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# Platteview Solar Frequently Asked Questions

## Updated: August 14, 2022

### WHY SAUNDERS COUNTY?

#### How did you decide to build in Saunders County?

- In anticipation of Omaha Public Power District's (OPPD's) Request for Proposals for solar energy generation to serve the [Power with Purpose](#) initiative, we studied multiple locations on OPPD's system for feasibility of connecting a solar project. The core components of siting a solar project are based several critical factors, including, but not limited to: access to transmission; suitable land; supportive county regulatory structure, and landowners that want to participate in the project. The project team worked with interested landowners in the community who responded to initiated outreach. These landowners voluntarily chose to participate in this project as an exercise of their personal property rights, to diversify a portion of their land assets and to preserve ownership of their family's property for future generations.
- We researched several locations extensively and conducted outreach to landowners. The current project location in Saunders County emerged as best suited to meet the needs of OPPD and its customers from a cost and viability perspective.



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## **TAX BENEFITS**

### **How will the taxes be collected and who will receive what?**

- Over the life of this project, the Platteview Solar project will generate more than \$9.5 million in tax revenue to Saunders County, with most of the revenue going to the Yutan School District. This revenue comes with no increased demand or material burden on infrastructure, public services, schools, or emergency services.
- Nebraska assesses a nameplate capacity tax, or excise tax, on solar projects at a rate of \$3,518/per megawatt of nameplate capacity regardless of what the facility actually generates. This money is collected by the state and 100% of the funds are disbursed back to Saunders County. The money collected by the state will be sent to the County Treasurer each year to be distributed according to the current mill levy rates for the different taxing entities.
- Saunders County will directly collect additional real property taxes for components of the project such as roads, fences, inverter pads and leasehold values. Both the excise tax and additional real property tax will be paid according to Saunders County's division of property taxing entities.

### **Will this use affect the value of adjacent ag lands, making their taxes go up?**

- No. Nebraska law prohibits the assessor from changing the valuation of adjacent agricultural land due to the presence or proximity of the project.

## **EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Will any local jobs be available during and after construction?**

- AES values a diverse and local workforce. Prior to construction starting, we will connect with local businesses and suppliers to inform the community of what opportunities may be available.

### **How many jobs will be created during construction?**

- Based on our experience and using the U.S. Department of Energy JEDI economic model, approximately 150 construction-related jobs will be generated during peak construction. A [University of Nebraska study](#) estimates economic output during the construction period to be \$57 million in Saunders County alone.

### **How many permanent jobs will be created for the operation and maintenance of the project?**

- It is expected that two to three jobs will be needed to operate and maintain the project.

## **SOLAR BENEFITS**

### **Why is solar considered a viable alternative to traditional forms of fossil fuel?**

- Solar power is renewable energy with zero fuel cost. Solar panels produce power when it is most needed (during the day) and when power prices peak, therefore making solar a clean, reliable and affordable source of energy.

### **Doesn't solar take good agricultural ground out of production?**

- Platteview Solar is sited on only 0.1% of all available agricultural land in Saunders County (500 acres of the 486,400 acres of ground in Saunders County). Solar, while a singular use of the land, does not remove agricultural land from production permanently. Solar can have a positive impact on the land in that it allows the land to rest, regenerate, and, over time, can allow the soils to become richer and more fertile so that they can be put back into agricultural production at the end of the life of the project.

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- The Platteview Solar project prioritizes agricultural land preservation, including a commitment to planting a portion of the site with pollinator-friendly and native species, and utilizing a restorative ground-cover seed mix to ensure that the land is enhanced and maintained throughout the project's life. AES is working with a local and nationally renowned expert in pollinator habitat to assist in the planning. A robust pollinator program can benefit not only the project's land, but cropland, trees, residential gardens and other landscaping within 30 miles of the project site. The benefits of restorative vegetation on nitrogen- and CO<sub>2</sub>-depleted acreage improve agricultural land for the future.
  - Solar projects are a long term, though temporary, use of agricultural land that enables landowners to diversify their land assets, creating an alternative income stream and financial stability allowing property to remain in families for future generations.

