

Staff Report for the McHenry County Zoning Board of Appeals

Application: #Z25-0064

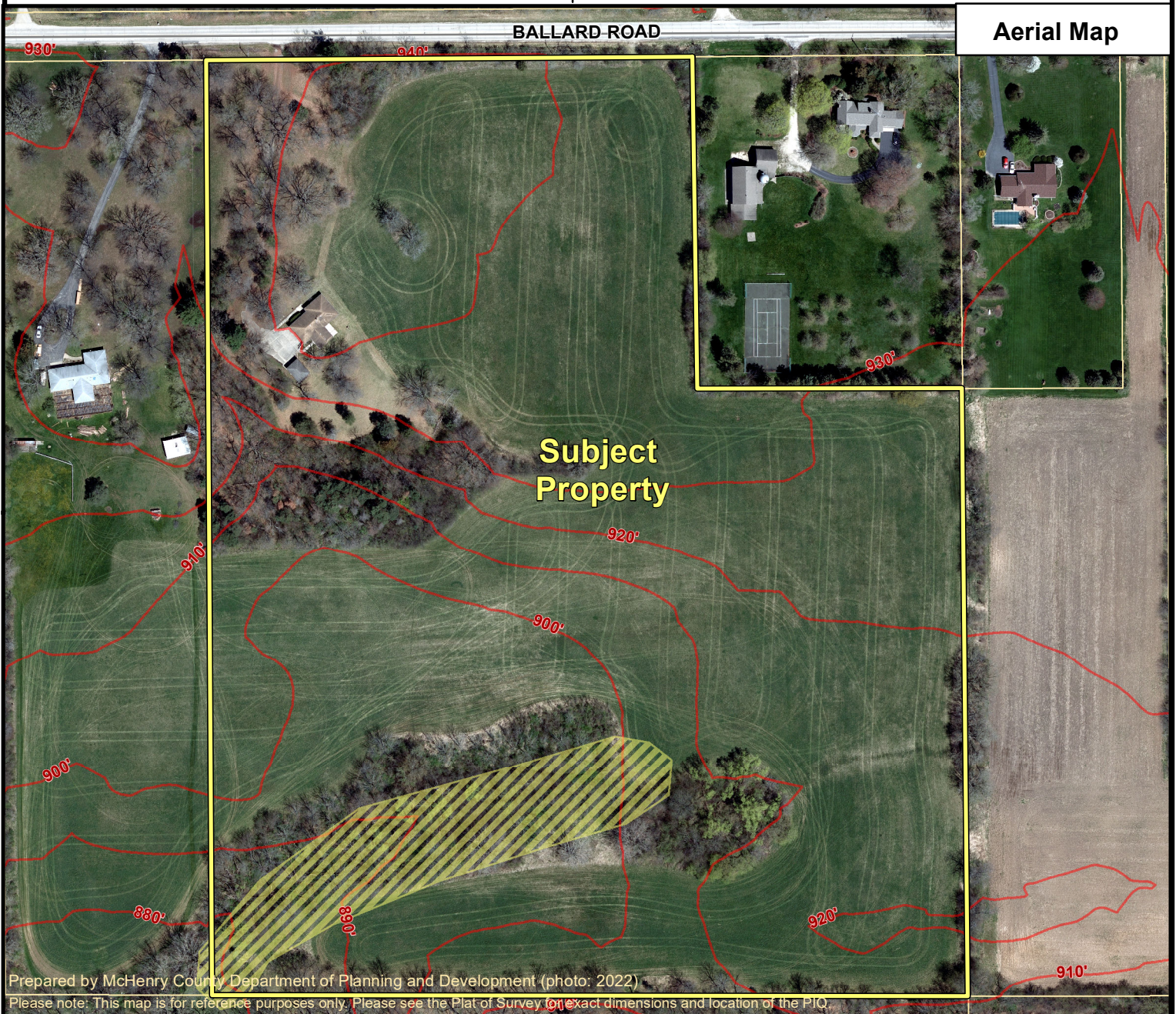
PIN: #18-04-200-005

Location: The property consists of approximately twenty-seven (27) acres and is located on the south side of Ballard Road, approximately 1,550 feet east of the intersection of Illinois Route 47 and Ballard Road, in Grafton Township, Illinois.

Hearing: August 27, 2025

Applicant: Skystone Solar, LLC

Request: Conditional Use Permit to allow for a Commercial Solar Energy Facility



Elevation
(feet above sea level)

— Contours

ADID Wetland Map 2005

- High Functional Value Wetland (hfw)
- High Quality Wetland (hqw)
- Wetland (w)
- Farmed Wetland (fw)

Feet
100 50 0 100 200
1 inch equals 200 feet



Staff Report for the McHenry County Zoning Board of Appeals

STAFF COMMENTS

The following comments and conclusions are based upon staff analysis and review prior to this hearing and are to be considered viable unless evidence is established to the contrary. Staff may have additional comments based upon the testimony presented during the public hearing.

BACKGROUND & REQUEST SUMMARY

The applicant is requesting a Conditional Use Permit to allow for a Commercial Solar Energy Facility. The subject property consists of approximately twenty-seven (27) acres and is zoned A-1 Agriculture District. According to the Plat of Survey, the subject property currently contains a one-story brick and frame residence, frame garage with wood deck, gravel, asphalt and concrete driveway, and additional areas of concrete.

According to the narrative, the applicant is proposing a 3.35-megawatt commercial solar energy facility, enclosed by a seven (7)-foot agricultural style security fence, per the regulations of the National Electric Code. The nearest adjacent residence on a nonparticipating parcel is over one-hundred fifty (150) feet from the proposed location of the solar array.

Note: On January 27, 2023, the State of Illinois passed Public Act 102-1123 (further modified under trailer bill P.A. 103-0580 on December 8, 2023), which modifies regulations for proposed commercial solar energy facilities. The County of McHenry has amended the Unified Development Ordinance, as of April 18, 2023, in order to comply with the State's regulations.

MCHENRY COUNTY UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE

- The applicant must meet the Principal Use Standards for a Solar Farm, listed in County Code Section 16.56.030.PP of the UDO (*with the exception of any changes provided by Public Act 102-1123, as outlined above*).

