



HOMER

solar project

Community Engagement Plan

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Introduction

The Homer Solar project is proud to operate in a state that places paramount importance on climate and communities. Throughout the life of the project, Homer Solar will set goals and act within the guidelines of New York’s nation-leading climate legislation, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), including delivering benefits to disadvantaged communities. The outcomes envisioned by this Community Engagement Plan offer a thoughtful approach to building community support while respectfully responding to interests throughout the project.

Homer Solar recognizes and appreciates that local governments and stakeholders including landowners, play an important role in the process of evaluating and advancing large scale renewable siting in New York State, and in shaping developments that may be permitted in their communities. Homer Solar asserts responsibility for implementing the following Community Engagement Plan, that supports an open and inclusive public process and encourages feedback throughout the development and construction of the proposed solar project.

This includes regionally targeted education and information campaigns and encourages an open exchange with residents, businesses, and community groups where our projects are located. Throughout the development, construction, and operational phases of the proposed facilities, Homer Solar’s efforts to understand and embrace local priorities and interests will ensure that the benefits that Homer Solar provides, economic or otherwise, align with community needs.

The following plan incorporates an understanding of local interests and concerns, provides valuable public education opportunities, demonstrates a commitment to partnering with host communities, and details a plan to respectfully respond to interests and prompt input from the public and affected agencies.

1. Local Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ)

<p>Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ)</p>	<p>Town of Homer Town of Solon Town of Cortlandville Town of Solon Highway Department Town of Homer Highway Department Town of Cortlandville Highway Department Cortland County County Highway Department</p>
<p>Taxing School District</p>	<p>Homer and McGraw Central School Districts</p>
<p>Local Elected Officials Name(s), Contact Information, and Tenure</p>	<p>Town of Homer Supervisor-Michael Park Supervisor@townofhomer.org 607-345-0723</p> <p>Deputy Supervisor-Berry Warren Deputysupervisor@townofhomer.org 607-591-0129</p> <p>Town of Cortlandville Supervisor -Thomas A. Williams Tawilliams@cortlandville.org 607-756-6091</p> <p>Town of Solon Supervisor -Corey LaSalle Solonsuper@outlook.com 607-836-6246 ext 1</p>

2. Community Outreach Strategies and Activities to Date

Alignment to Comprehensive Planning Efforts

In 2013, the town of Homer adopted an updated Comprehensive Plan to outline future goals and directions of the local community. The town of Cortlandville provided an update in 2020 and the town of Solon in 2024. Homer Solar Energy Center is proud to align with the above plans through concepts such as preserving rural character, protecting waterways and natural resources such as Lime Hollow Nature Center. One of the first actions taken by Tracy Solar was to read through the community's comprehensive plan to guide partnerships and donations in meaningful ways to the local community.



Overview of Commitment To Clean Energy Development: Homer Solar recognizes that grid-scale solar projects are a relatively new concept throughout the state of New York, and is committed to educating local officials, landowners, neighbors, and the community at large about the technology, impacts, and benefits of solar energy. Through its efforts in following the Article 10, Section 94-c, and Article 8 permitting processes, Homer Solar has shown a commitment to engaging with its projects’ host community residents, neighbors, businesses, government leaders, and community groups to ensure an open exchange of ideas and transparency about the projects.

Often, a lack of information can create confusion about a project. By sharing project details, including mitigation measures and permitting constraints, more meaningful dialog can take place. More importantly, receiving input from the community early in the development cycle uncovers critical information that can be used to help craft a project in ways that help maximize support from the community-at-large. The exercise of sharing information, receiving, and responding to feedback helps to realize a project with the community in mind. Homer Solar is committed to crafting various forms of communication methods for many stakeholders in the local community.

HOMER SOLAR COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

Located where Central New York meets the Finger Lakes and the Southern Tier, the Homer Solar Community reflects that of several groups. Namely, the community is nestled along interstate 81, the major thoroughfare from North to South New York in the central part of the State. The towns are rural in nature and prioritize local ecosystems such as Lime Hollow Nature Preserve. The residents of the towns and the nearby village of Homer prioritize the arts, and Homer Solar helps support several local groups and programs. The Homer Solar project touches two K-12 districts, the Homer and McGraw Central School districts. In addition, the project is near SUNY Cortland, and a bit further in Ithaca, Cornell University and Ithaca University, of which Homer Solar will continue to partner with.