#### **Is this still farmable land based on how the equipment will be set-up?**

- Only a portion of the roughly 500 acres that are being leased for this solar project will be covered by solar panels and equipment (approximately 30%), due to the spacing requirements needed between panels for them to operate most efficiently. AES uses industry leading technology to optimally design the solar panel layouts to ensure we use the least amount of land. The land inside the leased area (that will host the solar panels) will not be active farmable land. We intend to use a restorative seed mix on the land under and around the panels to ensure the soil content is maintained and enriched, and a robust commitment to a land preservation plan that includes pollinator friendly and native species. Fencing will surround the project perimeter and will allow small animal passage but keep out larger animals. A fence is required for safety by the National Electrical Safety Code.
- Upon decommissioning, the land can be returned to farming. The Platteview Solar project will be low impact, with minimal disturbance to the land and community. As part of the decommissioning plan, the posts (and all other project infrastructure) will be removed at the end of the project's life so the site can easily be returned to arable land.

#### **Why does this solar project involve 500 acres?**

- We have designed Platteview with industry-leading efficiency to ensure that we use the least amount of land necessary. The final project size of approximately 500 acres is the result of a design that allows for maximum solar collection while being careful to avoid ecologically and environmentally sensitive areas, drainage patterns and other land constraints.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

#### **What are the health concerns involving this project that could impact residents and nearby landowners?**

- No reports provide evidence that there any health issues caused by solar projects. All solar panels used by AES pass the EPA's Toxic Characteristic Leaching Procedure (TCLP) test, are classified as non-hazardous and are not regulated as toxic materials.

#### **Who will have access to the site and how will security be managed?**

- Only authorized personnel will have access to the site. Emergency key boxes will be located at the entrances to allow emergency personnel access, as necessary. The site is monitored 24/7 and our Operations Control team is available around the clock to respond to any emergencies and coordinate with trained local emergency and law enforcement personnel.

#### **How much maintenance activity will there be after the project goes in-service?**

- Solar projects require minimal maintenance during their lifetime. Routine maintenance typically sees 3-6 trips per year for ground cover maintenance as well as any equipment repairs and maintenance needs.

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## **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

### **What is the fire safety plan for these types of projects?**

- The project will meet all applicable, state-mandated fire codes.

### **Will the local fire department be adequately trained to respond to a fire emergency inside the project area?**

- Yes. The project team will provide training to local EMS staff to respond to potential emergencies. The project will also provide funding to the local Yutan Fire District through a one-time donation to assist in the acquisition of security equipment to access the project area, as well increased tax revenue to the county.

## **COUNTY APPROVAL PROCESS**

### **What is the county approval process?**

- Saunders County Zoning Regulations require the approval of a Conditional Use Permit for Commercial Solar Conversion Systems (CSCS) proposed in Agriculture or Transitional Agriculture zone districts. The Conditional Use Permit application was heard by the Planning Commission at a noticed public hearing. On May 17, 2021 the Saunders County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to approve the Conditional Use Permit for this project.

### **Once this is approved, can you just build more solar arrays or do the county and the public get to participate?**

- On May 17, 2021, the Saunders County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to approve the Conditional Use Permit for this project. This approval is specific to the Platteview Solar project proposal. The project cannot be expanded, moved or materially altered without approval of a new or amended Conditional Use Permit, which would follow the process outlined above.

## **SCREENING/SETBACKS**

### **How will this impact the cemetery?**

- Platteview Solar is being built on 500 acres of privately owned property. Setbacks of 500 feet between the Hollst-Lawn cemetery property line and project fence line will be created as part of the project design. This setback exceeds the County Zoning Regulations, which require setbacks of at least 100 feet. The project will not have any physical impact on the cemetery property. However, Platteview Solar is sensitive to the viewshed of the project from the cemetery grounds and commits to working with the Cemetery Board to identify a set of buffers that will adequately, and sensitively, screen the project.

### **What screening will be used for the cemetery (type of trees, double row, offset?)**

- Platteview Solar will provide a landscape buffer between the cemetery property and the project boundary on the west, north and east sides of the cemetery property. The type of screen, and specific landscape materials, will be developed in conjunction with the cemetery board in a collaborative effort.

### **What if the cemetery wants/needs to expand during the project lifespan?**

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- The Cemetery Board does not currently own the property surrounding the existing cemetery. However, AES has reached an agreement with the adjoining property owner on behalf of the Board and will be acquiring and donating additional land for future cemetery expansion.

#### **How will adjacent homes be screened?**

AES worked with adjacent property owners, gathering input on concerns and, where practical, incorporating screening into the project's approved Landscape Plan.

- **What are the setback requirements?**
- The Saunders County Zoning Regulations require the solar project to meet or exceed the required setbacks for the zone district in which it is located. In this case, the properties in the project area are zoned either A-1 (Agriculture) or TA-1 (Transitional Agriculture). The minimum setbacks for these zoning districts are:
  - Front: 100 feet (measured from the centerline of the road)
  - Side: 20 feet
  - Rear: 20 feet. The project is exceeding these requirements and is utilizing setbacks of a minimum of 500 feet from the closest wall of any adjacent residential use. That's a significant increase in setbacks from what the zoning regulations require.

