

Concerned Citizens Against Rockwool

A Project of Jefferson County Vision

September 14, 2018

Ms. Helen Clarkson
CEO, Climate Group
145 West 58th Street, 2A
New York City, NY 10019

Dear Ms. Clarkson:

We are writing to express our alarm with the Climate Group's selection of Rockwool as the corporate host of the "Building Tomorrow's Cities" panel during New York Climate Week on September 25th. Rockwool's recent behavior in Jefferson County, West Virginia and its coal-fueled product line make it a completely inappropriate choice for this event.

In 2017, Rockwool used a secretive, fast-track process run by the state government to gut our community's carefully constructed plans for a sustainable mass transit community. Instead, Rockwool plans to build a global-scale insulation factory that will burn fossil fuels around the clock.

The location Rockwool selected for their new plant is an apple orchard next to an elementary school in a residential and agricultural area. The area was never planned for heavy industry, but the company bound state and local government with various "understandings" ahead of the environmental permit process. Now that our community is expressing outrage at their plans, Rockwool is threatening our local government with a \$100 million lawsuit if we do not provide them with massive tax incentives.

To make their insulation, as defined in their permit here, Rockwool's process would primarily involve quarrying stone, trucking it in, melting it in 2,600 degree furnaces powered by coal and petroleum coke, then spinning the molten stone into fibers that are bound using toxic chemicals-- including the neurotoxin Formaldehyde. In our view, just because this incredibly energy and resource intensive product uses a minority percentage of recycled slag, does not make it sustainable. Rockwool's plant, as permitted, would be one of the most prolific emitters of toxic and hazardous air pollution in the entire state of West Virginia.

Rockwool leading a "Sustainable Cities" panel really rubs salt in the wound. In 2009, President Obama created the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, a collaboration between the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency that works to revitalize neighborhoods with convenient, affordable transit and clean energy.

Our City of Ranson was a leader in this model community movement before Rockwool came here. We received over \$1 million in planning grants and assistance from three federal agencies to integrate affordable housing, economic development, and transportation to build a livable community.

Jefferson County Vision

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Ranson was one of only two cities, of 1,700 who applied, to get all three grants: DOT, EPA and HUD. Within the 2012 Ranson Comprehensive Plan, Jefferson Orchards (the site now controlled by Rockwool) was highlighted as one of the major redevelopment projects in the region. Ranson rezoned the property to have a maximum density 4,300 homes in a mixed-use Transit Oriented Development. Basically, we were given the opportunity to build our dream small town

As you know, Transit Oriented Development is at the heart of modern urban planning, and we fell in love with it because it creates vibrant, livable, sustainable communities. The creation of compact, walkable, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use communities centered around high-quality train systems reduces complete dependence on a car for mobility and survival.

In 2013, the WV State Rail Authority passed a resolution to support the creation of a Transit Oriented Development integrated with the design of the new NorthPort passenger train station at the site where Rockwool is now breaking ground on their plant. The Maryland Transit Authority also provided a letter of support and officially approved the relocation of an existing outdated station. By, 2015 Ranson had adopted the NorthPort Feasibility Plan that showcased the idea of a multi-modal community featuring 1,000 homes (single family, townhomes and apartments), 10 parks and 800,000 sq ft of office and commercial space.

What happened? Rockwool came to town and secretly negotiated a rezoning application giving them an extra 100 acres of industrial, a Land Use Restriction Agreement and a Right to First Refusal. Rockwool has removed the legal avenues to build homes at Jefferson Orchards. No homes means no mixed-use community built around mass transit connecting us to Washington, D.C. And there goes our real-life Sustainable City vision up Rockwool's 21 story smokestacks. Never to return.

Please consider the impact of Rockwool's involvement on the overall integrity of Climate Week. If you cannot change the lineup, out of fairness and transparency, we would respectfully request an opportunity to present our side of Rockwool's story at some point during Climate Week NYC.

Our community has a web site, ToxicRockwool.com which contains more information on this citizen driven project. Please let me know if you have any questions or we can provide additional details.

Sincerely,

Leigh Smith
President of the Board
Jefferson County Vision
Resident of Ranson, West Virginia

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