

RFI RESPONSES

Best Practices



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RFI Responses

What We Will Cover Today

- Defining an RFI
- RFI vs. RFP
- The Process
- Scoring
- Walk Through an RFI/How to Answer
- Appropriate Attachments
- Tips on “Selling”
- Keep Your Marketing Consistent
- The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly



**What do you
consider a
large purchase?**



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Defining an RFI

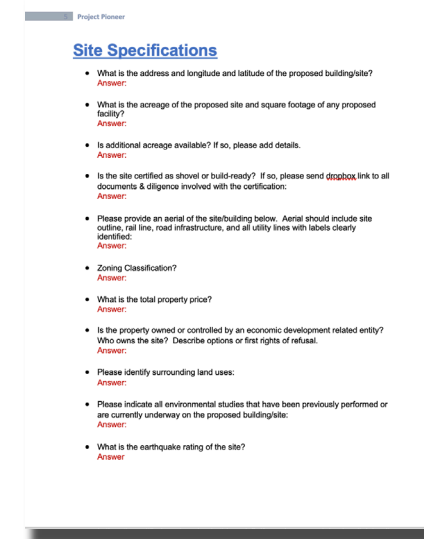
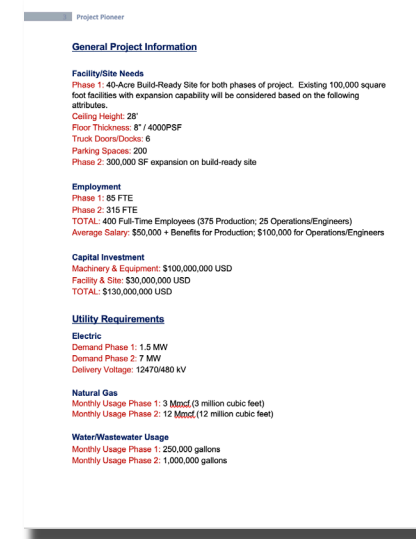
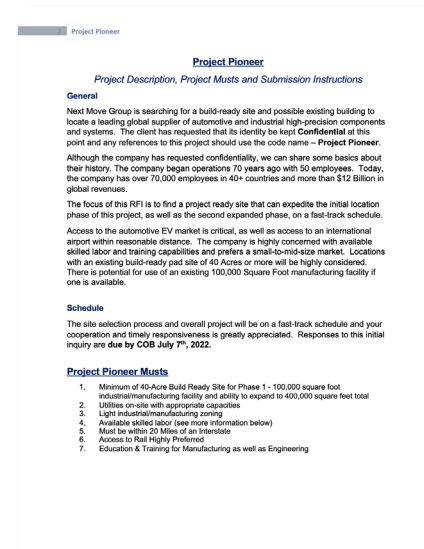
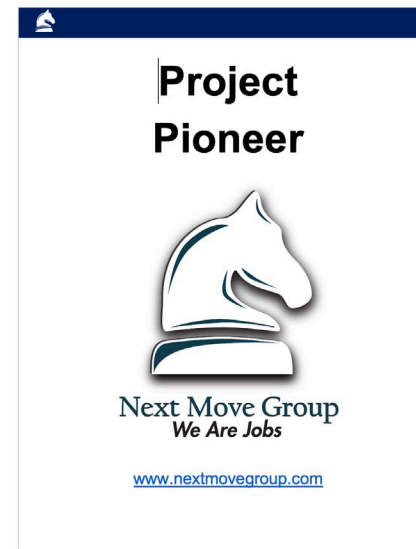


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What is an RFI?

- Utilized by Site Consultants
- Large Accounting Firms
- Companies Directly
- Commercial Realtors

