

John Imes: Foxconn should take the high road

From the [Keep up with the latest news and analysis about Foxconn's plans to invest in Wisconsin](#) series of the Wisconsin State Journal

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As policymakers meet to hammer out a historic deal for Wisconsin's economy that will require unprecedented taxpayer funds to secure Foxconn's proposed \$10 billion manufacturing facility, they should reject the same old, tired business model that exploits workers and disregards environmental standards.

Instead, there's a high-road strategy and sustainable opportunity for Wisconsin if we choose to take it. For example:

When completed, the massive Foxconn buildings will comprise over 20 million square feet (equal to 11 Lambeau Fields). Imagine if that all of the roofs on those facilities were covered with the latest solar panel technology? The buildings would generate over 200 megawatts of electricity each year, enough to power almost 33,000 homes.

As a major supplier for Apple, Foxconn is already planning to build 400 megawatts of solar capacity in China by 2018 to help meet its goal of using clean energy entirely in its production of the iPhone.

Other Midwest states are eating our lunch when it comes to clean energy investment, jobs and production. Foxconn's development could spur the innovative policies, technologies and infrastructure we need to accelerate clean energy solutions and more high-paying jobs in Wisconsin.

Similarly, the state should ensure that Foxconn builds a model, high-performance, net-zero energy facility (one that produces as much energy

as it consumes each year). Johnson Controls of Milwaukee is already a global leader in facility design, high-performance technology, building products and other services that can be harnessed to achieve the goal of a net-zero energy project.

As a massive user of water from Lake Michigan, Foxconn also should make smart investments in water technology, sustainability and stewardship. Just up the road in Milwaukee is the Water Council, one of the most powerful water technology hubs in the world.

The region's cluster of more than 200 water technology businesses, academic programs, and economic development organizations should be tapped to make sure Foxconn is on the leading edge of responsible water use.

Moreover, the company should achieve overall superior environmental performance and apply innovative treatment strategies and green infrastructure investments to ensure wastewater is clean, clear and can be reused.

When it comes to employee relations, the American Sustainable Business Council, in partnership with diverse stakeholders and businesses, developed principles to guide employers who want to operate responsibly and “take care of their own.”

Providing a livable fair wage, family friendly benefits, work-life balance, education and training opportunities, and community engagement are all ways Foxconn can pledge to operate as a responsible, high-road employer.

Wisconsin needs a solid new direction. Policymakers need to move beyond the partisan rhetoric and carry out a visionary yet realistic plan that yields smart investments and takes care of workers. Wisconsin can become a player in developing the emerging technologies, systems and highly trained workers to build a clean economy, but only if it takes the high road.

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