

## Renewable Properties, LLC

44 Montgomery Street, Suite 3150

San Francisco, CA 94104

www.renewprop.com



Mayor Richard Irvin  
City of Aurora, Illinois  
44 E Downer Place  
Aurora, IL 60505

Subject: Resolution 24-0361 - RPIL Solar 10, LLC

Dear Mayor Irvin and Members of the Aurora City Council:

I am writing on behalf of RPIL Solar 10, LLC (“Applicant”) and offer this letter as public comment ahead of the City of Aurora’s (“Aurora”) May 28 City Council Meeting. We are respectfully requesting your consideration in voting against filing a written protest of the South Barnes Solar Project (“Project”) for the reasons described below. The purpose of this letter is to provide additional background and clarifications regarding our good-faith consultation with Aurora to date, as well as outlining the need and benefits of the Project.

### **I. Background**

Given the Project’s proximity to the City of Aurora’s corporate boundary, on its own accord and without direction from Kane County, the Project reached out to the respective Ward 5 Councilor, Carl Franco in October of 2023. Similarly, following this initial outreach, the Project submitted a formal request to review the Project through Aurora’s Development Service Team (DST) review process. Shortly following this request, on January 24, 2024, the Project received an email from Ed Sieben of Aurora’s Zoning and Planning Division with Kane County in copy, indicating they would not support the Project and believed a DST meeting was unnecessary. On March 12, 2024, the Project further coordinated with Mayor Irvin to review the Project. As a takeaway from this meeting, the Project understood that with the provision of a Fact Sheet, there would be another opportunity to discuss the Project with the DST team. On March 19, 2024, RPIL Solar 10, LLC provided the Fact Sheet (**Exhibit A**) to Mayor Irvin and his office. On March 27, 2024, RPIL Solar 10 followed up with Mayor Irvin and his office. At the timing of this letter, neither Mayor Irvin nor his office replied to Applicant’s provision of the requested materials and thus no DST review has been scheduled with the City of Aurora.

### **II. Project Consistency**

First and foremost, the Project acknowledges Aurora’s right to strategically plan, and appreciates the effort required to undertake visioning and develop a Comprehensive Plan (“Plan”). Unless contemplating forced annexation situations, effectuating municipal land use Plan goals within unincorporated territories is dependent on the willingness of the landowner, who would otherwise have the right to continue using the land as zoned by the County indefinitely. In this case, and according to the Kane County zoning map,



the subject parcel is located in the Farming district<sup>1</sup>. In accordance with 55 ILC S 5/5-12020, solar is a compatible use in both agricultural and industrially zoned areas.

As part of the above discussions with Aurora, the Project in good faith identified a willingness to voluntarily annex the land into the Auora following an established decommissioning date of the Project to ensure that Aurora would be able to act on Plan goals. The Project was also willing to consider other mechanisms providing benefit to the City until the property was annexed. Although we recognize that the construction of the Project might temporarily delay implementation of Aurora’s Comprehensive Plan, this Project would bring a myriad of immediate benefits while guaranteeing the land would eventually be incorporated.

Lastly, the Project will preserve the neighborhood’s open space character through the identified setbacks and robust vegetative screening, comprised of a mix of deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs along visible sections of the Project boundary. Given the proposed temporary and low-impact use of the site, the Project will not be injurious to those existing uses or the surrounding environment and is compatible with other utility, residential, religious, and/or commercial uses in the area such as ComED’s existing 345 kV transmission lines, Splash Country Water Park, and Blackberry Farm. As informed though conversations with residents across the City, there is demonstrated support for this Project.

### **III. Project Need**

The State of Illinois found that the protection of “health, welfare, and prosperity of all Illinois Residents require[s] the provision of adequate, reliable, affordable, efficient, and environmentally sustainable electric service...”. This Project is an important step toward achieving this goal, as well as helping Illinois comply with mandatory benchmarks pertaining to the percentage of electricity derived from renewable sources as follows: 40% by 2023, 50% by 2040, and 100% by 2050 (Public Act 102-0662). Notably, the Illinois State Climatologist, responsible for providing climate information for farmers, government agencies, policymakers and citizens recently detailed current climate change impacts within Illinois including flooding and related contaminate exposure, drought stress, more frequent and severe heat waves, agricultural pressures, vector-borne disease risk, decreased air quality, and associated economic damages<sup>2</sup>. Solar energy is a proven resource supporting the diversification and deployment of additional electricity facilities, reducing emissions generated through electricity production, while helping to mitigate risks to public health, safety, and promoting welfare.

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<sup>1</sup> Kane County Zoning Map:

<https://www.kanecountyil.gov/FDER/Pages/development/zoneAtlas/pdfs/SU/SU24.pdf>;

Kane County Zoning Ordinance Article VIII – Farming District:

[https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/kanecountyil/latest/kanecounty\\_il/0-0-0-10616](https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/kanecountyil/latest/kanecounty_il/0-0-0-10616)

<sup>2</sup> <https://stateclimatologist.web.illinois.edu/climate-change-in-illinois/>



#### IV. Project Benefits

Although not exhaustive, please find several benefits summarized by topic below.

