

MEMO

To: Detroit City Planning Commission (CPC)
From: Lightstar Renewables, LLC (Lightstar)
Date: July 18, 2024
RE: Questions relative to the Neighborhood Solar Initiative

Question #1: What is the extent to which the solar generation sites will incorporate complementary features such as urban agriculture, animal keeping, engineered stormwater management systems, functional landscapes, and passive or active recreation that would offer more community benefits?

Lightstar Response: Complementary features for each site will be thoroughly explored and decided upon during the community engagement process with each of the host neighborhoods as dictated by the terms of the original Request for Proposals (RFP) #184254 issued by the City in December 2023. Lightstar's community engagement efforts within the State Fair and Gratiot-Findlay project areas will be led by our Detroit-based partner, JIMA Studio. JIMA is a landscape architectural design and urban planning studio that collaborates with community groups, organizations, and builders committed to culturally relevant placemaking and strategic implementation. JIMA Studio centralizes participatory design methods to provide full site design and planning services, from conception to completion. As one of few woman-owned and Black-owned landscape architecture and urban planning practices in the country, JIMA studio focuses on Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities, and elevates cultural motifs within design approaches. JIMA Studio works across a range of experiences to develop strategies for beautiful resilience and culturally relevant spaces. JIMA Studios have been certified as Detroit Based Business (DBB), Detroit Headquartered Business (DHB), Detroit Resident Based Business (DRB), Woman Owned Enterprise Business (WBE) and Minority Owned Enterprise Business (MBE).

Question #2: If urban agriculture is incorporated through agrivoltaics and the public is not allowed to benefit from these developments, who will manage and maintain these sites? Additionally, regarding stormwater management features, would the contractor or the City be responsible for their maintenance and upkeep?

Lightstar Response: Consistent with the City's goal to ensure local stakeholders are at the forefront of decision-making, Lightstar reiterates that it will be up to the neighborhoods to decide if urban agrivoltaics is what they want to see incorporated with the solar arrays.

If urban agrivoltaics are desired, Lightstar is proposing to work with the City to identify sites where urban agrivoltaics may take place in full compliance with local, state, and federal law. Where urban agrivoltaics are implemented, Lightstar will contract with local urban farmers to execute farm management and vegetation management plans within the arrays. Lightstar is proud to offer this land to our urban farming partners at no cost to help expand the network and distribution of fresh, locally-grown produce throughout Detroit. Throughout the project, Lightstar will support our farming partners by providing a stipend and agronomic consulting services. Although some site maintenance practices may be in coordination with our farming partners, Lightstar will ultimately be responsible for the management and maintenance of the arrays.



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Regarding stormwater management features, there are many ways to control stormwater properly as developed and informed by extensive industry research. Because of the potentially agricultural nature of our arrays, Lightstar plans to avoid as much topsoil disturbance as possible and prioritizes the decompaction of the soil for planting, therefore mitigating many significant erosion factors. As Lightstar proceeds into the civil design phase for these sites, we will design according to best practices per the site specifications to ensure runoff is minimized. Most of the stormwater controls are done through stabilizing the existing area with vegetation to help with drainage and speed runoff. As outlined within our contracts, stormwater management features integrated within the solar arrays on property leased by Lightstar will be kept and maintained by the company.

Question #3: Whether or not such additional community benefit features are incorporated, will any portion of the sites be open to public access at any time?

Lightstar Response: Site access is generally restricted to authorized management and maintenance individuals due to the fact that there is electric generating infrastructure present on site. However, Lightstar included within our proposal the potential to host educational tours of the solar arrays in partnership with local schools to complement renewable energy curriculum. We also anticipate collaborating with non-profits and local farmers on clean energy and agricultural education, agrivoltaic training programs, network building, and local apprenticeships.

Question #4: Will any of the sites provide for through pedestrian traffic to provide secure and efficient circulation within the host neighborhoods?

Lightstar Response: No. It is not Lightstar's intention to provide through-traffic circulation within the solar arrays. This is consistent with industry safety standards and with other solar arrays located within city limits across the country. As the project areas were created in collaboration with local residents and neighbors, Lightstar is confident there is sufficient traffic circulation around the sites.

Question #5: What right of way adjustments are anticipated to facilitate the sites? To what extent will existing underground utilities be removed/impacted from each solar site? How is this being coordinated with utility agencies to ensure adequate services remain available to adjacent areas?

