



CLEAN AIR
TASK FORCE

THE POWER OF ENGAGEMENT

Shear Lessons: Grange Solar Grazing Center



Engagement Overview

Though the proposed 2,570-acre Grange Solar Grazing Center, where solar would be co-located with sheep grazing, was ultimately canceled, developer Open Road Renewables (ORR) exemplified many best practices in a community-first approach to engagement. ORR initiated engagement early in the development process, using a range of outreach methods to connect with landowners and local organizations. The company embedded itself in the community by attending local events, opening a regional office, and volunteering for community projects. ORR also committed to \$10 million in community investment. Despite efforts to adapt the project and its benefits package in response to community feedback, the project was ultimately denied by the Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) and canceled in 2025. Opposition from local leaders influenced the decision, aided by a state siting policy that grants local officials significant authority over project approvals.

Project Overview



TECHNOLOGY
Solar



CAPACITY
500 MW



FIRST PROPOSED
2019



CANCELED
2025



DEVELOPER
Open Road Renewables

About Logan County

COMMUNITY TYPE

Rural

POPULATION

46,150

EMPLOYMENT RATE

59.1%

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$69,183

DEMOGRAPHICS

91.9% white

EDUCATION

93% high school degree, 18.3% bachelor's degree or higher

HEALTH

5.8% uninsured

KEY INDUSTRIES

Manufacturing, health care & social assistance, retail trade



Engagement Tactics

Early outreach: ORR started landowner outreach in 2019, five years before applying to the OPSB. Methods included dozens of letters to property owners, six rounds of targeted outreach to neighboring property owners, ten open houses, two state-mandated public information meetings, seven press releases, and media outreach. They also hosted less formal coffee chats and staffed booths at local fairs and community events.

Flexible siting: After sending hundreds of letters to landowners early in the project, ORR collaborated with those who expressed interest in the project. Rather than cluster the panels in one location, they spread the solar project over multiple properties so the panels would be sited only where they were welcomed. ORR also altered plans to adapt to local concerns, working with neighbors to avoid water tile damage and designing wildlife-friendly fencing and project landscaping that mixed native and beneficial flora.

Local presence: ORR opened a local office in 2022, which served as a community hub, project events space, and solar learning center. They staffed the office six days a week with a local representative, aiming to be accessible. The developer also canvassed persistently and attended local events and fairs to integrate into the community as much as possible.

Partnership with local organizations and unions: ORR worked with and received vocal support for the Grange Solar project from the Ohio Chamber of Commerce and several environmental groups, such as Ohio Citizen Action and the Ohio Environmental Council. ORR also signed formal workforce agreement with three local unions that would construct the project.

Community benefits: ORR committed \$10 million in local donations to be disbursed over the project's 40-year lifespan. Donations were anticipated to support construction of a community center, environmental restoration projects, a vocational training program, and other local causes.

Good neighbor agreement: ORR established a program to ensure residents potentially impacted by the project would receive direct benefits. A "good neighbor agreement" paid neighbors \$500 at signing, \$5,000 for landscaping, and either \$20,000 for home solar or an annual \$1,250 in electric bill offsets.

Takeaways

For several years, ORR appeared to implement the ideal model of community engagement, initiating outreach years ahead of schedule, investing into the local economy, and responding to feedback. However, this early and visible approach may have had unintended consequences, giving a small group of opponents time to attract broader attention. As opposition grew, residents and community leaders who supported the project became reluctant to speak out, fearing backlash. The outsized influence of local politics in Ohio's state siting policy creates an inconsistent and uncertain environment for projects that otherwise meet all technical and environmental standards. The story of Grange Solar draws attention to the role state policy plays in shaping project outcomes—even good community engagement can only go so far if political conditions shift or opposition gains traction.