

# WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT: Civic Engagement and Decision-Making Strategies



The wind energy market is one of the fastest growing sources of renewable energy in the United States. This guide serves as a basic resource to help Missouri communities evaluate and prepare for wind energy development proposals.

In partnership with University of Missouri Extension, students, faculty and leaders from eight schools and departments across campus developed this information. In communities in northwest Missouri with commercial wind turbines, graduate students from the MU Trulaske College of Business conducted:

- face-to-face meetings
- onsite interviews
- an online survey

The information they gathered, and additional research, point to initial best practices that communities, governmental entities and individuals can use to weigh local wind energy development proposals.

This decision-making framework is not a substitute for on-the-ground engagement, nor does it comprehensively address the many issues surrounding wind energy development, i.e. technical, social, environmental, legal and more. Rather, the guide can serve as a starting point to encourage further research and thinking that will help local communities work through whether such development is welcome and/or a good fit as well as desired parameters.

## KEY DECISION POINT CONSIDERATIONS

- Economic orientation
- Population density
- Zoning and property size
- Governance structure



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CHECKLIST

Wind energy development is most successful when the decision to welcome it (or not) is made on the community level. Open, honest conversations within potentially affected communities are key, whether they are driven by local government, wind energy development or local landowner interest. Ideally, this conversation occurs before a wind energy company proposes a project or makes deals with individual landowners. Then, use relevant tools to craft consistent policies and practices that best serve overall community interests.

- ✓ **Be open and transparent**
- ✓ **Establish appropriate zoning policies and other related ordinances**
- ✓ **Involve the community**
  - Consider identifying local liaisons
  - Hold frequent public hearings
  - Set and acknowledge expectations
  - Talk with neighbors
- ✓ **Research the company**
- ✓ **Explore tax abatements, e.g. Enhanced Enterprise Zones**
- ✓ **Tax revenue impact**
  - Make a community wish list
  - Give stakeholders a seat at the table

For more decision-making and checklist information, visit <https://extension2.missouri.edu/programs/wind-energy>.

# Is my community a good fit for wind energy?



**Is your community's economy more agriculture- or tourism-oriented?**

→ **Tourism, recreation and retirement**

If people come to your area to get away from machines, wind turbines are probably not a good idea.

**Agriculture**

**How densely populated is your community?**

→ **Fewer than 20 people per square mile**

**More than 20 people per square mile**

**What's the average acreage per landowner?**

While 20 people per square mile is not a hard cutoff, it's important to keep in mind that wind energy projects are less likely to be contentious if residences are spread out across a wide area.

**Medium or large acreage per landowner**

**Small acreage per landowner**

**What's your community's most local level of government?**

Rural communities with large commercial land holdings tend to be better suited for wind energy projects than those with many small family farms.

**Township**

**County**

Rural communities represented by a tightly clustered collection of townships may have a hard time passing consistent zoning regulations that reflect the community's goals for wind projects.

**Your community might be a good fit for wind energy development. View the accompanying checklist to help guide decision-making about development proposals and opportunities.**