Lightstar Response: Per the terms of the Request for Proposals (RFP) #184254 Amendment #3 issued by the City on January 31, 2024, "Per the Design Guidelines in Section 2.3 page 7 of the RFP, it is the City's intent to close streets and alleys that are within the project boundaries but leave them in place to provide access to the associated underground utility corridors as needed. During residential demolitions, the City removes basements entirely. The water service line and sewer service line remain in place up to a few feet away from where the home previously stood. There may be remnants of private utilities or service lines located within the development property, but they will be disconnected as part of the site preparation process." Therefore, the demolition efforts and corresponding utility disconnections are City-led and cutting the municipal services at or near the main (water or sanitary sewer) eliminates the potential of underground interferences within the property boundary. To the extent necessary, the Lightstar team will coordinate with the City and any natural gas, telecom, and electric providers that share city owned rights-of-way through agreements or easements.



Question #6: Will lighting be provided internal to sites in order to facilitate viewing for safety?

Lightstar Response: Lightstar has included basic lighting at the array entrances as part of the Neighborhood Agreement budget. Specific lighting design options will be presented, evaluated, and finalized during the community engagement process. Additional concerns regarding internal lighting will be reviewed and discussed during the community engagement process, including potential security benefits and drawbacks such as visual concerns at night and efforts to promote dark sky principles. There is the potential for internal lighting to make infrared visibility worse if security cameras are in use.

Question #7: Will perimeter lighting be provided to complement public street lighting in order to ensure safety and security immediately exterior to the sites?

Lightstar Response: It is Lightstar's understanding that existing street lighting along the exterior of the sites will remain in-place. Basic entrance lighting is included within the existing Neighborhood Agreement budgets for each site. If additional lighting around the perimeter is requested after the community engagement process, the budget can be updated to include it as outlined within Lightstar's contract.

Question #8: Given the increasing presence of wildlife in the City, how do [you] propose to manage the wildlife that may want to take up residence on site?

Lightstar Response: Lightstar can offer wildlife-friendly fencing options that can facilitate movement of urban wildlife. For reference, wildlife-friendly fencing typically includes a 6-inch gap at the bottom of the fence to allow animals to pass underneath the fencing. Other fencing options feature small 6-inch by 6-inch squares around the bottom perimeter of the fence for wildlife passage. These fencing options, in addition to other wildlife topics such as pollinator-friendly plantings, etc. will be presented, evaluated, and finalized during the community engagement process. Wildlife-friendly fencing will need to be balanced with neighborhood preferences and concerns regarding fence design aesthetics and pest control, as not all wildlife is desired within close proximity to neighboring residential properties.

Question #9: What are the metrics for determining success with this project? What are the ends you hope to achieve. What are the values driving the project forward towards those ends?

Lightstar Response: The City outlined the following goals for the project in Section 1.1 of RFP #184254:

- 1. Make progress towards the City of Detroit's renewable energy and climate goals.*
- 2. Find the most economically efficient way to achieve the City's goal of offsetting the energy use of municipal facilities with local solar generation.*
- 3. Ensure that Detroiters benefit from land needed to host solar. Ensure host neighborhoods and nearby neighbors benefit from the presence of solar projects.*
- 4. Generate clean and renewable energy to be used by the public.*



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5. *Generate renewable energy locally to maximize the possibility that energy produced from the projects will reduce the use of power plants that cause air pollution within the City of Detroit.*

Through this project, Lightstar aims to work with stakeholders to provide a supply of locally-sited clean energy infrastructure that helps the City meet its climate goals while also providing local investment and neighborhood benefits. Lightstar strives to be a good neighbor and project partner in all of our host communities. Through this project, we will strive to provide clear and accurate information in a manner that all stakeholders can understand. Oftentimes, the minutiae of the solar development process can be unwieldy and confusing to those not directly involved “behind the scenes.” Lightstar strives to present information in a way that helps neighbors feel connected and a part of the process. Lightstar also strives to recognize and partner with City staff, elected officials, and existing non-profits in Detroit that are continually working to improve the City. This includes pursuing partnerships for urban agriculture, education, and public art to maximize community input and elevate local priorities to inform project decision-making. All of these items align with Lightstar’s overarching corporate value to “provide local solar for the land, and for the community.”