Recognizing the prioritization to local farms and youth, Homer Solar has partnered with the Learning Farm to bring solar car workshops students got to make and take home in nearby Ithaca.

Homer Solar Outreach to Date

Beginning in April 2019, Homer Solar initiated a robust public involvement strategy with early consultation with the Towns of Homer, Cortlandville, and Solon to assess interest in hosting renewable energy development. Consultation with local agencies and municipal representatives and meetings with community members as required under the 94-c permitting process complemented the public engagement effort undertaken during the Article 10 process. Homer Solar hosted seven public community meetings from August 2019 through May 2021 and engaged in more than 15 meetings with municipal representatives.

On December 3, 2020, Homer Solar met with the Towns of Homer, Cortlandville, and Solon to discuss the potentially applicable local laws related to development of the project, as well as provisions that needed additional clarification to identify opportunities for compliance. Following this meeting, on December 18, 2020, Homer Solar via its attorneys sent a letter to each Town listing applicable substantive requirements and local laws with a response to each law indicating efforts made to comply with the laws.

Feb 2, 2021 - pre-application meeting with local agencies at a combination virtual and in person Cortland County Board Meeting that included the Cortland County Director of Planning and various board and committee members, Town of Solon Supervisor, Assistant County Attorney, Town of Cortlandville Supervisor, Town of Cuyler Supervisor, and representatives from the Town of Scott and Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District, as well as representatives of Homer Solar.

Homer Solar conducted three virtual open house meetings with community members in adherence to §900-1.3(b) on April 14, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.; April 15, 2021, at 12:30 p.m.; and May 7, 2021, at 12:00 p.m. in order to educate the public about the proposed project. Attendees were able to register and attend via a Zoom link or dial-in phone number. At each meeting representatives of Homer Solar provided an overview of the Facility, including information about the 94-c permitting process and ability to secure funds in a local agency account to defray costs of participating in the permitting process, maps showing Facility location and infrastructure components, information about environmental studies to date, and information about anticipated community benefits resulting from the Facility. Additionally, Homer Solar provided content related to topics that frequently receive questions, including monitoring of operations, co-location of solar infrastructure and agricultural uses, information on battery energy storage systems (which were subsequently removed from the project) and the local safety training that would take place if included, and information about site decommissioning and restoration. At the onset of each meeting, participants were invited to ask questions at any time in the embedded chat box. Homer Solar representatives answered questions at the end of the presentation.

To supplement public engagement activities and provide another platform for accessing information about the project, Homer Solar produced a podcast series that featured conversations with the project's developer, its contractors, and members of the public. Seven episodes were released between September 28, 2020, and November 9, 2020, and are available at <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/edfrenewables-solar-podcast/id1533678839> or via the project website.

Historically, the Homer Solar public involvement program plan for the Article 10 process, as well as Exhibit 2, Overview and Public Involvement of the Office of Renewable Energy Siting 94c siting process, can be

found on NYS Department of Public Service Document Matter Master. Homer Solar Energy Center Matter Number 21-00976

During the operational phase of the project, relationships with the community are managed by Homer Solar's asset optimization team, local site manager, and land and community engagement team. The primary focus of these community relationships are educational and partnership opportunities, ensuring the project is operating safely, and maintaining the requirements of our permits (for example vegetative buffering for visual impact). Refresher training for first responders and emergency personnel will be held as needed and opportunities for field trips or educational seminars will be available for local students.

Overall, Homer Solar is committed to a thorough community engagement program, listening to neighbors, and providing the information and resources necessary to help inform about solar energy and the project, so the project and its benefits are successfully integrated into the community for years to come.

