

Introduction to

Town "X"

Town X is an economically depressed community, an old steel town. While Town X thrived in the 1970's, the 1980's brought a decrease in steel production nationwide, but the steel mill stayed open. In 1992, a low-income housing project was built next to the steel mill, unaware of the potential dangers caused by toxic waste being disposed of improperly. Finally, the steel mill was forced to close in 1997 because they had buried toxic waste on the grounds that leaked into the River YU.

Currently the main industry in Town X is a paper mill, which opened in 1979. Located on the River YU, the Paper 4 Life (P4L) mill employs about 55% of the town population. Contrary to popular belief, the P4L plant is a relatively clean industry having no major Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) violations and an excellent community relationship. The biggest drawback is the constant smell of rotten eggs in the air due to the use of sulfur. Unfortunately, P4L has seen a downturn in profits over the past year and has begun laying off employees on the manufacturing and managerial levels.

Some demographic information about Town X:

- Mostly middle-class families: Average household income (family of four): \$40,000
- Ethnic make-up of town population:
 - 71% Caucasian
 - 20% African American
 - 8% Hispanic
 - 1% Other
- 12% of the total town population lives below the poverty line
- At the housing project, the average household income (family of four) is \$17,000
- Ethnic make-up of the housing project: 44% African American
 - 35% Hispanic
 - 20% Caucasian
 - 1% Other
- Town unemployment rate: 7%
- Workers in "blue-collar" jobs: 60%
- Workers in "white-collar" jobs: 40%
- Town's population is stable, surrounding area is growing

Selltech Power

The Selltech Power Corporation wants to open a new power plant to serve Town X and the surrounding region. The proposed site of the plant is on River YU upstream from the housing project. The plant will be powered by a combination hydroelectric and natural gas turbines (one turbine powered by water, two turbines powered by natural gas). There is an alternate site outside of Town X, however the town would not receive any of the tax revenue generated by the plant if it is situated there.

Town "X" Citizen:

Almos Poore

You live in the housing project next to the old steel mill. You are currently employed at the P4L paper mill, where you earn minimum wage on the factory floor. Your wife, Veri Poore, was also working there, but had to quit about six months ago when one of your children became very sick. You have two children ages 8 and 5. Your family moved to the housing project five years ago after your second child was born and you had just been laid off from another job.

Your eight-year-old child has leukemia and is currently in treatment. He is doing well with the chemotherapy, although it is difficult to see him so sick. Two years ago, Veri was diagnosed with breast cancer. She was forced to have a mastectomy and undergo intensive chemotherapy treatment to eradicate the cancer. Today she is doing well.

You feel that it is no coincidence that your family has been so sick. You think that the leaking toxic waste left over from the old steel mill somehow caused these illnesses. Although it was not known that toxic waste was leaking underneath the housing project when you first came, the truth is that you never wanted to move here in the first place because it was dirty and located right next to a steel mill. However, you had little money at the time and had no other options because you could not afford housing located elsewhere. You've been trying to move out since you arrived, but with the economy slowing, then Veri getting sick, and now your child, you just don't have the financial resources.

You are uncertain about the Selltech plant coming. The possibilities of a better paying job and good benefits are enticing, yet the thought of having more chemicals and possible toxins nearby is alarming. You don't know any specifics about the power plant and what sort of by-products it could produce and you haven't had time to find out more because, when you aren't working, you are at home or at the hospital with your child. You found out that there were meetings regarding the power plant after they had occurred, which made you angry because you don't receive the local paper and, even if you had known, the time (during the middle of the day) was impossible for you to attend. You feel excluded, as though you have no voice or say in the issue. It seems as though your opinion and those of your fellow residents are unimportant and being ignored. The next step is to attend the final "Task-Force" meeting.



Town “X” Citizen:

Anita Job

After losing your job at the paper mill four months ago, you are more than ready to get back to work. At the paper mill, you were a shift manager and earned a decent salary. It has been hard on your family because you were the main source of income. Your husband, Whatta Job, is a stay-at-home dad taking care of the three kids because childcare is so expensive.