##### **Community:**

**Tax Revenue:** The Project will generate more than one million dollars in tax revenue over the life of the Project. The taxes generated from this Project can be fully reinvested within the community as the Project will not require, or burden local resources. It is respectfully submitted that few, if any, other types of developments are able to make this representation. Using conservative tax estimates, West Aurora School District 129 will be the largest beneficiary of the Project, receiving roughly 68% of the tax dollars over the project lifespan valued at \$605,224. For example, in the Project's first year of operation, West Aurora School District 129 would see a tax increase of roughly five thousand percent (\$22,382.57) compared to the taxes received today (\$411), an overall increase of \$21,970.82. Other taxing bodies benefiting from this Project include but are not limited to Sugar Grove Township, Waubensee College 516, Sugar Grove Fire Protection, and the Kane County Forest Preserve.

**Labor and Diversity:** Participation within Illinois Adjustable Block Program requires compliance with set local prevailing wages, and an adherence to minimum equity standards created to increase diversity within the clean energy economy for traditionally underrepresented demographics. The construction of these projects are important mechanisms for supporting workforce job training, and contribution to local and regional economies across the life of the Project.

**Property Values:** Multiple analyses examining property values in states across the country have demonstrated that community-scale solar arrays in suburban settings have no measurable impact on the value of adjacent properties, and in some cases may even have positive effects. Proximity to solar projects have been proven to not deter the development and sale of residential and/or commercial properties.

**Program Access & Upgrades:** The construction of the Project enables local participation in community solar programs that are expected to reduce participant electricity costs compared to the standard tariff rates without needing to invest in costly solar infrastructure. This is increasingly important for strained household budgets adapting to increased cost of goods and services. The Project will also upgrade portions of the distribution electric grid resulting in increased capacity, resilience, and reliability.



**Environmental:**

**Estimated Health Value:** Utilizing a peer-reviewed methodology, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) analyzes the public health benefits of this Project is anticipated to provide more than 11 million dollars in health benefits through avoided emissions.

**Emissions Avoidance:** For illustrative purposes, the Project is anticipated to result in a decrease of more than 237,300 metric tons CO<sub>2</sub>e over the Project's lifespan. This is equivalent to the removal of more than 51,587 passenger vehicles from roadways, or roughly 28% of Aurora's population assuming each resident owned a passenger vehicle (2020 US Census Population).

**Vegetation & Habitat Creation:** The Project's transition to a low-growing vegetation comprised of native grasses and forbs, as well as evergreen and deciduous trees and/or shrubs will provide various benefits including but not limited to supporting the restoration of soil health, erosion reduction, improvement of water quality, reduced stormwater runoff, and the creation of habitat and food sources for songbirds, other wildlife, and pollinators. Stormwater improvements from this Project will provide benefits to the approximately 25,374 residents within the Blackberry Creek Watershed. Similarly, The Project will provide direct and tangible benefits to the abutting the Barnes Forest Preserve and Fox Valley Park District's successful community garden plot program through creation of and preservation of pollinator habitat. Fox Valley Park District's 94 garden plots, all reserved as of earlier this year, supporting the production of affordable and healthy produce are only 600' east of the Project's boundary. The Project has offered to provide financial assistance to help defray the cost of operational expenses of the garden program and/or provide sponsorships to cover plot fees to help broaden access and utilization. Growing research estimates that agricultural areas visited by pollinators could lead to improved yields upward of 20%.

**Agriculture:** The Project has entered into an Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement (AIMA) with the Illinois Department of Agriculture. At the end of its usable life, the land would be restored once again enabling agriculture production, or as otherwise deemed appropriate at this time.

**V. Conclusion**

In conclusion, we believe the proposed Project would result in mutually beneficial outcomes addressing land use and environmental needs across varying governmental jurisdictions. We respectfully reiterate our attempt to collaborate with the City of Aurora, while noting the Project complies with Kane County's Farming District which set the basis for dimensional and siting controls applicable to the subject parcel at this time. As the subject property is not compliantly contiguous to Aurora, any forced annexation at this time would require further evaluation.



As stewards of local and regional communities, we appreciate your consideration of balancing long-term land use goals against increasingly important climate mitigation and adaptation needs. Accordingly, we would respectfully request your vote against the submission of a written protest and welcome any further dialogue on this matter.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions and/or concerns.

Sincerely,

**RENEWABLE PROPERTIES**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SHL", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Stephanie H. Loucas  
Chief Development Officer  
415-710-3834  
[Stephanie@renewprop.com](mailto:Stephanie@renewprop.com)



## Exhibit A

RPIL Solar 10, LLC  
South Barnes Solar Project  
44 Montgomery Street, Suite 3150  
San Francisco, CA 94104



March 19, 2024

Mr. Richard Irvin  
Mayor, City of Aurora  
44 E. Downer Place  
Aurora, Illinois 60505

**RE: South Barnes Solar Project**

Dear Mayor Irvin:

Thank you for your time and willingness to discuss the South Barnes Solar Project (Project) last week. As discussed, please find some additional background information of the project and its benefits. We look forward to further discussing the Project with yourself and the DST team.