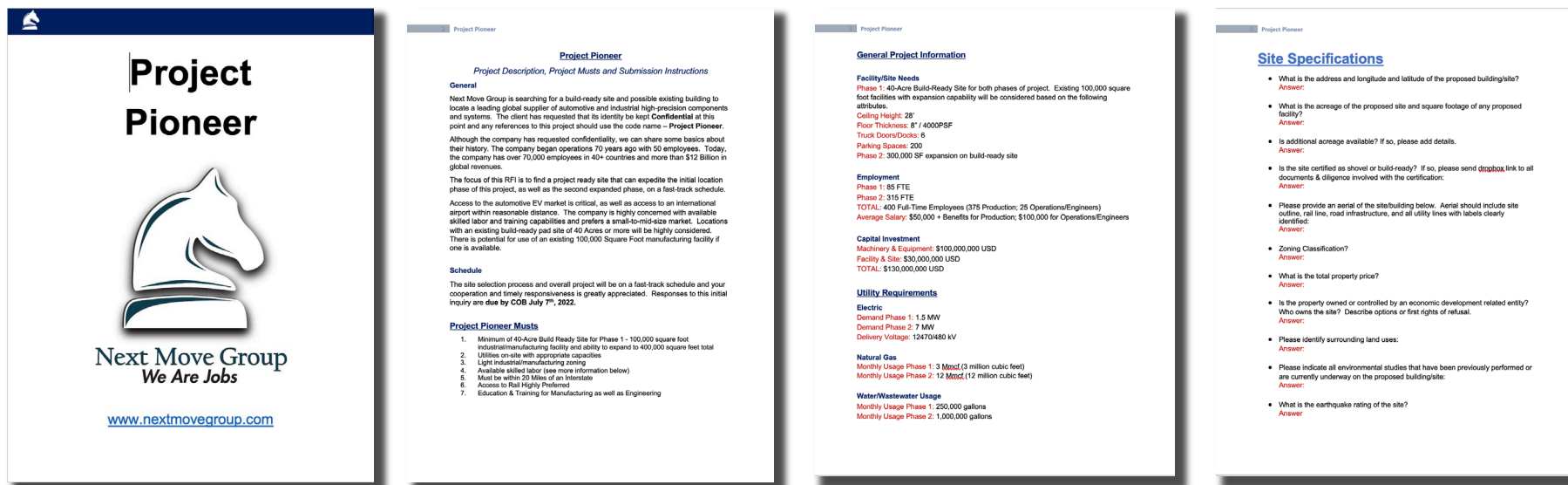




Why are RFIs used?

To Eliminate YOU

We use the information provided to score your community, your site, and your state based upon multiple factors, with the goal of eliminating the vast majority of responses.





RFI vs. RFP



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Is it an RFI or an RFP?

- **Requests for Information:**

- An RFI is a formal process for gathering information. Its purpose is to resolve information gaps and eliminate ambiguities. It is a fact-finding document made up mostly of pointed questions seeking specific information in categories such as: Real Estate, Workforce/Labor Relations, Education, Community Info, Utilities, Incentives, and More.
 - Gives a project description and overview.
 - Asks specific questions in a broad range of categories to gather information.
 - Each question has a weighted score attached to it, typically 0 to 10. You want to score high to keep your community in. If you skip questions, they are an automatic 0.
 - Some consultants will include open-ended questions as an opportunity for you to “sell” your community.



Is it an RFI or an RFP?

- **Requests for Proposal:**

- An RFP is a formal document used to gather bids for a project or service. In Site Selection, RFPs are used instead of RFIs for various reasons. In this case, the consultant is asking you to put together a formal proposal based on the information they give you in the RFP document. It allows much more freedom in how you respond while also leaving some ambiguity as to what can/should be included.
 - Still gives a project description and overview.
 - Should describe necessary site/building/utility information.
 - Will always provide a list of what should be included in your proposal response!
 - Typically, gives the professional more freedom in responding, allowing you to market and “sell” your community at your discretion, rather than a rigid Q&A like in an RFI.



Why would someone issue an RFP rather than an RFI?

There are various reasons that RFPs would be used rather than an RFI, including:

- Tight geographic search
- Very specific real estate requirements
- Early-stage of a search to narrow based on specific needs (such as buildings or sites) before issuing a longer RFI in a second round
- Smaller projects will sometimes utilize RFPs over RFIs



The Process



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What does the process look like?

- Geography Approval
- Musts & Wants Alignment
- RFI Preparation & Approval
- RFI Distribution
- Receive all RFIs by posted deadline
- Site Scoring (by Consultant)
- Site Elimination Meeting with Client



You Can Be Eliminated...



Scoring



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Walk Through an RFI/How to Answer



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How To Answer

THE MOST BASIC KEYS TO SUCCESS

- Answer each question thoroughly and in the manner requested by the consultant.
- Be honest with your answers, you don't want to lose trust.
- Give thought to each question regarding why it is being asked based on the project parameters and answer based on how you can fulfill their needs.
- Even if you don't meet the precise need today, explain how you can meet the needs of the company within its timeline.
- Check for spelling and other errors. You may inadvertently convey the wrong message.



Appropriate Attachments

The Do's and Do Nots...



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The Do's and Don'ts...

The goal is to present your community in the best light possible.

How do you do that?

1. Make sure you make it as easy as possible to review the information you submit for an RFI.
2. Don't send a site selector on a hunt. Provide an answer in the place it is expected to be found. *Sending a site selector on a hunt to FIND is an easy way for your community to be cut from an opportunity, so don't be that community.*

What if you answered a question, but didn't answer it in the correct place?

ZERO POINTS ON YOUR SCORE SHEET if we can't find the information we're looking for.



The Do's...



Send a .pdf attachment (less than 15MB in size); BUT make sure the pages are uniform in size and orientation



Apply your branding, or at minimum, organization name on every page of your submission



The Do's...

- Send a link along with the RFI to a Google Drive or a DropBox and make sure the file is *organized*.

I'm talking...

1. Descriptive file naming conventions
2. If there are a lot of documents, divide them up by subject, or at a minimum, by site/building, and organize them in different files
3. BONUS: Include a file map as an attachment (like a table of contents, but for digital files and documents)



Google Drive



Dropbox



The Don'ts...