3. Direct Benefits to the Community

The project team at Homer Solar and many community members are excited to see the project be realized, as it will provide many benefits for the community, including:

- More than \$15,000,000 in new revenues for the town, county and school districts, over twenty years
- More than \$18,000,000 in landowner payments over the first twenty years.
- \$45,000 per year in residential electricity bill credits (for the first 10 years of operation) applied directly to the energy bill for residents of the towns of Solon, Cortlandville and Homer.
- \$30,000 annual Share the Sun Fund community benefit fund (during construction and for the first 10 years of operation) to help support local organizations, in addition to any host community agreements or PILOT payments.
- Other benefits including jobs during construction and operation, and opportunities for material supply and services and opportunities for the hospitality sector.
- \$2,000 annual scholarships to both the Homer and McGraw Central School District for students interested in pursuing a post-secondary program in the trades or has a renewable energy component, with the option for a second-year renewal for the recipients.
- Some of the above-mentioned investments are anticipated to benefit disadvantaged communities in the Central New York region, such as nearby city of Cortland, as well as the approximately 29.2% of households in the town of Homer, ~41.7% of households in the town of Solon, and the ~28.7% of households in the town of Cortlandville, that fall within the 0-60% state income level threshold for disadvantaged community criteria.

The Homer Solar project represents a significant investment in the local towns, county, and the state of New York. The project would rank among the largest, by investment, in the Towns of Solon, Cortlandville and Homer. The project also shows alignment with the CLCPA and this solicitation's stated prioritization of benefits, including job creation and support for disadvantaged communities. The project will help grow and support New York's burgeoning renewable energy supply chains and workforce.

In addition to the category of alignment with the CLCPA, investments in the community fall into three primary categories:

- *Job Creation:* Includes temporary construction jobs and long-term jobs for the life of the facility.
- *Contribution in Taxes and Revenues:* Includes income from PILOT's and/or Host Community Agreements, special district taxes, taxes on underlying land and agricultural exemption conversion penalties.
- *Direct Economic Benefits:* The initial spending on the construction and operation of the photovoltaic (PV) installation creates a second layer of impacts, referred to as "supply chain impacts" or "indirect impacts." Indirect impacts during the construction period consist of the changes in inter-industry purchases resulting from the direct final demand changes and include construction spending on materials and PV equipment and other purchases of goods and offsite services. Focusing on local or in-state indirect benefits, we see the greatest impact in the hospitality, material supply, and construction services sectors.

Alignment with the CLCPA

The Homer Solar project contributes to New York State's goal of 70% renewable energy by 2030, through reducing emissions associated with power production by providing a renewable energy resource. Homer Solar commits to other goals of the CLCPA such as a Just Transition, by partnering with community organizations to offer localized benefits to the most vulnerable populations in project communities.

Homer Solar's efforts to bring clean energy to New York are not only aligned with the goals of the CLCPA, but also with NYSERDA's five core mission outcomes which are greenhouse gas emissions reductions, driving steady and reliable procurements of renewable energy, driving energy efficiency and building decarbonization, building New York's clean energy economy, and aligning infrastructure, investment, and energy system planning to create a resilient and distributed energy system.

To ensure benefits are integrated into project communities, Homer Solar believes in creating longstanding partnerships with organizations like local school districts and higher education institutions, BOCES, community groups like Veterans of Foreign Wars or Boys/Girls Scouts, food pantries, county and regional program partners like workforce development boards and NYSERDA Clean Energy Community Coordinators or Clean Energy Hubs.

Looking at the larger picture of upstate New York, Homer Solar's development will also have a positive impact on the cities and regions it sits between, including Binghamton, Rochester, and Syracuse, and the Central New York area each of which include significant disadvantaged communities. Homer Solar is helping to grow a connected and growing renewable energy supply chain in these cities, while developing a skilled local workforce and supporting New York's nation-leading transition to a renewable energy future.

Economic Development/Local Job Creation: Homer

In November of 2023, the unemployment rate in Cortland County was 4.1%^[08]. The job creation from the project construction will provide contracted work to local workforces for a secured timeline. The Homer

Solar Energy Center is proposed to contribute over \$18 million in direct payments, to the towns of Homer, Solon and Cortlandville, Cortland County, and host school districts in the first 20 years of operation. This value includes PILOT and/or Host Community Agreements, special district taxes, taxes on underlying land, and agricultural exemption conversion penalties.