STAFF ANALYSIS

Current Land Use & Zoning

The property is adjacent to Agricultural uses to the south and east and Agricultural and Single-Family Residential uses to the north and west. The surrounding zoning consists of A-1 Agriculture District to the east, south and west and the Village of Lakewood to the north.

2030 Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map

The proposed conditional use permit is not consistent with the County's future land use designation of Estate.

2030 Comprehensive Plan & 2030 and Beyond Analysis

The 2030 Comprehensive Plan and 2030 and Beyond Update support the construction of commercial solar energy facilities within existing agricultural areas. (*See analysis below*)

McHenry County 2030 and Beyond, Adopted October 18, 2016

Big Idea #1 Let's make our communities healthy, active, and green

"We can make it happen by preserving our groundwater aquifers, lakes, rivers, streams, and their natural functions." (p.11)

- The McHenry County Water Resources Division has determined that the panels will not be calculated as an impervious surface for the development permit. This is because the panels are proposed to be elevated above the ground several feet and supported by driven piles. The petitioner will be required to obtain a Stormwater Management Permit which will include calculations for all impervious areas, including but not limited to the piles, access drives, and equipment pads.

Big Idea #2 Let's build on our strengths

"We can make it happen by recognizing the economic and social importance of our agricultural industry." (p. 15)

- The McHenry County Soil and Water Conservation District's Natural Resources Inventory report (#25-051-4712) indicates that the LE score is 72.22 out of a possible 100 regarding soils for crop production. This is due, in part, to approximately 44.6% of the site containing prime farmland soils. The concerns that the development of solar facilities in the county will result in the loss of farmland, particularly prime farmland can be remediated because, unlike other forms of development, the land is preserved for future farming. Also, the proposed native vegetation may slow the velocity of runoff, capturing sediments or other pollutants and allowing water to infiltrate into the soil, thereby reducing potential for erosion and sedimentation and improving soil conditions.

Big Idea #3 Let's grow smarter

"The county should also be open to commercial enterprises in the unincorporated areas that are major generators of jobs or tax revenues for which no suitable municipal sites exist elsewhere in the county, or that are dependent upon a direct proximity to agriculture or open space and designed in harmony with these areas." (p. 17 & 21)

- Due to the size and scale of the project, undeveloped acreage is important to the siting and development of a commercial solar energy facility. The applicant should be prepared to address how the proposed use relates to the statement above regarding generation of jobs, tax revenues, and siting of the facility.

Big Idea #4 Let's expand our economy

"We can make it happen by improving infrastructure, including freight and commuter rail, access to major regional and interstate roadways, and access to high-speed internet services." (p.22)

- The proposed commercial solar energy facility will provide a renewable energy source to the electrical grid as an alternative to energy created from sources with a larger carbon footprint.

McHenry County 2030 Comprehensive Plan, Adopted April 20, 2010

Community Character & Housing

No applicable text.

Agricultural Resources

"Encourage owners of parcels with the greatest potential for productive agricultural use, such as parcels with an LE score of 80 or above that are in agricultural use and contiguous with other such parcels, to preserve their parcels for agricultural uses." (p. 38, #7)

- Commercial solar energy facilities typically have a life of approximately thirty (30) to forty (40) years and after that time the property may return to agriculture.

"Continue joint participation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and McHenry County Soil and Water Conservation District in educational programs regarding best soil conservation practices and improving rural water quality." (p. 38, #20)

- The McHenry-Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District recommends that areas between panels be planted to a native prairie mix to help increase water infiltration and reduce runoff from the site. It is recommended that a planting and maintenance plan be developed with the landowner to ensure that noxious weeds are controlled, and native plantings are properly installed and managed. The petitioner is encouraged to add pollinator species to this planting plan. The Soil and Water Conservation District also recommends, upon decommissioning, that if any underground lines are to remain, they should have at least five (5) feet of cover to adequately allow farming operations to commence after the facility's removal.

Greenways, Open Space & Natural Resources

"Protect environmentally sensitive areas from negative impacts of adjacent land uses." (p.57, #9)

- The IDNR found record of potential protected resources in the vicinity of the project location (Blanding's Turtle and Brassy Minnow) but concluded that adverse effects were unlikely. The endangered species consultation was terminated.

"Encourage the design of developments to achieve the broader sustainability of human and natural communities, including the social and economic dimensions of sustainability." (p. 57, #15)

- The proposed commercial solar energy facility will contribute to a broader sustainability objective in that it will produce clean energy as a replacement for energy produced by unsustainable means.

Water Resources

"Preserve and enhance the chemical, physical, biological, hydrologic integrity of streams, lakes and wetlands." (p.63)

"...land use and development should be carefully examined and regulated within sensitive groundwater recharge areas to ensure that the water quality, quantity, and natural recharge functions of the area are safely maintained." (p.67)

- The applicant will be required to obtain a Stormwater Management Permit prior to construction.

Economic Development

"Decrease the degree to which the residential sector in the County must pay for services." (p.87)

- The state legislature has approved standards that would regulate how commercial solar energy facilities are assessed for tax purposes. The standards would result in an increase from the current assessed value of agricultural land.

Infrastructure

"It is estimated that every 120 MW of solar power would eliminate 1.7 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions which is the equivalent of removing 310,000 vehicles from the nation's roadways annually. A 1,000 MW coal plant produces approximately 6 million tons of carbon dioxide per year." (p.116)

"Encourage all governmental units in the County to adopt and support ordinances that will enhance all segments of the areas electric grid." (p. 120, #5)

The proposed commercial solar energy facility is consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan* support of more sustainable energy sources.

STAFF ASSESSMENT

The 2030 Comprehensive Plan and the 2030 and Beyond Update both support the development of commercial solar energy facilities. Once the facility is constructed, there is very little to no traffic generated by the use. There is very minimal risk of noise, lighting, or other nuisances generated by this use. The proposed use is compatible with adjacent uses. As noted within Public Act 102-1123, a request for a Conditional Use Permit for a commercial solar energy facility shall be approved if the request is in compliance with the standards and conditions imposed within the Act, the zoning ordinance adopted consistent with this Code, and the conditions imposed under State and Federal statutes and regulations. A County may not adopt zoning regulations that disallow commercial solar energy facilities from being developed or operated in any district zoned to allow agricultural or industrial uses. All construction will be required to meet applicable codes and ordinances for: fire protection, commercial building and electrical construction, and stormwater management.