- Say “See our site online” without saying where that is or including a link to get to it!
- Send a link when you were asked to send a document.
- Overstuff your attachments... You want to “sell” your community but if it is too much information (40 extra pages) it may all get ignored.
- “Hide” the pertinent information that was requested. Make sure it is easy to find the requested maps and other information without digging through a 100-page file.

GISPlanning

ZoomProspector

LOIS

CREXI 



Tips on “Selling”

Paint the Picture....



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Paint The Picture

Data is “black & white”, but we all know that it doesn’t paint the full picture of your community. You need to figure out how to fill the canvas with color for site selectors through your responses, attachments, anecdotes, etc.





Post-Pandemic Landscape...

There is an ongoing imbalance between US labor demand and supply:

- December 2022: 11 million job openings
- December 2022: +/- 5.3 million people unemployed, but actively seeking employment



Post-Pandemic Landscape...

The post-pandemic workforce landscape presents new challenges, which only compounds issues from over the last 10+ years...

- EVERYONE is hiring
- Baby boomers continue to retire at an alarming rate, taking irreplaceable and irreplicable institutional knowledge with them
- Wages were a problem going into the pandemic and the problem has only grown



Post-Pandemic Landscape...

- The remote workforce is here to stay, and people are moving to where their dollar goes further, AKA Rural America, but not everyone is suited to the remote workforce
- We know that businesses like retailers and manufacturers and the healthcare industry will always have to have workers on-site, but the longer they go without a suitable labor force, the more automation will take place





How to Sell

#1

Problem for communities and companies today: Labor

#2

Problem for communities and companies today: Available Sites/Buildings

Access to talent is the number-one concern for employers today, making it a top concern as well for EDOs that seek to attract, retain, and expand businesses in their communities.



How to Sell

#1

The biggest question is how your community can provide a short-term and long-term workforce.



- What programs do you have in place to RECRUIT, SCREEN, & TRAIN for ramp-up of operations?
- How are you engaging discouraged workers and getting them back into the workplace? (this goes to Labor Participation Rate vs. Unemployment Rate)
- Do you have a RECENT example of how your community helped a company bring on 20 to 100 new employees and how many people applied for those jobs?



How to Sell

#1

The biggest question is how your community can provide a short-term and long-term workforce.

- What programs are in place to ensure students are embracing technical/skilled trades in addition to a four-year university?
- Have you studied your talent pipeline and the projected growth in employment opportunities across your industry sectors?
- *DO YOU HAVE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS???*
- What is your community doing to attract people to live there?





How to Sell

#2

Problem for communities and companies today: Available Sites and/or Buildings

- What can you do to lower the risk for a company to come to your community using real estate?
- How prepared are your sites and buildings for a project to land there?
- DO NOT say that a site is shovel-ready unless it is cleared, grubbed, and graded.
- DO NOT say that a site is build-ready unless you have a compacted building pad on it.



How to Sell

- What are other top sales point for your community?
 1. Have you cut red tape and streamlined processes to make it easier to do business in your community?
 2. Do you have creative incentive options?
 3. Do you have a stellar BR&E program with good examples of success?
 4. Have you recently reviewed your zoning/master planning documents to make sure your community can anticipate future growth needs in housing, business, and industrial areas?



**Keep Your
Marketing
Consistent**



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Marketing is Important, too...

The image displays four overlapping promotional brochures for McNairy County, Tennessee, designed by BlueOval City. The brochures are as follows:

- Left Brochure:** Titled "SITE OVERVIEW VIDEO" with a QR code. It features a map of McNairy County and text: "MCNAIRY NORTH INDUSTRIAL PARK", "44+/- ACRES SELECT TN CERTIFIED", "LAT: 35°16'27.50\" N LONG: 88°23'52.26\" W ADAMSVILLE, TENNESSEE", "180,000+ LABOR FORCE", "LESS THAN TWO HOUR DRIVE TIME TO MEMPHIS & NASHVILLE", "731.645.6360", "MARK@MCNAIRY.COM", "MCNAIRY COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT", "WWW.MCNAIRYCOUNTYECD.COM", and "AGGRESSIVE REAL ESTATE INCENTIVES AVAILABLE!".
- Top Middle Brochure:** Titled "STEEL & METAL FABRICATION". It includes a map of the United States highlighting Tennessee, text: "Why McNairy County Tennessee?", "MCNAIRY COUNTY HAS DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF MANUFACTURING WORKERS THAN THE US AVERAGE", "MCNAIRY COUNTY HAS 4x THE NUMBER OF PRODUCTION WORKERS THAN THE US AVERAGE", "MCNAIRY COUNTY IS NEARLY 20% LOWER COST THAN THE AVERAGE US LOCATION", "MCNAIRY COUNTY HAS 43% LOWER ANNUAL WAGES THAN THE AVERAGE US LOCATION", "TENNESSEE IS #1 IN THE US FOR ADVANCED INDUSTRY JOB GROWTH", "TENNESSEE IS #1 IN THE US FOR LOWEST TAXES PER CAPITA", "BlueOval City", "Ford", "1-hour Drive of Ford BlueOval City!", "Logistics:", "4-LANE ACCESS TO I-40, I-55, & I-22", "1.5 HOURS TO MEMPHIS INT'L AIRPORT", "30 MINUTES TO INLAND RIVERPORT", "1.5 HOURS TO FEDEX WORLD HUB", "CONTACT: Mark O'Mell, CEO", "ph: 731.645.6360", "email: mark@mcnairy.com", and "www.mcnairycountyeecd.com".
- Right Middle Brochure:** Titled "LAND AVAILABLE:". It includes a map of the land, text: "ADAMSVILLE/MCNAIRY NORTH INDUSTRIAL PARK", "Copeland Drive, Adamsville, Tennessee, 38310", "Lat: 35°16'27.50\" N Long: 88°23'52.26\" W", "Parcel Number: 38 017.04", "SITE OVERVIEW VIDEO", "For Sale or Lease", "About:", "Acres: +/- 44", "Ownership: Public", "Zoning: Heavy Industrial", "Additional Acres Available: 33 in industrial park", "Environmental Studies: Phase 1 environmental, soil boring report", "Sub-dividable", "All utilities at site", "Logistics:", "Distance to Interstate: 35 miles to east/west I-40 via US HWY 45", "Distance to Regional Airport: 51 miles", "Distance to Int'l Airport: 100 miles", "Distance to Port: 30 miles", "2 hours to FedEx Hub - Memphis, TN", "VIEW ALL AVAILABLE SITES", "CONTACT: Mark O'Mell, CEO", "ph: 731.645.6360", "email: mark@mcnairy.com", "www.mcnairycountyeecd.com", and "McNairy County, Tennessee, Economic Development Commission 205 West Court Ave. Selmer, TN 38375".
- Bottom Right Brochure:** Titled "1-Hour Drive From: Ford BlueOval City". It includes a map of the area, text: "1-Hour Drive From: Ford BlueOval City", "2x THE NUMBER OF MANUFACTURING WORKERS THAN THE US AVERAGE", "4x THE NUMBER OF PRODUCTION WORKERS THAN THE US AVERAGE", "43% LOWER AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGES THAN THE US", "COMMUNITY OVERVIEW", and "www.mcnairycountyeecd.com".

- Package your information with consistent branding
- Doesn't require a professional, or a lot of money, to build a template with your logo in ppt to apply to your documents