More than 150 union jobs will be created at the peak of construction, and 3 full-time, high-paying jobs for its 35+ year operating life. In addition, this will provide much needed training opportunities, setting individuals up for a career in one of the fastest growing industries of the future.

Contributions to local Revenues and Direct Economic Benefits

While this Community Engagement Plan provides an overview of the significant localized contributions for the Rich Road community, the economic benefits sections of this solicitation cover the direct benefits in detail. With a fervent commitment to the local community, Homer Solar exceeds the base level expectations of benefits a project can bring to a community through listening and responding to needs in real time and bringing the following programs:

- Share the Sun Fund \$30,000 annually fund given to local organizations. The winners are selected after their applications are viewed by a local review committee for a truly locally process.
- \$2,000 Scholarships for students at project school districts interested in renewable energy or the trades.
- In person education and outreach events from arts festivals to environmental summits, to school homecomings and county fairs.
- Partnerships with local unions such as IBEW, LiUNA and Operators.
- Presentations, scholarships, and partnerships with renewable energy schools such as SUNY Cortland and Cornell University.

4. Benefits to Disadvantaged Communities

Recognizing most of the state's utility scale renewable energy projects are in rural areas, Homer Solar maintains the NYSERDA March 2023 definition of Disadvantaged communities to adequately address rural poverty, wherein households that fall within the state level threshold may be categorized as members of disadvantaged communities. In addition, recognizing regional impacts of any kind of development, Homer Solar will work closely with county and regional organizations to create opportunities for nearby disadvantaged communities. Homer Solar further recognizes some of the biggest burdens are local funding opportunities, workforce development and household energy efficiency.

According to the March 2023, NYSERDA DAC map and additional criteria, the Homer Solar project would be adjacent to a DAC in Cortland, with nearby DACs in Ithaca. Additionally, in approximately 29.2% of households in the town of Homer, ~41.7% of households in the town of Solon, and the ~28.7% of households in the town of Cortlandville, fall within the 0%-60% state income level threshold to qualify as a disadvantaged community member. In Cortland County, 14% of parcels fall within a designated disadvantaged community.

Local Funding Opportunities

Homer Solar Energy Center is dedicating \$30,000 for ten years beginning at the start of construction for the project's Share the Sun Fund community benefit Fund. Often, local nonprofits have a hard time finding funding such as local food pantries and serve the members of communities who are most in need of assistance. Winners of these funds are chosen by a local selection committee.

\$2,000 scholarships are currently being offered for the Homer and McGraw Central School District for graduating seniors interested in renewable energy or the trades. The project will also provide an opportunity to source construction labor, materials, subcontractors, and vendors directly from this disadvantaged area.

Job Creation and Workforce Development

The Homer Solar Energy Center will bring much-needed job opportunities not only to the host town, but also to neighboring disadvantaged communities. Construction jobs will offer prevailing wages, hands-on learning, and serve as a starting point to gain relevant knowledge and experience in the fast-growing energy industry. Full time operations jobs will pay an average of [16-19%](#) above the average state level, depending on the position.

There will be approximately 150 union jobs created at the peak of construction and 3 additional fulltime, high paying operation jobs for the project's 35-year operating life. Tailoring to various job experience levels in the community, there will be jobs available such as laborers, technicians, electricians and construction workers. The Homer Solar Energy Center will create opportunities in the energy sector, which is a growing field of work because of the state's rigorous renewable energy goals. From 2016 – 2018, workforce growth in the energy industry was [8.9%](#) in New York State, which has positively contributed to growth for the economy. It is projected that in the next 10 years, solar technician demand will increase by [50%](#) in New York State. These jobs will provide much needed training opportunities, setting individuals up for a future career in an expanding industry.

While the direct contributions made by Homer Solar will focus on the projects host towns, school districts, and the county; its proximity to Cortland will provide an opportunity to source hospitality, services, construction labor, and materials, subcontractors, and vendors from both disadvantaged community members and recognized DACs in Central New York. Homer Solar intends to distribute a flyer that highlights the opportunities to pursue a career in renewable energy.

