Environmental Decision Making – Ethics and Values

Ethics and Values Assignment: 10 points
This morning we will divide ourselves into groups of 4 individuals. Each group shall have two CRP students and two LA students each group will become a family (group of siblings) that has the following scenario to contend with:

Scenario:
As a child you lived on a farm in a house that was built by your grandfather. It is a modest home, built of wood and stone. The wood came from the trees in a small forest on the property where the house also still stands. The stones used to build the foundation of the house were hauled from the creek that runs along the edge of the property.

Since the time that your grandfather built the house and since the time that you grew up there; many other people have come to live nearby. Most of the fields you used to play in were sold by your family to pay taxes and support the family in “rough times”. As the farm fields have been sold off, they have been replaced by houses and commercial development. The 4-acre property where the house stands remains intact, still surrounded by the old grove of trees. When you were a child you thought this grove of trees was an enormous forest. Now that you have grown up, you realize that this forest is actually a small cluster of bushes and ordinary trees. There is one majestic Oak, which is listed on the protected trees list for the county. There is nothing really remarkable about the rest of the cluster of trees except for the memories you hold; the memories of a joyous childhood of make believe and exploration. To the causal passerby this “forest” is also just a cluster of trees and shrubs by the side of the road. To you it is the magical basis of childhood adventures……it is a treasure.

Your parents still live in the house. It is getting rather old and dilapidated now. All of the children have moved away and your parents are getting old and frail. They are no longer able to take care of the property and the house. One day, while you are visiting your parents, you learn that a developer wants to buy the house and the four acres surrounding it. The developer would like to tear down the house and replace it with an elder care facility. The local neighbors have asked the developer’s architect to save as many trees as possible, but after many design iterations the developer informs the community that most of the trees have to be removed in order to make the design financially feasible.

The amount of money the developer wants to pay your family for the cost of the land is in line with local land costs. If you sell the land you will be able to afford to pay for your parents care in the elder home for a few years. Your parent do not want to leave the community where they grew up, so they feel that this opportunity could be a blessing……sell the land and then live in the elder-care facility that is being proposed by the developer.

In the meantime, you learn that a neighbor is circulating a petition to save the stand of trees on your parent’s property. This neighbor mentions that since you have moved away, most of the stands of trees around the community have disappeared, and in fact, the one you used to call your forest is the only one left and many people in the community have come to see it as a shared resource for visual beauty and wildlife habitat. Even if the neighbors don’t own it they want to protect it.
Requirements:
Please answer the following questions with your family and be prepared to briefly discuss the issues at 9:45 AM this morning.

Individually: Please turn in a 1 to 2 page, typewritten paper answering all these questions. Turn this in on Thursday November 20th at the beginning of class. Please note the names of your group members.

Phase One Questions: Explore the following questions with your family.
Are you going to sell the land?
What are you going to do with your parents?
Will you do your part to protect the trees?
What are some of the other issues that you need to contend with and how will you resolve them?

Phase Two Questions: Explore these questions with your family and on your own. In your assignment please make note of how your process and decisions may be similar to the groups or how they may differ.

How are you going about making these decisions?
What characterizes your approach?
When making a decision- what influences impact or are considered in the process?
   Or …On what do you base your decisions?
Is making a decision about the environment different that making a decision on anything else?
What cultural and environmental issues have you had to wrestle with?