

Rhiana Barkie

I empathize with Ecology staff. Before I moved out here to live with my parents, I was the Program Manager for the City of Indianapolis Brownfield Program. I was project and then program manager in brownfield redevelopment for over 5 years. So I've got at least some familiarity with the struggle to pay for cleanups, the regulatory constraints, and the advantage that wealthy Responsible Parties have in avoiding the financial burden of full cleanups of their own messes.

I empathize with Ecology staff, but I must join other voices in demanding that Rayoneir pay for all contaminated soil to be removed. There are many times a cap is an appropriate mitigation/remediation technique. This is not one of those times.

We can look at maps of projected coastal erosion as an effect of climate change, but I don't think that we can ultimately model out just how bad it could be. Can we really trust that same cap won't soon be underwater, eroded by fluvial processes until the contaminants are once again harming the rest of the environment?

In addition to my skepticism regarding the limits of coastal erosion and tide incursion, I fail to see how economically this isn't just a net loss to our community. This land has sat unused for decades, and will continue to for at least another decade or two. Decades of lost tax revenue, maybe affordable housing or mixed-use commercial areas. Maybe cleaner, more modern industry that is much lighter on the environment while still providing just as many jobs. And that potential will continue to be unfulfilled and rotting away because the site was remediated just enough to industrial regulatory standards, but not to commercial or residential. Our community has a high cost of living, but it also just doesn't have enough affordable, attainable housing. We have little boutiques, but we don't have a dearth of good-paying jobs that can match the high cost of living. If we're going to spend so many years just to do the cleanup that is planned, we may as well go that extra bit and have all the contaminated soils hauled away.

Our community, like many others, is seeming to be transforming into one that is deeply divided, with neighbors against neighbors. I think a major reason for that is economic strain. Everybody is hurting right now while the big corporations and oligarchs continue to siphon tax dollars from all our pockets, convincing us to turn on each other instead of holding the real Responsible Parties, well, Responsible. Maybe part of what would heal our country is for economic growth of and investment into our rural communities to not be stifled by megacorporations manipulating regulatory frameworks to their own selfish ends.

I don't care how pompous I sound with dropping my brownfield redevelopment experience. I don't care how dramatic I sound with my analysis. Our community deserves better, and I can't sit idly by in silence when I know we are due better.

Other aspects of the proposed cleanup plan seem fair and reasonable to me.