Staff offers the following conditions for consideration:

1. The Conditional Use shall have no time limit, unless the use is abandoned as specified in 16.56.030.PP.4 of the McHenry County Unified Development Ordinance.
2. Site development shall be in substantial conformance with the site plan prepared by Kimley-Horn, with revisions dated June 24, 2025 (attached).
3. The *Decommissioning Plan* shall be applicable in part as well as in whole. If any portion of the commercial solar energy facility ceases to perform its intended function for more than twelve (12) consecutive months, that portion of the facility shall be decommissioned in compliance with all the terms of the *Decommissioning Plan*.
4. A McHenry County Stormwater Management Permit shall be secured prior to construction. Any damaged drainage tiles shall be repaired at the expense of the Petitioner and in a manner satisfactory to the Water Resources Division Manager.
5. A detailed Landscape Plan illustrating compliance with required landscape screening standards and Illinois Department of Natural Resources Pollinator Scorecard Standards and land management practices shall be approved by the Zoning Enforcement Officer prior to issuance of construction/building permit.
6. Recommendations made by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in their April 24, 2025 letter to the applicants, with regard to protected resources in the vicinity of the project location, shall be followed.
7. Fencing shall be provided in compliance with the National Electrical Code, as applicable. The use of barbed wire is prohibited. Setting fence posts in concrete is prohibited except for gate posts and where otherwise required for stability.
8. All requirements of McHenry County Unified Development Ordinance §16.56.030.PP (as amended, subject to State of Illinois Public Act 102-1123 and Public Act 103-0580) shall be met or exceeded unless specifically amended by this Conditional Use Permit.
9. All other federal, state, and local laws shall be met.

16.56.030 Principal Use Standards

PP. COMMERCIAL SOLAR ENERGY FACILITY. Conditional use permits for a COMMERCIAL SOLAR ENERGY FACILITY shall have no time limit, unless the use is abandoned as specified in subsection PP.4. below (COMMERCIAL SOLAR ENERGY FACILITY: Abandonment), or the permit is revoked in accordance with § 16.20.040I. (Revocation of Conditional Use Permits).

1. Application.

- a. A threatened and endangered species consultation (EcoCAT) from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources is required at the time of conditional use permit application for any site that is five (5) acres or greater in size and currently in agricultural use or undeveloped.
- b. A site plan shall be provided showing all improvements, including structures, fencing, power lines (above and below ground), lighting, and landscaping, at a detail sufficient to understand the location, height, appearance, and area.
- c. All other application submittal requirements outlined in the *Planning and Development Department Zoning Application Packet* as published on the McHenry County Website.

2. Site design.

- a. Solar panels, structures, and electrical equipment, excluding fences and power lines for interconnection, shall be erected no less than fifty (50) feet from any lot line and no less than one hundred fifty (150) feet from any residence, other than a residence on the same ownership parcel.
- b. No structures, excluding power lines for interconnection, may exceed twenty (20) feet in height. Power lines shall be placed underground to the maximum extent possible.
- c. Lighting must comply with § 16.60.020 (Exterior Lighting).
- d. Solar panels shall have a surface that minimizes glare and shall comply with § 16.60.040D. (Lighting and Glare).
- e. The facility shall be situated as to minimize impacts to woodlands, savannas, wetlands, drainage tiles, and encroachment into flood plains. All site development shall comply with the Stormwater Management Ordinance. Any damaged drainage tiles shall be repaired.
- f. In order prevent erosion, manage run-off, and provide ecological benefit, the facility shall be planted with "low-profile" native prairie species, using a mix appropriate for the region and soil conditions per Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) standards, as amended from time to time.
- g. Fencing shall be provided in compliance with the National Electrical Code, as applicable. The use of barbed wire must comply with § 16.56.050H.1.c. of this Ordinance.
- h. Any part of the facility that is within five hundred (500) feet of a NONPARTICIPATING RESIDENCE, or road right-of-way, shall be landscaped with an arrangement of native shrubs, subject to approval by the County Board, unless the facility is screened from view by existing vegetation.
- i. Prior to building permit issuance, the operator shall prepare a landscape monitoring and maintenance plan to ensure the establishment and continued maintenance of the native prairie species, all installed landscape screening, and all existing vegetation that provides required landscape screening.
- j. Prior to scheduled public hearing, the operator shall enter into an Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement with the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA), as required by that department.
- k. Prior to building permit issuance, the operator shall provide an executed road use agreement between the Applicant and the appropriate governing road and highway jurisdictions or the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), showing approved entrances.

3. Safety.

- a. Prior to construction, the operator shall prepare an emergency management plan acceptable to the County and the local fire district and shall be responsible for training of emergency personnel, as needed.
- b. A sign shall be posted providing the name of the operator and a phone number to be used in case of an on-site emergency.
- c. Access shall be granted, provided appropriate advance notice, for periodic inspection of the site by the County or the local fire district.
- d. Damaged solar panels shall be removed, repaired, or replaced within sixty (60) days of the damage. The ground shall remain free of debris from damaged solar panels at all times.

