

Dear Friends, Neighbors, and Township, Village and County Officials:

An enormous 600 MW commercial solar energy utility is being proposed for Green Garden Township and parts of neighboring Wilton, Manhattan and Peotone Townships.

Monumental Scale

With approximately 1.5 million solar panels needed to generate a 600 MW capacity, this sprawling site will consume an estimated 5000 acres of local farmland, more land than has been acquired for the controversial South Suburban Airport.

Monumental Failure to Disclose

According to a lobbyist for Earthrise, a Virginia-based corporation, its zoning application will be filed with the Will County Land Use Department in about three weeks. Yet, our request for a copy of the site plan was declined. In Green Garden Township, the proposed facility is currently believed to be sited west of Center Road, from Offner Road to the south and as far north as Dralle Road or even Steger Road. Despite the magnitude of this project ongoing for several years, Earthrise has never contacted Green Garden Township officials about a utility design that violates the Township's Comprehensive Plan.

Resident Objections

While confidential Earthrise land leases with some local landholders have been confirmed, many residents rejected solicitations by Earthrise. Some argue that a sea of industrial metal and glass will decrease subdivision home values and end the future transition of farmland to rural-residential use. Others fear this huge commercial site will metastasize into a sprawling industrial district.

Some complain about recent Illinois laws that prioritize solar/wind projects and abolish traditional zoning protections. A new 2023 Illinois law allows 20' H solar panels to be set only 50' from rural backyards and forbids use of earthen berms to shield properties from these commercial utilities.

Some farmers point to the recent USDA mandate to end commercial solar on prime farmland, while others warn that utility-scale solar arrays and panels, exposed year-round to the extreme weather of northern Illinois, will warp, crack and leach toxic chemicals into the ground, making farmland unusable for future crops and grazing.

Earthrise Sheds Its Skin

The US energy sector is rapidly shifting from the hysterics of the solar/wind agenda to focus on the enormous energy appetite of emerging computer technologies and Artificial Intelligence (AI) data centers. As data center campuses now reach 500 MW capacity, energy demands are expected to double in the next ten years. Illinois is now fourth in the nation with 222 data centers. Virginia, where Earthrise is located, has over 660 data centers. Earthrise, while appointing itself as a "liberator" from fossil fuels, has purchased the local natural gas power plant two miles west of Green Garden Township, called the Lincoln Generating Facility. Its highly-efficient eight turbines can produce 700 MW of reliable power, day or night, on just 30 acres of land. It seems likely Earthrise seeks to double local energy production in order to construct a mega data center, using the existing infrastructure of the Lincoln power facility.

Reliable Energy Alternatives

Aside from this utter debacle of consuming thousands of acres of prime farmland with solar panels, 600 MW of energy production can be achieved by simply expanding the Lincoln power plant Earthrise now owns, on just 30 acres of adjacent land, also bought by Earthrise.

Thus, the real issue is land use. Is it best to use 30 acres to increase reliable energy for the power grid or to consume 5000 acres of farmland for an unreliable solar utility? The solar "emergency" is over. Hungry AI is here.

Petition Drive Begins

Our petition drive begins, as we oppose this reckless Earthrise project, to save local farmland and to preserve our future as a rural-residential community. A flyer and a petition (see attached below) for any Will County resident to sign is available to download on the Homepage of the Green Garden Township website, or please click on the three bar Homepage menu icon, choose the Future Planning option, and navigate to the Watershed Committee page.

More information will be forthcoming.

Respectfully submitted,
Thomas Becker
Chairman, Watershed Committee