locally and help them grow and be successful.” This concept was made evident in the recent study “Eastern Panhandle Economic Outlook 2020-2024”² prepared by WVU in which they found that Jefferson County’s per capita income was \$8,800 per year above that of Berkeley County. This was attributed in part to Berkeley County’s job growth over the last several years coming from large companies such as P&G and Macy’s, where as Jefferson county’s came from commuters and local small business. These local agriculture, tourism, and equine industries set our community apart and provide opportunities for the small businesses and startups responsible for this growth of better paying jobs that are so good for our local economy.

Having a local economy robust with small business provides flexibility, and agility in our economy.³ Small businesses have been shown to be better able to react to even sever sudden changes like medical epidemics. Recent events have shown us just how important that is. On the other hand turbulence and uncertainty has been shown to be the leading cause for failure in manufacturing businesses such as heavy industry.⁴ A concentration on efficiency and lean operations has lead to an inability to adapt to change in these businesses.^{5,6} Agility and flexibility are as important now as they have ever been. Heavy industry will introduce rigidity and threaten the small businesses that provide agility and flexibility to our economy.

Further, agriculture and local food production provides a safety net in times of food instability. We never thought this possible in the US, but recent events have shown us that the drive for lean efficiency and profitability in our food supply chains have left most communities vulnerable to food shortages. This highlights the important of local sustainable food production that we already enjoy here in Jefferson County as part of our agriculture industry. As highlighted above, the equine and tourism industries support the maintenance of the agricultural land needed for this food production. As a community we should be moving toward resiliency and agility in our economy and food supply not away from it.

Large companies in heavy industry not only hurt our economy directly but also damage the industries that have been pillars of our economy for so long. Check out how Heavy industry in this location in the county will damage each of these industries in the other fact sheets of this series.

“Small, locally owned businesses and startups tend to generate higher incomes for people in a community than big, non-local firms, which can actually depress local economies.”

~ Dr. Stephan Goetz, Professor of Agricultural and Regional Economics at Penn State and Director of the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development



Tourism, agriculture, and equine industries:

All support each other in a symbiotic synergistic way

Are made up of small businesses. Small business is better for local economy than big, non-local firms



Manufacturing industries:

Are more unstable in times of turbulence and uncertainty

Have great potential to harm all of our biggest industries



Endnotes

1 Small Business is Good for Local Economies; Big Business is Not, Researchers Say, Business News Daily, 2020 Feb 26; <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/1298-small-business-good-for-economy.html>

2 Lego B, Deskins J, The Eastern Panhandle Economic Outlook 2020-2024, Bureau of Business & Economic Research, West Virginia University, John Chambers College of Business & Economics, 2019.

3 Irvine W, Anderson AR. Small tourist firms in rural areas: agility, vulnerability and survival in the face of crisis. International journal of entrepreneurial behavior & research. 2004 Aug 1.

4 Small AW, Downey EA. Orchestrating multiple changes: a framework for managing concurrent changes of varied type and scope. In IEMC 96 Proceedings. International Conference on Engineering and Technology Management. Managing Virtual Enterprises: A Convergence of Communications, Computing, and Energy Technologies 1996 Aug 18 (pp. 627-634). IEEE.

5 Verstraete C. Planning for the unexpected [business agility]. Manufacturing Engineer. 2004 Jun 1; 83(3):18-21.

6 Goodhue DL, Chen DQ, Boudreau MC, Cochran J. Addressing business agility challenges with enterprise systems. 2009.

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Educate yourself and others.

Read the detailed information on our website and share with others. Knowledge is power.

Submit a written public comment.

Submit through our website, or use the information here to write and send to the City of Ranson.

Sign up to speak at the hearing.

Sign up via the announcement found here. Stand up for keeping heavy industry out of our county.

Donate to support our efforts.

If you are able to, please support our ongoing legal efforts with a fully tax deductible donation.

www.jeffersoncountyfoundation.org