4. Abandonment.

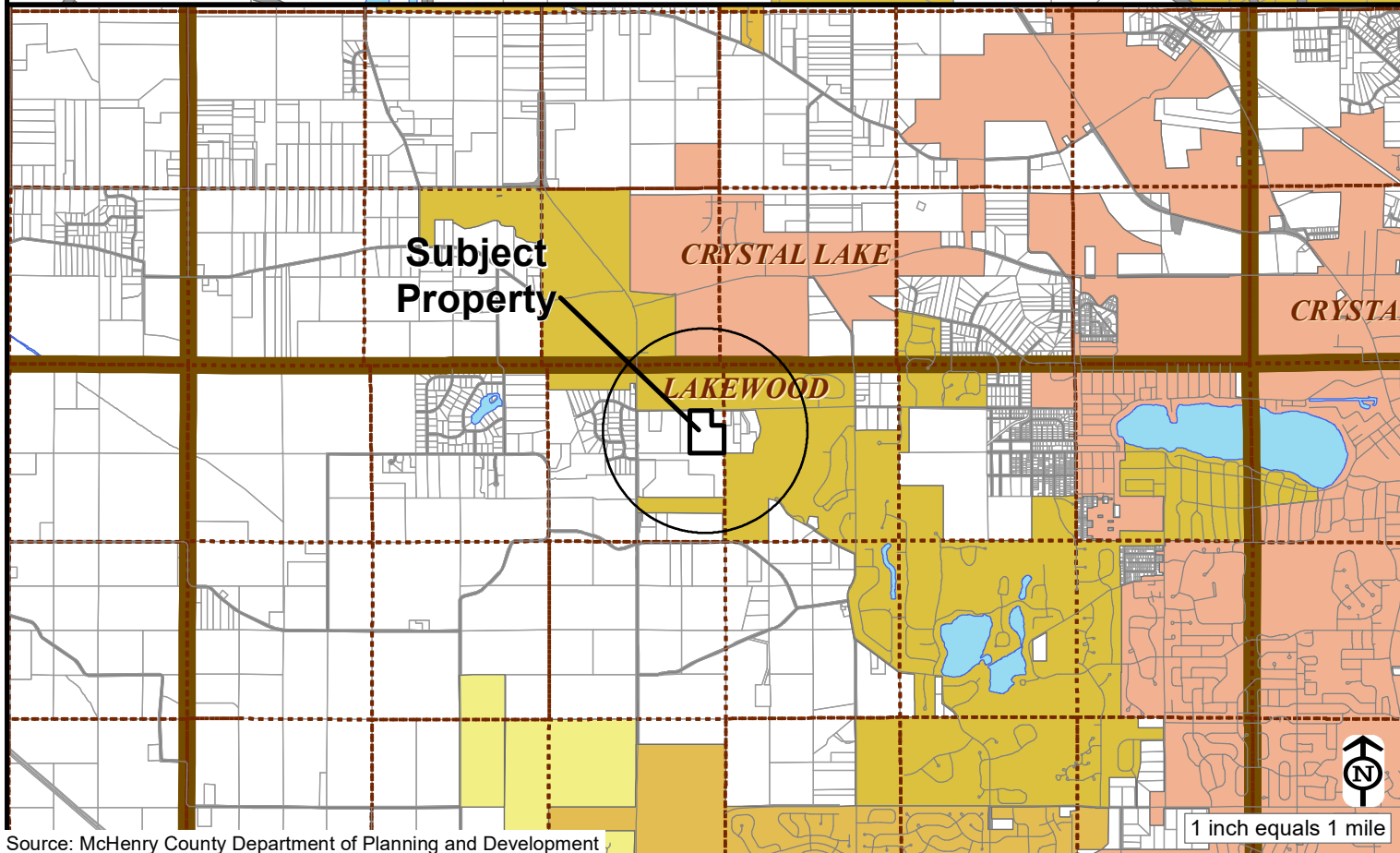
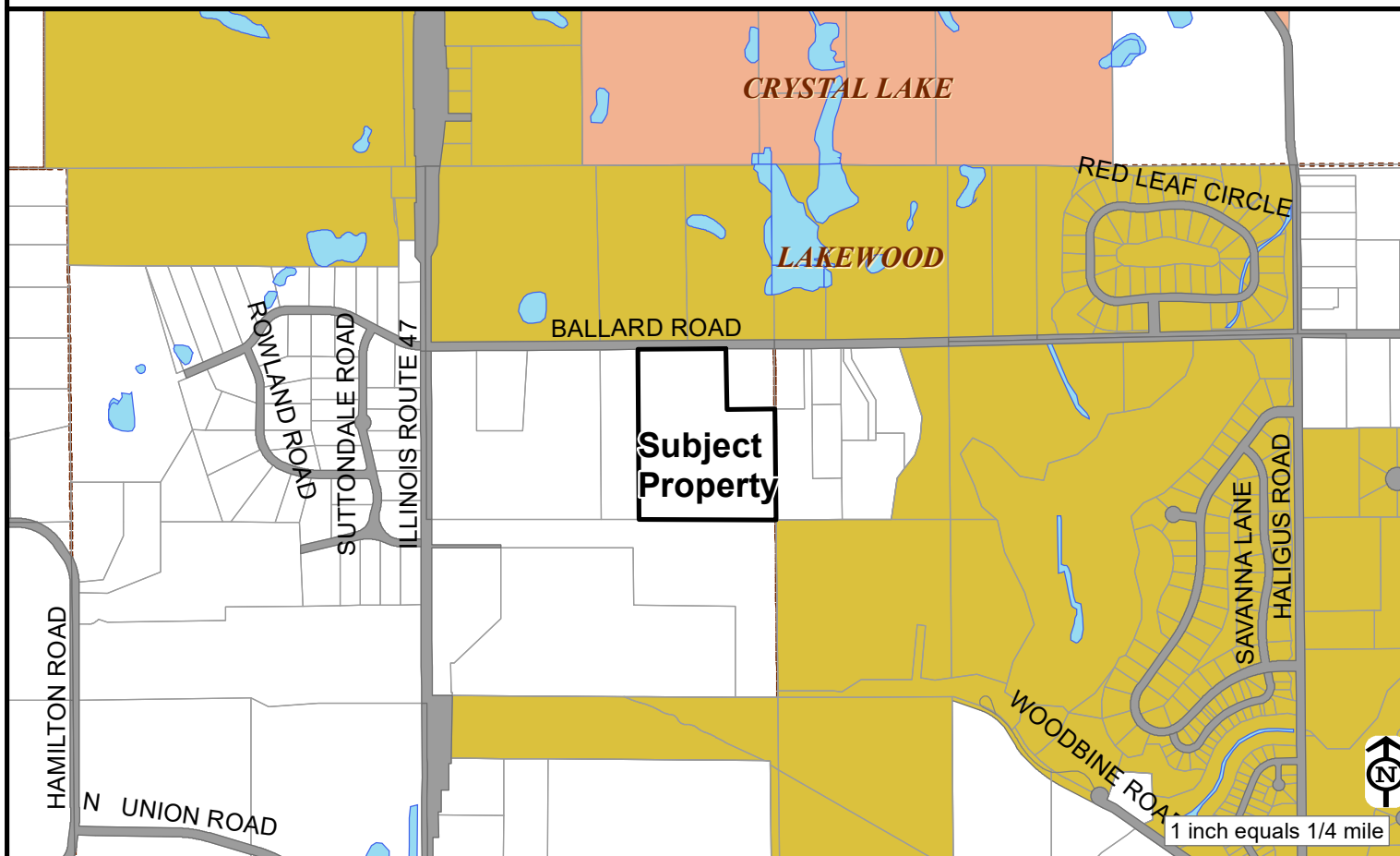
- a. The COMMERCIAL SOLAR ENERGY FACILITY shall be considered abandoned if the operator fails to pay rent as specified in the Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement, or it ceases to generate electricity for a period of twelve (12) consecutive months. Reports of electrical power production shall be provided to the County upon request. An abandoned COMMERCIAL SOLAR ENERGY FACILITY must be decommissioned and removed within twelve (12) months from the time it is deemed abandoned. The operator may appeal in writing to the Zoning Enforcement Officer for an extension of time in order to remove the facility or to bring the solar farm back into operation.