If the Selltech power plant is approved and built in your hometown of Town X, it is possible you could find a job at the plant as a shift manager. You’ve heard that the plant will create 350 job openings; however, you also heard that 50 of those positions will be filled with current Selltech employees from other plants. This worries you because those jobs are usually the managerial jobs, which is what you are seeking.

After attending an information session given by Selltech (you saw an ad in the paper), you have discovered that a shift manager position at Selltech will pay \$5,000 more than your old job at P4L. Selltech also offers continuing education opportunities for their employees and more importantly, free childcare. This would be wonderful for your family because your husband would be able to work outside the home and provide more money to help pay for your family expenses. You desperately want your children to have the opportunity to attend college and the extra income would help you save for this.

You live on the main road through town. If the Selltech plant is built, traffic will increase dramatically, which concerns you. The property value of your home will decrease and, more importantly, trucks carrying natural gas to the plant will be driving by your house daily, and if one should get in an accident it could be disastrous.

You know that power plants can pollute the air. This is also a concern because two of your children have asthma, one of them with acute asthma. This has proven to be an expensive and time-consuming medical condition. On several occasions, your child with acute asthma has needed hospitalization, forcing you to take off of work while your husband kept the other two children at home.

There is an alternate site outside of Town X that Selltech investigated. If the plant were built there you wouldn’t have increased traffic and it seems as though this would put your children farther away from the possible pollution. However, it would probably be more difficult to get a job because more county residents would apply in addition to the numerous Town X residents.

The next step is to attend the final “Task-Force” meeting where you will be able to voice your opinion.



Town "X" Citizen:

Forest Green

You are a forester for the county surrounding Town X. You live right outside Town X, downstream from the proposed site of the new Selltech power plant. There are several things that concern you about the power plant. You've done some research and found that the proposed plant will have some serious negative environmental effects.



The proposed plant will level four acres of forestland, which can lead to increased soil erosion and runoff into River YU. In addition, new power lines will be constructed leading out from the plant, which will also cause more deforestation, and Selltech is known to use strong herbicides to control the vegetation around the towers.

The power plant will release a minimum of 2,500 tons of airborne toxins annually if they comply with the minimum EPA guidelines for air quality. It will also produce 250,000 lbs. of hazardous waste per year, which Selltech is required to dispose of properly. One other fact that worries you is that Selltech uses anhydrous ammonia to reduce its nitrogen oxide emissions, which is stored in large tanks. It is possible that these drums could leak, although highly unlikely.

There is an alternative to using the ammonia,

it is a dry substance called urea; however, it costs more than the ammonia.

You feel that it is no coincidence that the future site of the proposed plant is near the housing project. Its residents are poor and mostly of minority races. In general, they have been ignored in the planning process for town development. For instance, the original site of the housing project was supposed to be on the other side of the river, upstream from the steel mill. However, the land next to the mill was significantly cheaper to purchase and develop and, despite known environmental hazards, it was built there anyway. Later, when it was discovered that toxic waste was leaking from the buried drums next to the project, it took a long arduous court case in which residents of the project were forced to sue both the town and the steel corporation. You feel that a similar situation could easily arise if a power plant is built near the housing project.

Town X is in a serious economic rut. Although your job is not threatened directly, many people you know who work at the paper mill have lost their jobs, or could lose their jobs, because the paper mill is downsizing. The new plant would also provide a reliable power source, which will be a nice change from your current power company. Your electricity flickers constantly and, when a bad storm hits, you always lose power and the company is slow to get it back up and running.

The next step is to attend the final "Task-Force" meeting where you will be able to voice your opinion.