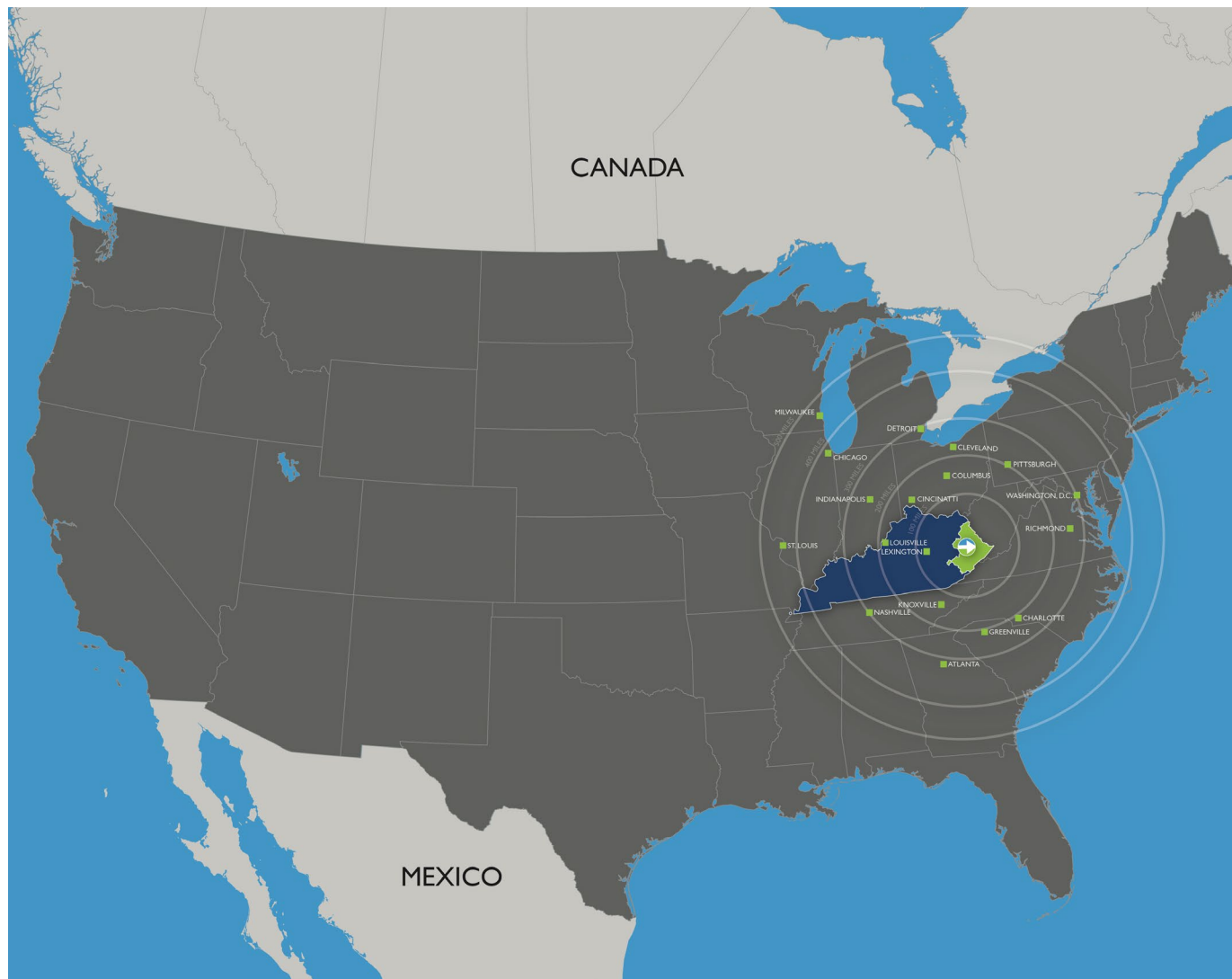


Marketing is Important, too...

- Good maps that are easy to understand
- You want to start at a high level and work your way down. For example, on your first map, make sure multiple metro markets can be seen as a Major Markets Map.
- Next, you want to zoom into a Regional Map that includes easy-to-understand primary transportation corridors.
- Finally, you will come into an aerial map of the property (sometimes you may want to include an overview of the industrial park if this site is inside of one)
- Always note where the site's location is in each of the maps.