5. Decommissioning. Decommissioning and removal of the COMMERCIAL SOLAR ENERGY FACILITY shall be the responsibility of the operator upon abandonment or revocation of the conditional use permit. All operators shall comply with the following:

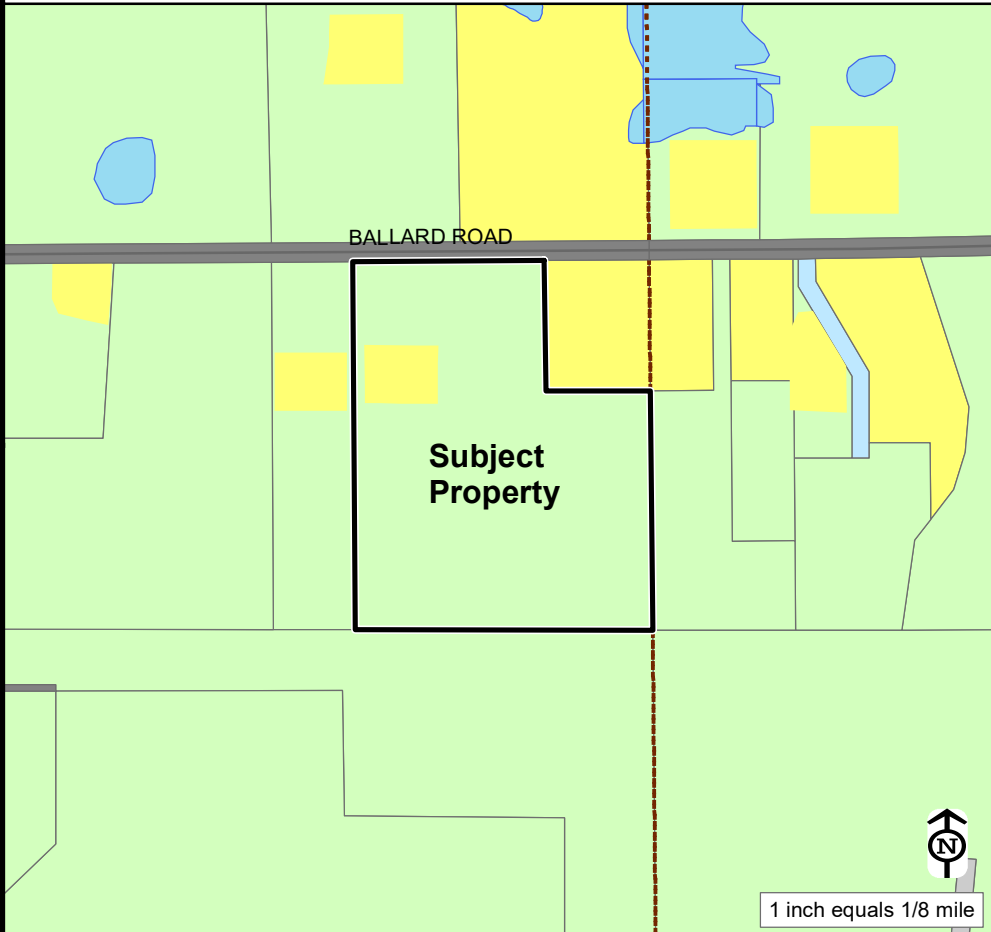
- a. Prior to building permit issuance, the operator shall prepare a decommissioning plan which shows the final site conditions after the COMMERCIAL SOLAR ENERGY FACILITY has been removed from the property. Decommissioning plans shall require removal of all solar panels, electrical equipment, poles, piles, foundations, and conduits (above and below ground). Access roads, fencing, groundcover, and landscaping may remain only by agreement of property owner.

b. Prior to building permit issuance, the operator shall submit an engineer's estimate of cost for decommissioning the facility and restoring the site in accordance with the approved decommissioning plan. Upon review and approval by the Zoning Enforcement Officer of the estimate, the operator shall obtain a bond, letter of credit, or other form of surety acceptable to the County to be held by the Department of Planning and Development in the amount of one hundred percent (100%) of the estimate. Provision of this financial assurance shall be phased in over the first eleven (11) years of the project's operation or as otherwise provided in accordance with the executed Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement.

c. During the operation of the facility, a new engineer's estimate of cost for decommissioning shall be submitted every ten (10) years to the Department of Planning and Development. Upon approval of the estimated costs by the Zoning Enforcement Officer, a revised surety shall be provided to the Department of Planning and Development in the amount of one hundred percent (100%) of the new estimate.