Local Educational Opportunities

The project will be able to provide well-paying jobs to locals who completed relevant educational programs at such universities as State University of New York Cortland (SUNY Cortland), within fifteen minutes of the project facility. Working with this local institution can increase opportunities for underrepresented groups, where underrepresented groups make up at least 23% of the student body and 28% are Pell grant recipients.

5. Payments in Lieu of Taxes or Host Community Agreements

Homer Solar held an initial meeting with the Cortland County Industrial Development Agency (the “CCIDA”) in October 2019, to introduce the proposed project and its potential economic impacts to Cortland County, the Towns of Homer, Cortlandville and Solon (the “Towns”) and the Homer Central School District and McGraw Central School District (the “School Districts”). Beginning in early 2020 through 2022, Homer Solar continued to meet and discuss the proposed project with CCIDA, and at the request of the CCIDA, Homer Solar also met with the Towns and School Districts to discuss the potential project and its projected economic impacts. After received the ORES permit on January 9, 2023, Homer Solar reengaged with the CCIDA to continue the discussions regarding a framework for the payment in lieu of tax agreement (“PILOT”) and sales tax exemption for the proposed project. Homer Solar anticipates submitting an application to the CCIDA for a PILOT and sales tax exemptions in Q1 2024.

Summary of IDA meetings to date:

- 10/16/2019 – EDFR had meeting with IDA to discuss project and potential community benefits.
- Draft Application submitted originally 2/18/2020
- IDA Virtual Meeting to discuss application and project in detail March 2020
- IDA Presentation September 2021
- Draft Application submitted 2/3/2023
- IDA Presentation August 2023

6. Local Interests/Concerns and Mitigation Efforts

Homer Solar has come to find, there are two main factors that contribute toward building community support and responding to opposition:

- Providing education about the facility -a lack of information can cause confusion about the project. By sharing project details including mitigation measures and permitting constraints, more meaningful dialog can take place.
- Receiving feedback from the community – more importantly, receiving input from the community early in the development cycle allows for a mutually beneficial flow of information and ideas.

The exercise of sharing information, receiving and responding to feedback helps to realize a project with community in mind. Below are specific examples indicating of how informing stakeholders and/or receiving feedback either influenced project decisions or helped build community support at the Homer Solar Energy Center:

- Some residents were concerned about the state 94c permitting process and the perceived lack of control the local municipalities have. Homer Solar has assured and has continued to work closely with host communities to address any variances from local laws to the state 94c permit.
- Other residents voiced concerns over the right to have a vote in the process of siting a solar project in their community. Homer Solar understands the need for community driven processes and will implement an annual \$30,000 Share the Sun Fund to be distributed among local community

groups, with winners selected by a local selection committee. Interested members of the community are encouraged to apply to be on the committee.

Communities also expressed an interest in how the project might benefit the local towns and schools, and its potential effect on their taxes. The Project through the PILOT and/or Host Community Agreement, special district taxes, taxes on underlying land, agricultural exemption conversion penalties is proposed to contribute more than \$15 million in direct payments to the Towns of Homer, Solon, and Cortlandville in Cortland County and associated school districts in the first 20 years of operation. In addition, if the Project is awarded a contract with NYSERDA, a \$500/MW payment will be made annually to offset residential electricity bills for the first ten years following commercial operation amounting to \$45,000 per year, provided directly to the residents' annual electricity bills.

Homer Solar believes it is a strong fit for the local communities from fostering meaningful relationships that are built to last and be mutually beneficial.

7. Strategies to Mitigate Concerns Raised by the Public

During the public feedback period for the 94c permitting application submission, community members voiced a few concerns. One concern that arose was the perceived permanence of the energy generation project. Understandably, because there have not been projects built to this size in the state, much less decommissioned, the process can be hard to understand or visualize for community members. Homer Solar pointed to the rigorous decommissioning process set forth by the Office of Renewable Energy Siting and reminded the public of the letter of credit reassessed every five years to cover the cost of decommissioning.