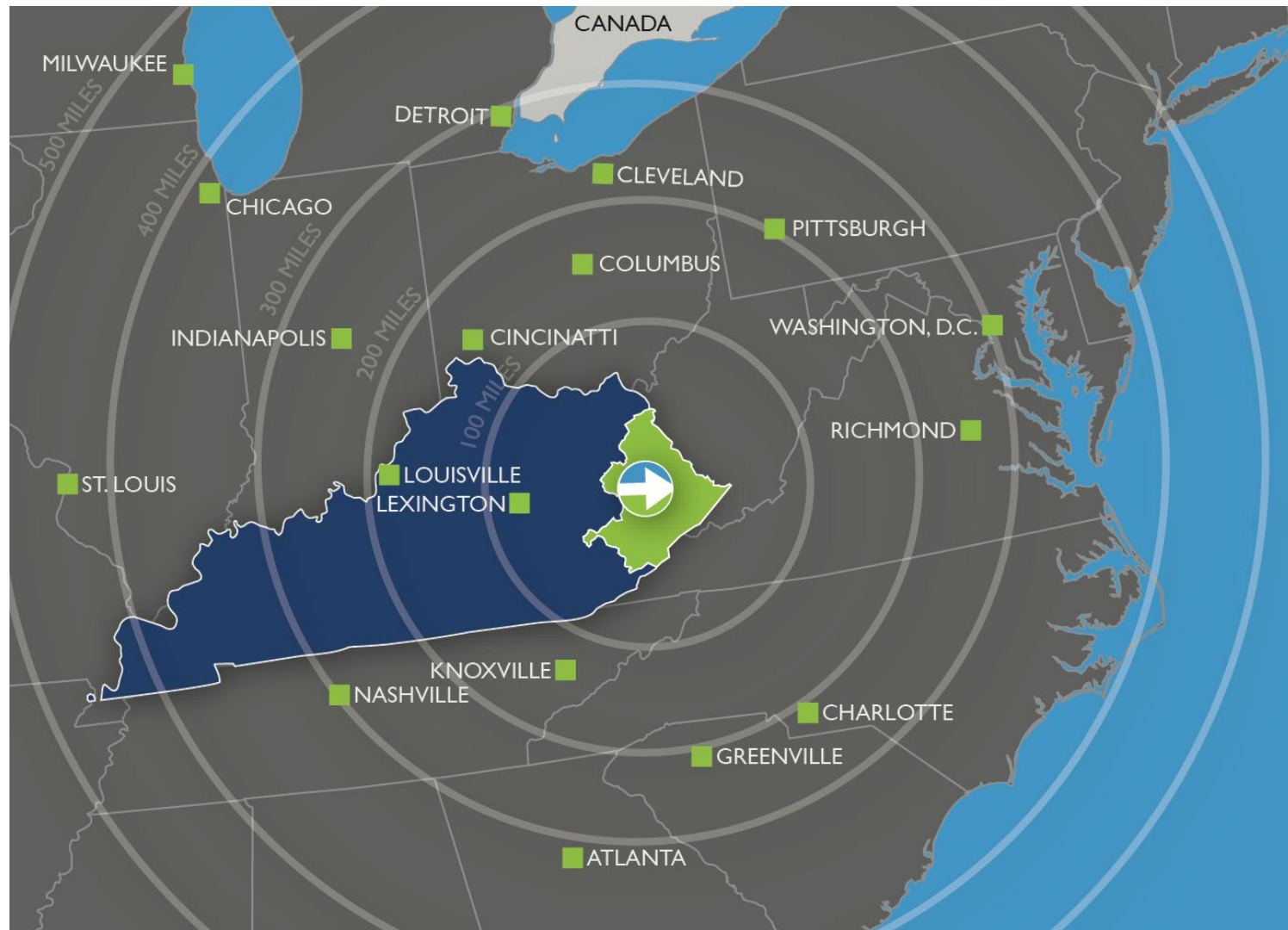


Map Examples





Map Examples



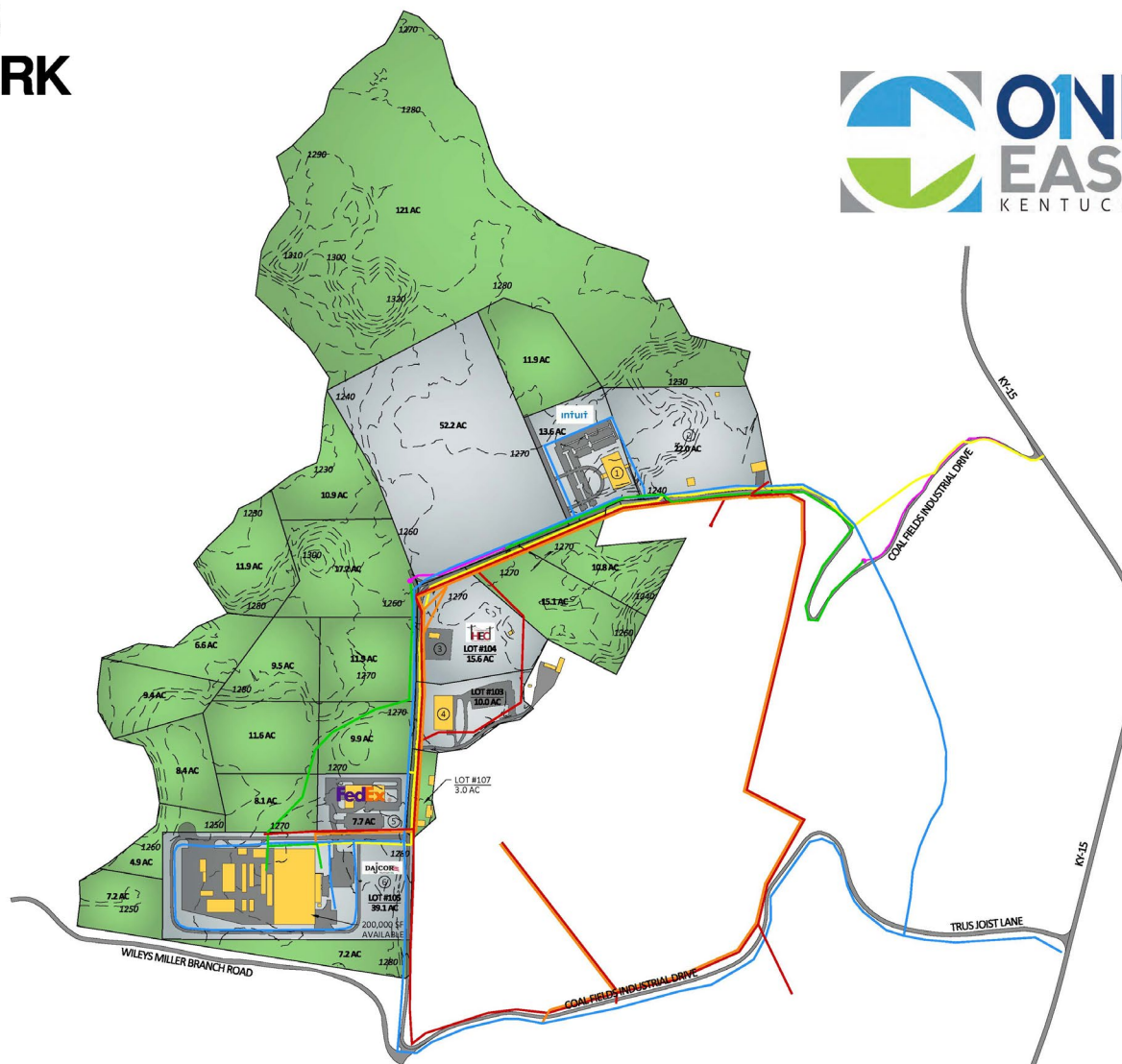


Map Examples



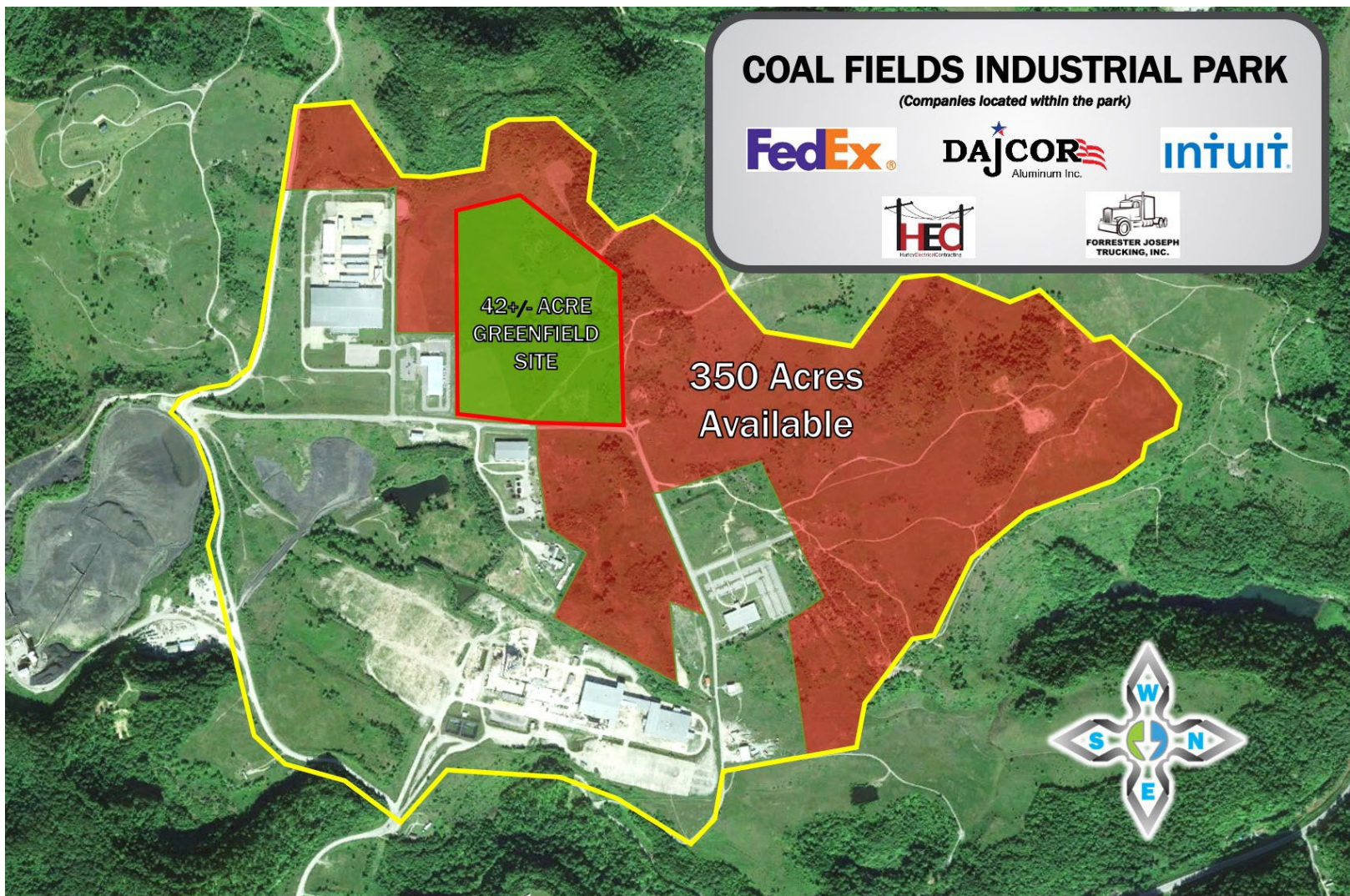


LEGEND	
DESCRIPTION	COLOR
AVAILABLE PROPERTY	
SOLD PROPERTY	
EXISTING BUILDING	
EXISTING PAVEMENT	
ELECTRIC (7200V)	
WATER (12" DIA)	
SANITARY (8" DIA GRAVITY)	
SANITARY FORCEMAIN	
NATURAL GAS	
FIBER/TELECOM	
CONTOUR LINE (10' INTERVAL)	
SPOT ELEVATION	





Map Examples





The Good, the Bad & the Ugly



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RFI: The Good

- Answered Every Question
- Concise, but ensured information was what is needed
- Provided relevant and easy to read maps of the location, site/property, infrastructure, & transportation
- Consistent text, font, and color type**
- No Typos or Spelling Errors