Current Land Use Map



Current Land Use

Agriculture/Single-Family Residential

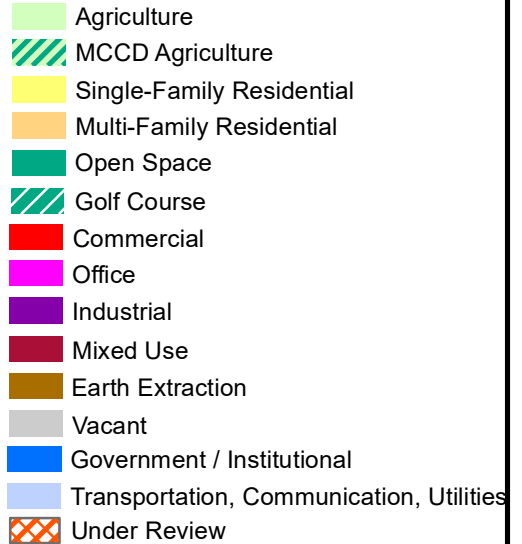
Adjacent Land Use(s)

North: *Agriculture/Single-Family Residential*

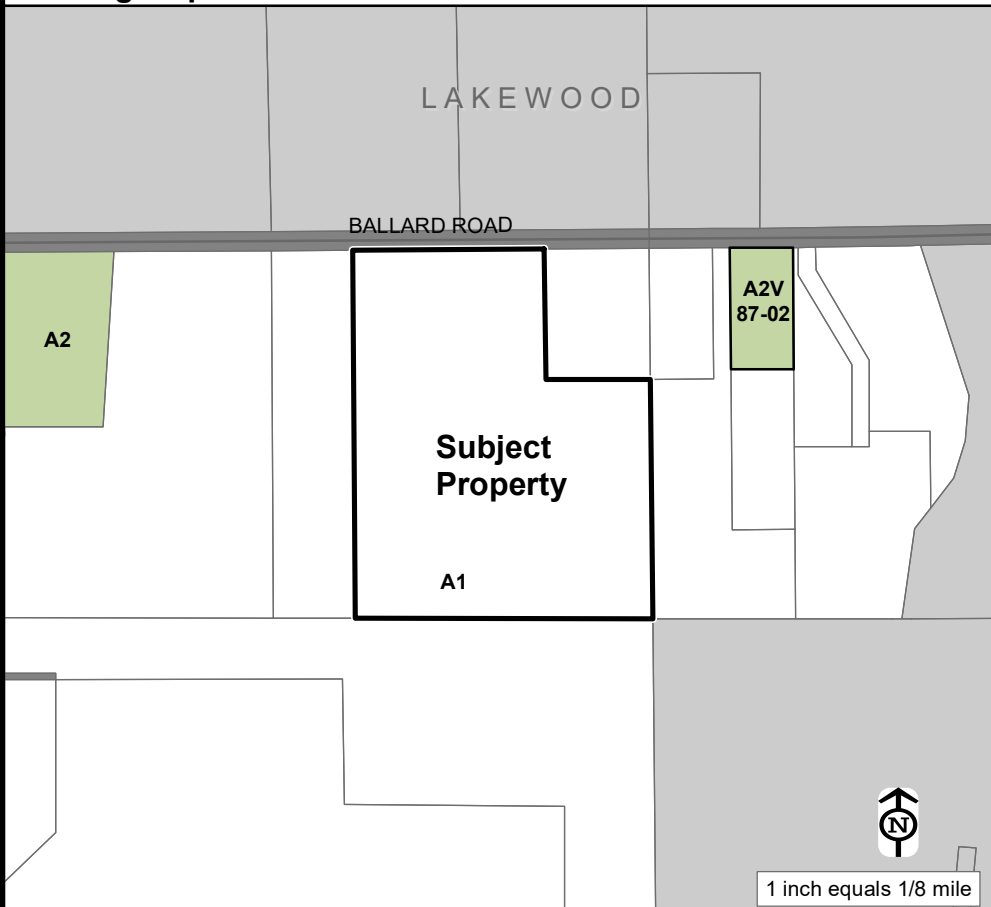
South: *Agriculture*

East: *Agriculture/Single-Family Residential*

West: *Agriculture/Single-Family Residential*



Zoning Map



Current Zoning

A-1 Agriculture

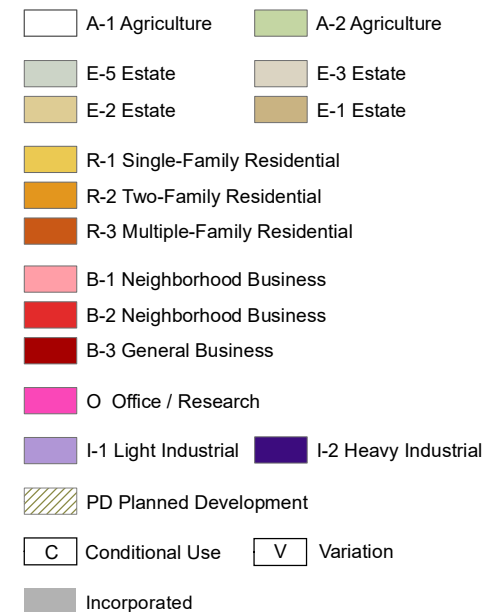
Adjacent Zoning

North: Incorporated (Village of Lakewood)