Another concern that was raised was potential impacts to the adjacent waterways. Again, Homer Solar was able to point to the stringent state regulations surrounding storm water management for solar facilities and that net storm water retention and infiltration is improved on the site.

Finally, some community members were concerned about the use of agricultural land, however participating landowners were able to voice for themselves at the 94-c public hearing, their lands may have been rocky for the time they farmed them causing difficulties, while the solar lease provides opportunity for a steady income to expand their operations or a more comfortable retirement.

General Education of Municipal Officials and Residents

As mentioned, to address municipal assistance, Homer Solar provided an ESCROW account, so municipalities could hire consultants and legal staff in the collaboration efforts leading up to the 94-C application where Intervenor funding is provided as part of the permit review process. This increased the quality of the conversations between the municipalities and Project in the application development phase and avoided any potential expense to the local taxpayer. In addition, Homer Solar will take municipalities on bus tours, provide training, and have in-depth conversations at the request and need of host municipalities to ensure all needs and questions are met. Equipment for local first responders may also be donated on behalf of Homer Solar such as utility terrain vehicles or fly cars, for abilities to respond and monitor.

8. Feedback from the Community

Virtual Meetings and Podcasts

During to the COVID-19 pandemic, Homer Solar needed to adapt its community outreach strategy to continue the important work of informing communities during challenging times when it was not possible to meet in public gatherings. The solution was to hold virtual community meetings where developers and experts shared updates on project development, studies conducted, land acquisition, our conversations with state and local officials, other consultations, and the Article 10 / Section 94-c permitting processes, including the anticipated application date and information regarding the future availability of local agency and community intervenor funds.

The Tracy Solar website maintains a podcast series focused on educating the public about solar projects in development across New York State¹. The podcasts explain the project background and benefits, answer frequently asked questions, and detail the importance of reaching out to the community and building grassroots support. They include interviews with landowners, beekeepers and farmers grazing sheep, and energy storage safety experts. When awarded a contract with NYSERDA, Homer Solar will develop a new podcast focused directly on the positive impact on the community, featuring interviews with landowners, environmental groups, local businesses and other stakeholders.

Feedback Opportunities

Homer Solar understands the importance of building lasting meaningful relationships with the local community. Homer Solar uses a project website to easily share project details and other information like FAQs with the local community or any other person interested. The websites maintain permitting information and includes multimedia experiences. The Homer Solar Project can be found at www.homersolar.com

9. Forthcoming Community Outreach Strategies and Activities

Recognizing Homer Solar could be nearing the construction phase of its life, should a NYSERDA Tier 1 contract be awarded, future outreach strategies will involve keeping the community and municipality involved and informed of processes moving ahead, as well as continued conversations and feedback loops finalizing project designs to continue to integrate the project into the fabric of the community.

Leading up to construction, Homer Solar will engage with the local community to provide a booklet of local services and hospitality businesses to distribute to the hundreds of construction workers who will work in the area for many months. This booklet will help to promote local businesses across Cortland County to maximize opportunities to support the local economy. When we consider potential impacts across a variety of sectors and businesses, the collective impact is great.

Finally, through a combination of podcasts, webinars, mailers, public meetings, website updates or one on one conversations, the Project team will continue to communicate relevant information and collect meaningful feedback from all stakeholders to better integrate the Project within the community.

Community Opportunities/Capacity Building

Homer Solar recognizes the importance of building community opportunities and capacity during the development, construction, and operation of the project and will continue in many of our engagement and outreach efforts as listed below:

- \$30,000 Share the Sun Fund, community grant program with selections by local committee (for ten years)
- Annual \$2,000 Scholarships to students from Homer and Mcgraw Central Schools (for ten years)

Homer Solar realizes community engagement is an iterative and long-lasting process and thusly cannot put an end date on our community engagement plan as conversations, partnerships and outreach will continue so long as the Homer Solar Energy Center is in development and operation. Further, we recognize despite every effort to solicit feedback from the local community, there may be voices we have missed and Homer Solar encourages residents to continue to reach out.