## **DESIGN AND SITE OPERATIONS**

#### **Can solar panels withstand hazardous weather such as thunderstorms, high winds, and hail?**

- Yes. Solar facility components are rigorously tested in many different weather conditions to ensure they are durable enough to withstand severe weather, including high winds and hail. Solar panel support structures are designed to various wind load ratings appropriate to the region and the implementation of tracking systems with a "stow" feature allow panels to be positioned for the least impact from high winds.

#### **Can these types of projects withstand tornados?**

- The installation is engineered to withstand wind gusts of up to 120mph.

#### **Will there be lights on all night?**

- Permanent nighttime lights are not required, and not currently anticipated as part of the project. Should concerns arise requiring lighting, low-impact lighting may be considered.

#### **Will someone on the edge of the project (or across the street) be able to hear noise from the trackers or inverters?**

- Solar projects are quiet neighbors. There are only a few pieces of equipment at the site that will make any sound, inverters and transformers, as they are equipped with cooling fans. Acoustic studies have analyzed noise produced from similar utility-scale solar sites, and based on this report, noise levels approached background noise levels within 150 feet from inverter locations. All proposed inverters will be located well over 150 feet from any site boundaries and neighboring parcels.

#### **How long will construction last?**

- The entire construction period is anticipated to last approximately 9-12 months. Construction will not begin until all permits are received, and any pre-construction work and standard site due diligence is completed.

## **ROADS**

#### **Will construction traffic damage local roads?**

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- The public may see or hear some construction vehicles transporting material to the site during construction. We will coordinate closely with local and state transportation authorities before, during and after construction to ensure local roads are cared for and any necessary road improvement or use permits are obtained.

**Who will be responsible for fixing roads damaged during construction?**

- Platteview Solar will be responsible for the repair of any damaged roads to County Highway Department specifications both during and after construction is complete.

**How will the developer be held accountable for fixing damaged roads after construction?**

- Platteview Solar is committed to being a good neighbor and community member. We received all necessary right-of-way and driveway permits per county requirements. Additionally, a Road Use Agreement as part of our Conditional Use Permit process, requires the project to provide surety bonding against road damage during construction.

**Will the site plan take intersection site distance into account?**

- Yes, the project will comply with county safety regulations. The Zoning Regulations require setbacks from county roads for this purpose, and the project will comply with those setbacks.

## **WATER USE**

**How much water does a solar project use?**

- During construction, water trucks may be used to compact project roads to manage construction dust. This water use is approximately equivalent to the annual use of one average single-family home per day.
- During project operation, the project may use an amount of water per year approximately equivalent to the average single-family home, however given the amount of rainfall typical to the Yutan region we expect water usage to be minimal.

**Will adjacent wells be impacted by project use of water?**

- No.

## **DRAINAGE AND EROSION CONTROL**

**How will the development of panels on the property affect drainage off-site?**

- The solar project will not increase stormwater runoff outside of the project area and will be properly managed within the project area. Rain falls on the solar panels and runs off the edge of the panel, where it falls off the drop line to infiltrate the ground below. The area beneath the panel and between the panel rows will consist of pervious soil and well-maintained ground cover vegetation. The project is designed to maintain existing and natural drainage patterns. Platteview Solar will be developed in accordance with authorization under Section 402 of the Clean Water Act and will include implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPP).

**Will downstream drainage get worse after the project is complete?**

- The groundcover measures and project design described above will also serve to reduce the potential for downstream changes to drainage. The project will be constructed and operated in accordance with federal (e.g., Clean Water Act, Section 402), state (e.g., Clean Water Act, Section 401 [delegated to the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy] and Title 117 – Nebraska Surface Water Quality Standards), and local permit requirements (described in the Saunders County Zoning Regulations).

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## **FENCING**

### **What type of fencing is proposed and what will it look like?**

- Platteview Solar is working with OPPD to make sure the fencing is as unobtrusive as possible while providing the security commensurate with requirements for an electrical generating facility. Current fencing proposed is 7-8 foot chain link, which adheres to the Saunders County solar ordinance requirements and is comparable to the fencing at OPPD's interconnection substation.

### **Will the fence be electrified?**

- No, the security fence will not be electrified.

### **Why do you need fencing?**

- Fencing is required to provide security and is required by the National Electric Safety Code as an electric generating facility.

