

Dundonald Avenue Solar Farm

Public Engagement Summary

October 8, 2021



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1 Background

Cleaner ways of generating power is a priority for the City of Saskatoon (the City). As part of the Low Emissions Community Plan, the City aims to reduce its own emissions by 40% below 2014 levels by 2023 and 80% by 2050. Additionally, the long-term plan is to support the Saskatchewan power grid's transition to carbon neutral by 2050. One way to achieve these goals is through clean power generation, such as solar energy.

1.1 Dundonald Avenue Solar Farm

Currently, Saskatoon Light & Power (SL&P) buys most of its electricity from SaskPower, which uses fossil fuels. The Dundonald Avenue Solar Farm (solar farm), a 2.2 megawatt solar power project, will enable SL&P to generate renewable electricity to the power grid for their customers in addition to the 1.6 megawatt Landfill Gas Generation Facility, which was commissioned in 2014.

The Solar Farm will lower annual power emissions by approximately 1,800 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, which is comparable to removing 400 cars from the road.

What is a Solar Farm?

A solar farm is a large collection of photovoltaic (PV) solar panels. These panels absorb the sun's energy, convert it into electricity, and send the electricity to the power grid.

Location

City Council set aside a parcel of land (Parcel M) for solar development. An additional right-of-way immediately south of the parcel has also been included. These 14 acres of land lie east of Montgomery Place and Dundonald Avenue, between the CN railway tracks and the Circle Drive South freeway.

The location of the solar farm would also accommodate a potential future overpass of the railway tracks at 11th Street West. This land has no commercial value. It has excellent sun exposure and is near existing underground electricity lines.

The generated power from the solar farm will be directly tied into the main power feed of Montgomery Place.

Funding

The total cost of the project is estimated to be \$4.25 million. The City has been approved to receive \$2.56 from the government for this project. With this funding, the project will pay itself back in 7 years due to reduced purchasing of electricity from SaskPower.

Feasibility Study

Stantec Consulting Ltd. conducted a feasibility study in 2021 regarding the potential of a solar farm at the proposed location.

2 Engagement Activities

2.1 Marketing

An [Engage webpage](#) for the project was created on the City website.

Residents in Montgomery Place, as well as businesses east of Circle Drive in the proximity of Parcel M, received a mailout with a description of the project including visual renderings, instructions on how to access the project's Engage page and online comment form, instructions on how to take part in the June 22 online meeting, and contact information for Saskatoon Light & Power Customer Service.

City-wide social media ads (Facebook, Twitter) to promote the Engage page and encourage input on the project were posted 1 week in advance of the online meeting.

2.2 Online Comment Form

An online comment form was posted on the Engage page and was open for responses from June 8 to June 30, 2021. In total, there were 49 responses, which includes 26 who indicated they live in Montgomery Place.

2.2.1 Summary of Comments

Please describe any benefits you see to the Dundonald Avenue Solar Farm

Forty-five of forty-nine respondents provided a comment to this question. The table below provides a summary of comments received related to benefits in descending order of common themes.

Comments Provided	Count
• Support "green" friendly initiatives / reduce emissions / renewable energy	28
• Good use of vacant land that has limited other uses	12
• The City taking lead / being example	11
• Cost effective / return on investment / Government funding	10
• Should do more projects that are similar in the future	5
• Not obtrusive on the neighbourhood / less intrusive than other options (e.g. wind turbine)	4
• None / Nothing	4
• Quiet / has potential to dampen freeway noise	3
• Reduction in power bills?	3
• Less electricity purchased from SaskPower	2
• Good to invest in power production	2
• Minimal maintenance	1
• Limited access to the public in this location	1
• May support local business (e.g., installation, maintenance)	1
• Lots of sunshine in Saskatoon	1

Please describe any concerns you would have with the Dundonald Avenue Solar Farm

Forty-three of forty-nine respondents provided a comment to this question. The table below provides a summary of comments received related to concerns in descending order of common themes.

Comments Provided	Count
• None / concerns were addressed in information provided	13
• Green space / impacts to wildlife (e.g., antelope have been sighted in area)	7
• Sound / noise / impacts to sound wall / must accommodate future sound attenuation	5
• Industrial waste / how recyclable are they?	5
• Cost / impact to property tax / not a priority	5
• Landscaping (Shrubbery or trees between the solar farm and Montgomery Place? Wildflowers or native grasses instead of hardscaping?)	5
• Industrial power plant near a neighbourhood / why not elsewhere / already COC, snow dump, etc. in area	5
• Will be an eyesore / will obstruct view to the east from property	4
• Maintenance for the panels (snow removal, cleaning, etc.) / operational costs	4
• Glare	4
• Construction impacts (e.g., noise, disruption to traffic flow)	3
• Will not produce the estimated power / marginal return from solar	2
• Some will oppose this project (i.e., due to location, oppose solar power in general)	2
• Other power needed to balance fluctuations	1
• 2.2 MW is not an ambitious enough project	1
• Land could be used commercially (e.g., rental storage units)	1
• Will this energy production only benefit Montgomery Place customers?	1
• What will be the country of origin of the solar panels?	1
• Reflective heat	1
• Constraints put on other projects nearby (e.g., potential railway crossing on 11 th Street West)	1
• Security of site	1

2.3 Online Meeting

An online meeting was held on the evening of June 22, 2021, through Microsoft Teams Live. At its peak, there were 9 simultaneous attendees.

The meeting included an opening presentation on the project, including the results of the 2021 feasibility study, which was then followed by a question and answer period from attendees. Some comments received through the online comment form and by telephone were also addressed at this time.

The following questions and comments were received from attendees through the meeting’s chat function:

- Please stop calling this “vacant undeveloped marginal land” – this area was the earth berm to provide sound attenuation to Montgomery Place for south Circle Drive – although much of the soil was taken away for other construction sites and it is not an adequate sound berm.
- Did the sound study that performed address any concerns to the sound attenuation? I just want to see if I understand the study properly. The sound appears to be the same or better?

- Will there be community engagement on the landscaping options/opportunity? If so, where in the project timeline would that take place?
- I don't have a question, I just want to say that I think this is a great idea that uses land that is not usable for anything other than a dog park. I had hoped for more in the way of sound attenuation but zero is quite acceptable. Way better than the wind turbine idea from a few years ago.
- Why can't the solar farm be near the Operations Centre or on the landfill? The landfill is already partially capped in order to gather methane now. That area is currently accessed for methane.
- The panels will obstruct my view. And now that it's 12' high on top of the rise along Dundonald. Totally blocks it off.
- Is the 30 year project life realistic, are there any performance guarantees, and are there any similar projects that have been running for over a decade or so?
- Could there be trees along Dundonald beside the track???
- Will there be any requirements for supply of the components from domestic/North American suppliers?

2.4 Other Input

2.4.1 Engage Page Forum

- A commentor strongly opposes the proposed solar farm due to its impact on wildlife (antelope) that utilize the space, as well as the impact on nearby residents. The commentor believes this project should not be a priority for the City.
- A commentor would prefer rooftop solar panels on civic buildings.

2.5 Data limitations

- Due to COVID-19, we were not able to conduct any in-person engagement. Online engagement can be less inclusive as some who would be interested in providing input may have limited to no Internet access. The mailout to residents in Montgomery Park and nearby businesses included a phone number to Saskatoon Light & Power Customer Service to help mitigate that risk.
- Residents of Montgomery Place are key stakeholders for this project and therefore received direct mailouts promoting this engagement. Residents living outside Montgomery Place may be less aware of the project, or feel less impacted, and therefore were less likely to provide their input during.