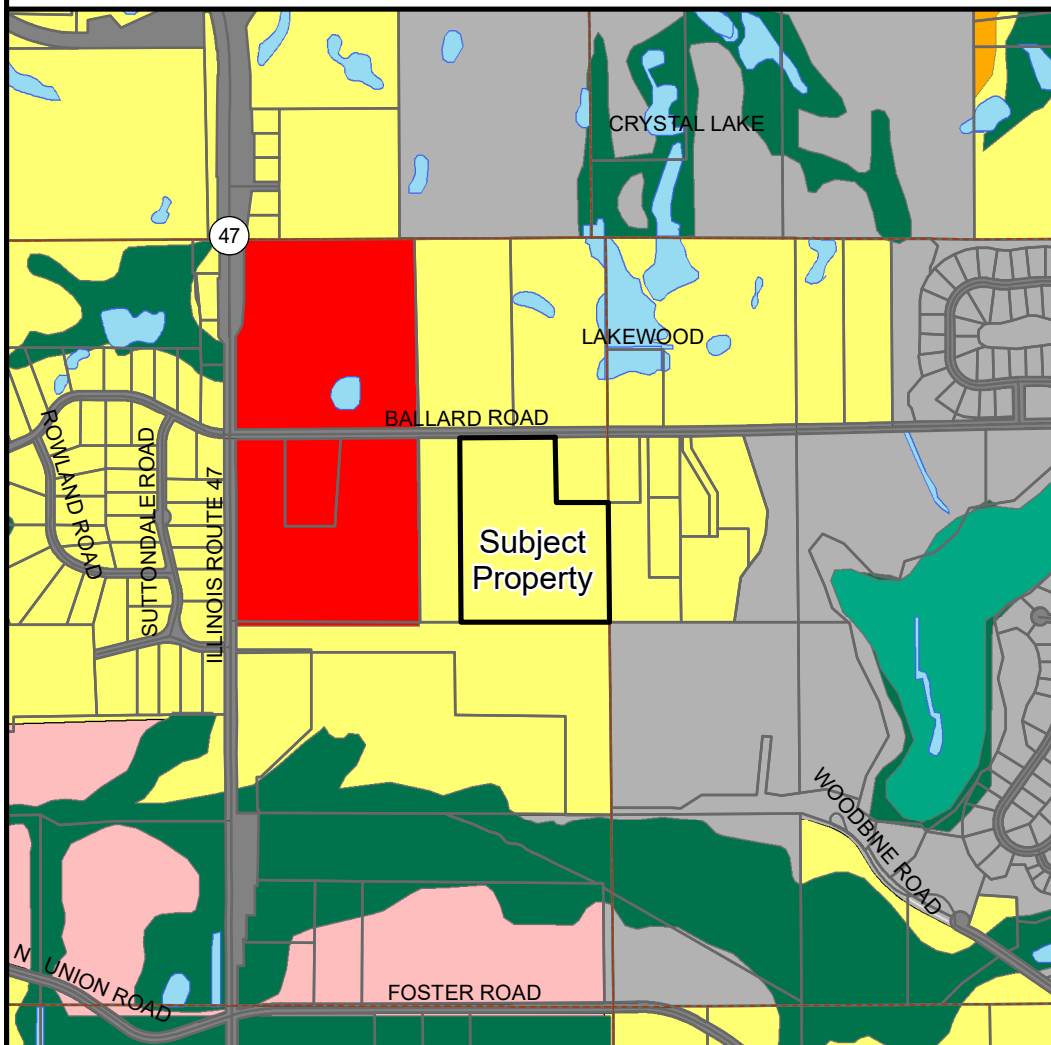
South: A-1 Agriculture

East: A-1 Agriculture

West: A-1 Agriculture



McHenry County 2030 Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map



Future Land Use Map Designation

Estate

- Agricultural
 - Open Space
 - Environmentally Sensitive Area
 - Estate
 - Isolated Estate
 - Residential
 - Isolated Residential
 - Retail
 - Mixed Use
 - Office, Research, Industrial
 - Gov't, Institutional, Utilities
 - TOD Existing Rail Station
 - TOD Future Rail Station
 - Active Earth Extraction Site
 - Municipality
- Scale: 1 inch = 1/4 mile



Municipal / Township Plan Designations

Grafton Township: Agriculture

Crystal Lake: No Designation

Lakewood: Estate Residential

McHenry County 2030 Comprehensive Plan — Text Analysis

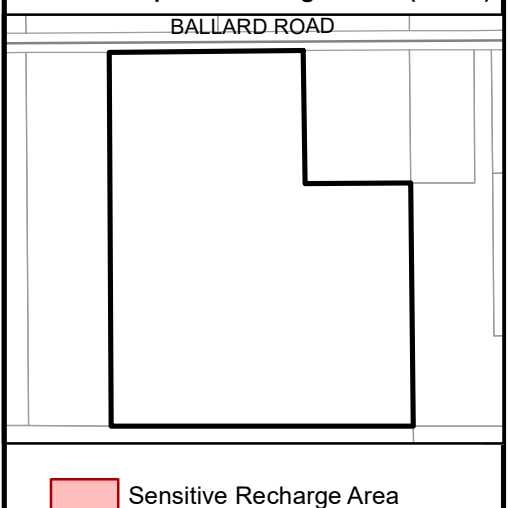
Land Use

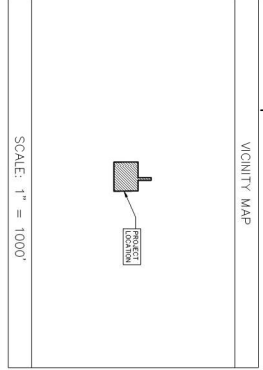
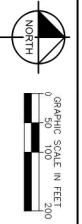
Estate includes existing and proposed areas for single-family residential uses at gross densities of one to five acres per dwelling unit. Estate land use is generally designated in areas that are not projected to have access to public sewer and water. Where appropriate, conservation design is encouraged in order to cluster lots and maintain open space within estate developments. Increased estate densities are encouraged where appropriate; however, estate development in close proximity to a municipality should take into consideration that municipality's densities (p. 134).

Sensitive Aquifer Recharge Areas

The site is not located in a zone with elevated contamination potential.

Sensitive Aquifer Recharge Areas (SARA)





NOTES

1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN IS TO PROVIDE THE PLANNING AND ENGINEERING INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROJECT.
2. INFORMATION FROM THE FIELD SURVEY, INCLUDING ELEVATIONS, DISTANCES, AND BEARINGS, SHALL BE PROVIDED TO THE CLIENT FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL.
3. THE CLIENT SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR OBTAINING ALL NECESSARY PERMITS AND APPROVALS FROM THE APPROPRIATE AGENCIES.
4. THE CLIENT SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING ALL NECESSARY INFORMATION REGARDING THE PROJECT SITE, INCLUDING ELEVATIONS, DISTANCES, AND BEARINGS.
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10. THE CLIENT SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING ALL NECESSARY INFORMATION REGARDING THE PROJECT SITE, INCLUDING ELEVATIONS, DISTANCES, AND BEARINGS.

