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## **Before the Sunset Review Committee**

**Senator Shane Wilkin, Chair**

**Testimony of Dominick Brook**

**May 7, 2024**

Chairman Wilkin and members of the Sunset Review Committee, my name is Dominick Brook. I am the former Director for Real Estate at Ohio University. Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony regarding the Land Use Advisory Committee to the President of Ohio University. The Land Use Advisory Committee to the President of Ohio University was established in 1988 when the 700-acres Southeastern Ohio Mental Health Hospital property was conveyed to Ohio University by the State of Ohio. The land and buildings are now referred to at the Ridges.

With the creation of a rehabilitation and reuse strategy for the Ridges, which will implement the recommendations of the Advisory Land Use Advisory Committee's 2016 Ridges Framework Plan, Ohio University is respectfully asking for the Land Use Advisory Committee to the President of Ohio University to be sunsetted.

The Land Use Advisory Committee is comprised of members of Athens city and county government officials as well as members of the community who have special knowledge or experience in land use planning, preservation, and economic development. The Committee provided recommendations on the 1998 Ridges Land Use Study that Ohio University developed. Together with Ohio University the Committee crafted the Ridges Framework plan which was adopted and approved in 2016.

From 2021 to 2023, Ohio University, with input from Land Use Advisory Committee, the City of Athens, and private partners, developed a strategy to implement the Ridges Framework plan and rehabilitate and reuse the Ridges Campus. This strategy incorporates several mechanisms to ensure the plan is correctly implemented. First, a conservation easement will cover over 500-acres of the land placing restrictions on the use of the land and preserving it in its current state; Second, a New Community Authority has been formed, consisting of University, City, Community, and private partners to oversee the rehabilitation, reuse and new developments on the Ridges campus; Third, all development will be subject to deed-restrictions that follow the framework plan. Finally, all historic buildings, including those retained by Ohio University, will be part of a Condominium Association that will ensure that the historic nature of the campus is well preserved.

The planning phase has been completed. Once legislative approval has been received, land and buildings will be transferred from the University to be developed. With thorough safeguards in place, the University respectfully asks for the Land Use Advisory Committee to the President of Ohio University to be sunsetted. Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.