Town “X” Citizen:

Kilo Watts

You are a corporate executive for the Selltech Power Corporation. You live 75 miles away from Town X in the city of Metropoli. This power plant is a great opportunity for you. You will be the supervising executive over the Town X plant which will require you to drive to the plant once a week. However, you will earn 50 percent more than what you currently earn. You truly believe in the Selltech Corporation or, as you like to call it, the Selltech “family”. You’ve spent over a year researching what would be the best location for a new Selltech power plant. You and your task force chose Town X because of its great location on the River YU, the cheap price of the land, the low tax rate for industry, its hard working citizens, and the need for economic rebirth. You believe that this plant will lead Town X down the road to economic recovery as you have seen the “Selltech family” bring about such change in several other localities.

You know that Selltech will bring a much-needed boost to Town X’s tax base and an influx of economic activity. In addition to increased economic activity Selltech has a commitment to fostering community development. You have seen the positive effects of Selltech’s “Power for You” program, which addresses everything from teen mentoring to neighborhood clean-ups and restoration.

You know that there will be some environmental changes; however, you feel that change is necessary for progress to take place. You are aware that there is a housing project located slightly downstream from the proposed site and that there have been problems in the past with leaky toxic waste from an old industry located nearby. However, you feel that Selltech will not make those same sorts of mistakes and is one of the “cleaner” power corporations in the market today. It does its best to comply with all federally mandated regulations and goes a step further in trying to include local citizens in the decision making process when Selltech deems that it concerns them. In fact, several meetings were held to educate the citizens about Selltech, the proposed plant, and give an opportunity for them to ask questions and voice concerns. These meetings were advertised in the local paper, but turnout was low.

There is an alternate site outside of Town X in the surrounding county; however, the topography doesn’t lend itself to building easily. In fact, the modifications made to the plant to accommodate the land and construction costs will raise the electricity prices. You would also have to petition the county government to rezone the land. You think this will be a difficult task because of the strict open space laws. You would much prefer the plant to be located in Town X.



The next step is to attend the final “Task-Force” meeting where you will be representing Selltech.

Town “X” Citizen:

Landon River

You own a large piece of property in the county surrounding Town X. About six months ago Selltech approached you expressing an interest in buying part of your property and building a power plant on it. Initially you were upset because your family has owned this land for almost one hundred years. It started out as a farm that your great-great-grandfather bought and was passed down generation after generation. Today, you use part of the land for farming crops and the remainder as grazing land for your herd of cattle. You earn a modest income (enough to live comfortably) and your family enjoys the farming lifestyle. In your mind, this lifestyle is worth more than anything money could buy.

It seems illogical for Selltech to buy your property and try to build on it. The topography surrounding River YU, which you assume they will be building near, is rocky and hilly. It is not ideal for building a large power plant. About five feet down is a layer of solid bedrock which is difficult to break apart and move. Other companies have approached you in the past about buying your land to build on, but when they found out what was under the soil, they felt that the construction costs would be astronomical and found other places to build.

Another factor that has driven away companies in the past are the strict county open space laws. About ten years ago when Metropoli was experiencing a boom, the county residents wanted to prevent urban sprawl and petitioned the Board of Supervisors to zone the land so that it would be near impossible for suburbs, shopping malls, and industry to spill out of the city. Although Metropoli is on the opposite side of the county, these laws apply to the area where your land is as well. Selltech would have to try to get the land re-zoned for industry and the county residents have been vocal in the past about keeping the open space at its current status. In your opinion, the loss of farm and rangeland signifies a threat to your lifestyle.

It would make more sense for the power plant to locate in Town X. The economy of Town X is struggling and the taxes collected from the new plant would give a boost to the ailing town. It would provide money to build new schools (which are currently overcrowded) and a means to carrying out various town beautification projects such as building parks and repairing the apartments in the low-income housing project.

It would be nice to have that extra tax money in the county’s budget; however, your county is doing fine and there is not a budget crisis. One positive aspect of the plant being built on your land is that it is likely that more county residents will be hired to fill the jobs than if the plant were built in Town X. You assume that, since Selltech has not followed up on their offer, they are planning on building the plant elsewhere. You want to attend the “Task-Force Meeting” just to make sure that this is indeed the case.

The next step is to attend the final “Task-Force” meeting where you will be able to voice your opinion.