



OEC [Action Fund]

April 8, 2021

Letter Supporting Conservation for the Theiss Road Property

Dear Mayor Horrigan, Deputy Mayor Hardy, City Council Members, and City Planner Segedy,

The Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund (OEC AF) writes to support permanent conservation of the Theiss Road property. The OEC AF is a statewide 501(c)(4) organization whose mission is to secure healthy air, land, and water for all who call Ohio home. Several of our members have contacted us about the Theiss property to express their desire to see it permanently protected as a conservation asset. We share our members' sentiment.

The 45-acre, mostly forested Theiss Road tract provides important ecological, outdoor recreation, and equity values that would be forever lost if residential development proceeds.

The Theiss Road property is a vital link in an existing greenbelt of parkland and conservation lands in the area. It sits adjacent to Summit Metro Parks' nationally recognized Hampton Hills Mountain bike area and in close proximity to Cuyahoga Valley National Park, the seventh most visited national park in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the value of open space and natural areas for public health and wellbeing. Protecting this property will preserve its utility as a public health asset and as an asset for the growing outdoor recreation economy.

The ecological reasons for protecting the Theiss Road property are numerous. Its status as a contiguous natural area in a larger conservation matrix makes it an important wildlife habitat corridor. Retaining Akron's tree canopy helps moderate urban heat island effect and flood and erosion impacts. The parcel's tree canopy helps filter urban air and water. And, it sequesters and stores carbon. A conservation approach will preserve these important ecosystem services.

Conservation of the Theiss property is important for social equity, as well. Development of the Theiss property would require the construction of new water and sewer infrastructure and the expansion of city services. City resources could instead be invested in growing and serving Akron's existing neighborhoods.

For the foregoing reasons, the OEC AF respectfully requests that the City of Akron adopt a conservation approach for the Theiss Road property.

Sincerely,

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