- Any needed improvements with estimated costs and schedule to serve load to site:
Answer: The current electrical capacity meets the needs for this project and no additional improvements are necessary.
- Distance (miles) to the Closest Substation to Service the Site:
Answer: [REDACTED] Substation is located 0.82 miles from the site.
- Does the natural gas service for this site have the available capacity to meet Project Pioneer's Phase 2 demand?
Answer: Yes, the current capacity is 50MCF/Hour
- Name of Gas Company(ies) serving this site:
Transmission: Atmos Energy
Distribution: Texas Gas
- Distance (miles), size, and PSI of the Closest Gas Line to Service the Site:
Answer: A 4-inch distribution line is 0.568 miles from the site, the PSI of this line is 275
- Does the Water/Wastewater utility for this site have the available capacity to meet Project [REDACTED]'s Phase 2 demand?
Answer: Yes
- Name of Water/Wastewater Company serving this site:
Answer: [REDACTED] Water Company
- Distance (miles) and size of the Closest Water Line to Service the Site:
Answer: A 12-inch water line runs along the frontage of the property along US 68.
- Distance (miles) and size of the Closest Sewer Line to Service the Site:
Answer: The sewer line is 1.04 miles from the site. The plans for the sewer are complete and submitted to the Division of Water and Sewer for approval and funds for the extension have been allocated.
- What is the total available capacity of Water/Wastewater at this site (not at the plant)?
Answer: Currently the excess water capacity is 4m/GPD, current wastewater capacity is 1m/GPD



RFI: The Good

- Cover Letter
- Top 7 Reasons to Choose Us
- Details for Each Reason, but not too much detail...
- Showed that this community is aggressive, willing to pursue the deal, and wants to take be a good partner to the company.

- Why Should We Choose Your Community and this Property for Project [REDACTED]?

Answer: Please refer to our cover letter. However, here is a non-exhaustive list of why our site should be considered and ultimately chosen:

1. Speed to market. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
2. Quality of Life. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
3. Aggressive deal making. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
4. Service after the sale. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



RFI: The Bad

- Inconsistent Text, Could've missed it
- RED FLAGS: Unknown? You don't have a BRE Program? Why would my client go somewhere to be ignored?
- Zero Effort/Lazy. That could be anywhere. Maybe they don't want the project.

Support Services

- Provide an overview of the following existing support services within a reasonable distance of the proposed site: *General Machine Shops, Bulk Storage Terminals, Bonded Warehouses, Third Party Logistics Carriers, Waste Services (Bio/Hazardous), Machinery Repair, Engineering/Maintenance/HVAC*
Answer: Site is centrally located and has access to Cincinnati market and all the above types of companies.

- How many of these operations regularly utilize more than one shift?
Answer: Unknown
- How many operate seven days per week?
Answer: Unknown

- Why Should We Choose Your Community and this Property for Project Pioneer?
Answer: We're a manufacturing city with related skills.



RFI: The Bad

- *Seriously?*
- Don't send the consultant chasing your information. If you want them to have it, AT MINIMUM, provide the link.

- Please provide an aerial of the site/building below. Aerial should include site outline, rail line, road infrastructure, and all utility lines with labels clearly identified:
Answer: See Zoom Prospector
- Zoning Classification?
Answer: Industrial use only
- What is the total property price?
Answer: starting at \$30,000 per acre
- Is the property owned or controlled by an economic development related entity? Who owns the site? Describe options or first rights of refusal.
Answer: [REDACTED]
- Please identify surrounding land uses:
Answer: [Farm Land](#)
- Please indicate all environmental studies that have been previously performed or are currently underway on the proposed building/site:
Answer: see zoom prospector



RFI: The Ugly

- Price is high, but... Private ownership **WITHOUT a first right of refusal** is an automatic elimination.
- Knew this community had unions, and remember...I can check your answers.
- TYPOS = Funny, could mean a lack of attention to detail

- What is the total property price?

Answer:

\$1,551,6000

- Is the property owned or controlled by an economic development related entity? Who owns the site? Describe options or first rights of refusal.

Answer: [REDACTED]. There is no first rights of refusal.

- What is the total unionization rate of your county?

Answer:

We do not have the unionization rate for [REDACTED]. However, in the past twenty years, there has not been a new industry locate within [REDACTED] County that elected to be unionized.

- What is the total available capacity of Water/Wastewater at this site (not at the plant)?

Answer: Aqua 1,000,000 GPD up to 2,000,000 GPD with upgrade and water wells on site provide non potable water up to 8,000,000 GPD – [REDACTED]
6,000,000 GOD



RFI: The Ugly

- Unanswered Questions are **THE WORST**
- Happens much more often than it should.
- Shows the following:
 - Laziness
 - Lack of Interest
 - Poor Image of the Community
 - Unprofessional

- Site Accessibility:
 - Show ingress/egress map of industrial road to the site from a major highway/interstate:
Answer:
 - If industrial access from the site to a major highway/interstate is either not in place or will need significant construction work, please describe in detail and provide timeline by which such a road can be constructed:
Answer:
 - Distance to U.S. Interstate Transportation Corridors:
 - i. **Identify Interstate(s): I-155**
 - ii. **Distance to Interstates: I-155 frontage and ½ mile to I-155/US 412 Interchange**
 - Identify distance (miles) to 4-lane primary road with limited access:
 - i. **Identify Highway(s): US 412**
 - ii. **Distance to Highway(s): ½ mile to I-155/US 412 Interchange**
 - Distance to International Airport
Answer: 94 miles to [REDACTED] International Airport
 - Distance to Rail:
Answer:



If you answer every question on an RFI correctly and professionally, you will be better than 80% of the economic developers in the country.

***- Chuck's First Mentor
in the Industry***



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