## **DECOMMISSIONING**

### **What is the lifespan of these types of projects?**

- Solar PV projects typically have a useful lifespan of approximately 30-35 years.

### **What happens to all the equipment at the end of the project?**

- At the end of the project's life, all equipment will be removed from the property and the land returned to its original condition.

### **Whose responsibility is it to remove the equipment?**

- Per the Decommissioning Plan, Platteview Solar is responsible for the decommissioning of the project at the end of the project life, including removal of the equipment and restoration of the ground.

### **How is the removal guaranteed?**

- The county, as part of the Conditional Use Permit, required the submittal and approval of a Decommissioning Plan, which includes a requirement to post a bond or other financial security with the county so that the county can fund decommissioning and disposal should the project company not fulfill that obligation.

### **Where is the decommission plan filed?**

- The Decommissioning Plan is kept on file in the Saunders County Zoning Office.

## **PANELS**

### **What are the different types of solar panels?**

- There are two major types of solar panels used today: crystalline-silicon and thin-film. The Platteview Solar project is planning to use crystalline solar panels.

### **What are the solar panels made of?**

- Platteview Solar will be using crystalline-silicon solar panels. Crystalline-silicon solar modules are largely made of glass, aluminum, copper, silicon, along with other commonly used plastic and wires. The cells on solar modules that are used to capture sunlight are made of silicon, which is a naturally occurring element. Crystalline-silicon solar modules are made of basic "solid state" materials, meaning there are no liquid or gaseous components. The project will be constructed with Tier I panels. Tier I panels are of high quality, and rigorously tested for predictable performance, durability and content. All solar panels used by AES pass the EPA's Toxic

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Characteristic Leaching Procedure (TCLP) test and are classified as non-hazardous, and not regulated as toxic materials.

**Where are solar panels made?**

- Solar panels are manufactured all over the world. Most panels are manufactured in China, Malaysia, Vietnam and the United States.

**What are bifacial solar panels?**

- The Platteview Solar project will have bifacial solar panels which can capture sunlight from both the front and back of the panel, thus producing incrementally more electricity than comparably sized, traditional solar panels. Most bifacial solar panels have a transparent back sheet so that sunlight can travel through the panel, reflect off the ground surface, and back upwards toward the solar cells on the back of the panel.

**Is there a danger of contamination from water running off the solar panels and leaching into the ground? Any impact on soil?**

- No reports provide evidence that there is any contamination or soil impact issues caused by solar panels. All solar panels used by AES pass the EPA's Toxic Characteristic Leaching Procedure (TCLP) test and are classified as non-hazardous and are not regulated as toxic materials.

**Do solar panels cause glare?**

- Solar panels are intended to capture the most light possible, and specifically designed to reduce reflection and glare. Modern solar panels reduce reflection by using antireflection coatings (ARC) and by texturing the surface. According to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, solar panels reflect as little as 2% of incoming sunlight and produce less glare than standard windows and water. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) produced a final policy report that found solar projects do not create hazardous glare for aircraft in the area.

**Do solar panels pose a high fire risk?**

- No. Solar systems are governed by the same codes that govern the construction of homes and other buildings with electrical systems in the community. The local fire and EMS organizations will be thoroughly informed about the project and all access points available to them. Turn-around radius will be reviewed to assure local equipment can operate. The project will be fenced and secured with access only by approved personnel.

**Do solar panels produce energy on cloudy days?**

- Yes. Solar panels will still generate power even on cloudy days, but at a slight reduction in output. On days with variable clouds, modern solar facility design compensates for some of the losses due to passing clouds.

**Are there above-ground electric lines?**

- No. All electrical lines will be buried underground (except at the substation).

## **PROPERTY VALUES**

**Will my property value decrease because I live next to a solar farm?**

- Studies analyzing the impact of commercial, utility-scale solar projects on neighboring property values conclude that there is no impact on surrounding property values.

**Will this stop urban growth and development from Omaha (Saunders County Comprehensive Plan)?**

- Saunders County has adopted a robust and thoughtful comprehensive plan that will guide the county's decision-making regarding land use choices that will allow the community to grow in a manner that fits its needs and supports its requirements. The Saunders County Comprehensive



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Plan does not anticipate residential or commercial development in the project area during the project's anticipated lifespan.

## **INSURANCE**

**What kind of insurance do these projects carry to protect adjacent landowners from unintentional damage from solar project?**

- Platteview Solar will carry and maintain industry standard insurance policies throughout the life of the project and will be responsible for any due compensation.