I am available to answer any questions and/or concerns, or provide additional information as useful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeremy T. Price". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Jeremy T. Price  
Project Developer  
(978) 382 - 1751

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### **Developer Background:**

Renewable Properties is a national renewable energy company that specializes in developing and owning small-scale utility and community solar projects across the country. Renewable Properties values and prioritizes its relationships with landowners, regulators, and other relevant stakeholders to ensure projects result in mutually beneficial outcomes. Renewable Properties operates an operational portfolio of more than 100 MW, with another six (6) projects actively under construction and/or expected to break ground shortly in California, Maine, and Illinois.

### **Project Overview:**

The approximately 35-acre South Barnes Community Solar Project (Project) is proposed on the west side of South Barnes Road and has been designed to complement the existing landscape. This 4.99 MW Project is expected to produce enough energy to power roughly 1,000 homes annually and would provide a variety of benefits as further discussed below.

### **Project Benefits:**

#### *Community*

**Taxes:** The taxes generated from this Project can be fully reinvested within the community as the Project will not require, or burden local resources. It is respectfully submitted that few, if any, other types of developments are able to make this representation. Using conservative tax estimates, West Aurora School District 129 will be the largest beneficiary of the Project, receiving 68% of the tax dollars over the project lifespan valued at \$605,224. For example, in the Project's first year of operation, West Aurora School District 129 would see a tax increase of roughly five thousand percent (\$22,382.57) compared to the taxes received today (\$411), an increase of \$21,970.82.

The Project is willing to further discuss other mechanisms intended to create added value for the City of Aurora as an abutting stakeholder to the unincorporated project.

**Labor and Diversity:** Participation within the ABP requires compliance with set local prevailing wages, and adherence to minimum equity standard created to increase diversity within the clean energy economy for traditionally underrepresented demographics. The construction of these projects are important mechanisms for supporting workforce job training, and contribution to local and regional economies across the life of the Project.

**Community Consistency:** The Project will preserve the neighborhood's open space characteristics through the identified setbacks and robust vegetative screening, comprised of deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs along visible sections of the Project boundary. Given the proposed temporary and low-impact use of the site, we believe the Project will not be injurious to those existing uses or the surrounding environment and is compatible with other utility, residential, and/or commercial uses in the area such as ComED's existing 345 kV transmission lines, Splash County Water Park, and Blackberry Farm. This Project would protect



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the land from being permanently developed in a manner that is not consistent with the City of Aurora's 2002 Countryside Vision Plan.

### **Property Values:**

Multiple analyses examining property values in states across the country have demonstrated that community-scale solar arrays in suburban settings have no measurable impact on the value of adjacent properties, and in some cases may even have positive effects. Proximity to solar projects have been proven to not deter the development and sale of residential properties.

**Program Access & Upgrades:** The Construction of the Project enables participation within the community solar program, expected at a discount without needing to invest in costly solar infrastructure. The Project will also upgrade portions of the distribution electric grid intended to increase capacity, resilience, and reliability.

## ***Environmental***

**Estimated Health Value:** Utilizing a peer-reviewed methodology, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) analyzes the public health benefits of utility-scale photovoltaic energy within the mid-Atlantic region of the United States to be between 3.1 to 7 cents per kWh generated. At the lower end of this range, over the Project's lifespan it is projected to provide more than 11 million dollars in health benefits through avoided emissions and pollutants associated with electricity generated from fossil fuels.

**Emissions Avoidance:** For illustrative purposes, the Project is anticipated to result in a decrease of more than 237,300 metric tons CO<sub>2e</sub> over the Project's lifespan. This is equivalent to the removal of more than 51,587 passenger vehicles from roadways, or roughly 28% of the City's population according to the 2022 US Census estimates assuming each resident owned a passenger vehicle.

**Vegetation & Habitat Creation:** The Project's transition to a low-growing vegetation comprised of native grasses and forbs, as well as evergreen and deciduous trees and/or shrubs will provide various benefits including but not limited to supporting the restoration of soil health, erosion reduction, improvement of water quality, reduced stormwater runoff, and the creation of habitat and food sources for songbirds, other wildlife, and pollinators. Stormwater improvements from this Project will provide benefits to the approximately 25,374 residents within the Blackberry Creek Watershed. Similarly, The Project will provide benefits to the abutting Barnes Forest Preserve, as well as directly benefiting the Fox Valley Park District Community Gardens through creation of pollinator habitat. Pollinators have experienced significant declines, a trend expected to continue with increased urbanization.

**Agriculture:** The Project has entered into an Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement (AIMA) with the Illinois Department of Agriculture. At the end of its usable life, the land would be restored, once again enabling agriculture production, or as otherwise deemed appropriate at this time.