SITE DATA TABLE

ITEM #	DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY
1	1500 SOLAR PV MODULES, 10.00% EFFICIENCY	1500
2	1500 SOLAR PV MODULES, 10.00% EFFICIENCY	1500
3	1500 SOLAR PV MODULES, 10.00% EFFICIENCY	1500
4	1500 SOLAR PV MODULES, 10.00% EFFICIENCY	1500
5	1500 SOLAR PV MODULES, 10.00% EFFICIENCY	1500
6	1500 SOLAR PV MODULES, 10.00% EFFICIENCY	1500
7	1500 SOLAR PV MODULES, 10.00% EFFICIENCY	1500
8	1500 SOLAR PV MODULES, 10.00% EFFICIENCY	1500
9	1500 SOLAR PV MODULES, 10.00% EFFICIENCY	1500
10	1500 SOLAR PV MODULES, 10.00% EFFICIENCY	1500

NO.	REVISIONS	DATE
1	UPDATE PER CLIENT COMMENTS	06/24/2025
2	UPDATE PER FPD REQUIREMENTS	06/09/2025

CULTIVATE
POWER

KimleyHorn
© 2025 KIMLEY-HORN AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
570 LAKE COOK RD. SUITE 200
DEERFIELD, IL 60015
WWW.KIMLEY-HORN.COM

PRELIMINARY NOT
FOR CONSTRUCTION

KHA PROJECT
5502025002
ORIGINAL DATE
05/09/2025
SCALE AS SHOWN
DESIGNED BY SFH
DRAWN BY SFH
CHECKED BY CPC

ZONING SITE
PLAN

SKYSTONE
SOLAR, LLC
MCHENRY COUNTY, IL

SHEET NUMBER
EX-1

McHENRY~LAKE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

NATURAL RESOURCES INFORMATION REPORT

25-051-4712

June 27, 2025



This report has been prepared for:
Skystone Solar LLC

Contact Person:
Paul Bottum

PREPARED BY:
McHENRY-LAKE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION
DISTRICT

1648 S. EASTWOOD DR.

WOODSTOCK, IL 60098

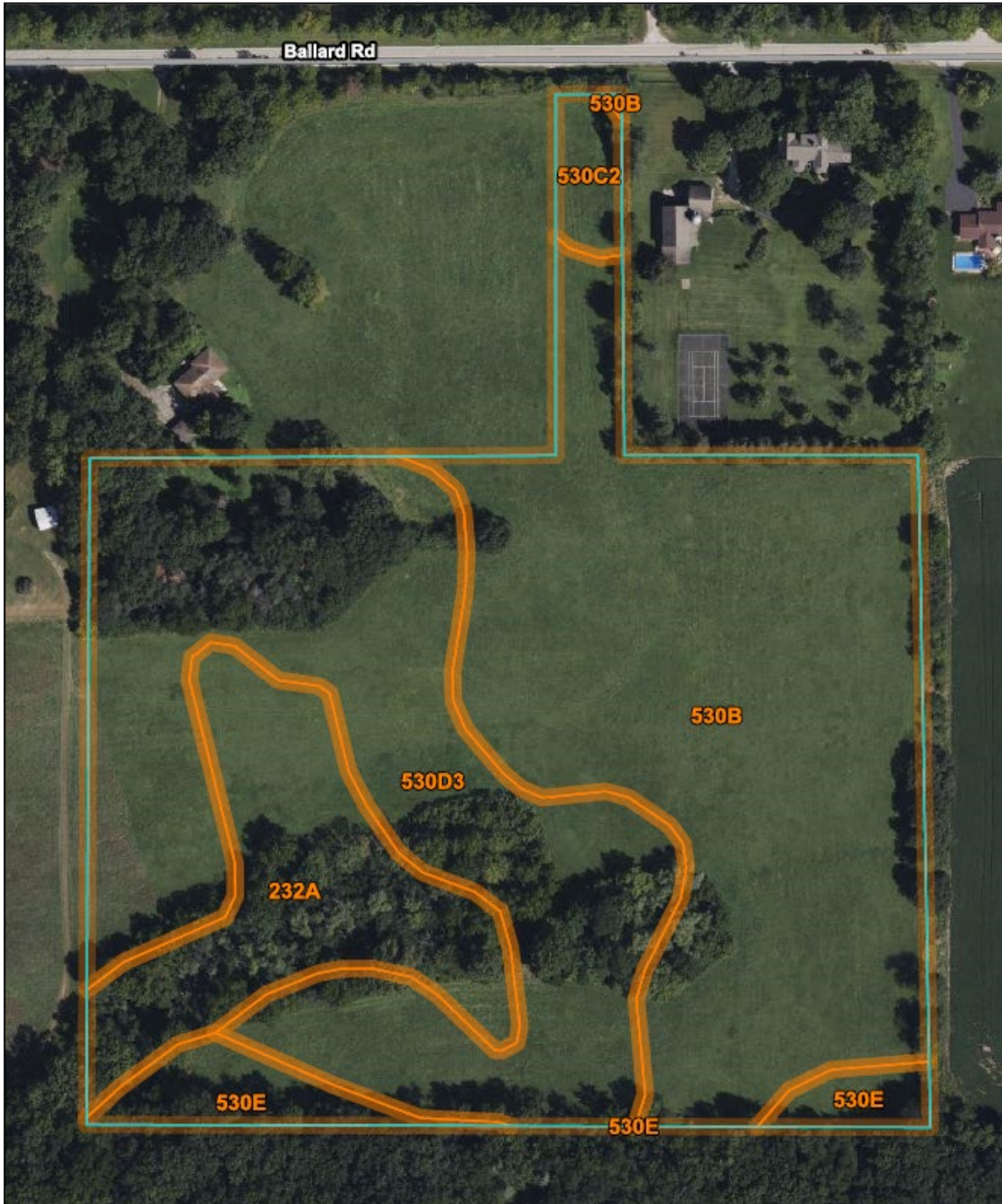
PHONE: (815) 338-0444

www.mchenryswcd.org

The McHenry-Lake County Soil & Water Conservation District
is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF NRI REPORT #25-051-4712

It is the opinion of the McHenry-Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors that this report as summarized on these pages are pertinent to the requested zoning change.



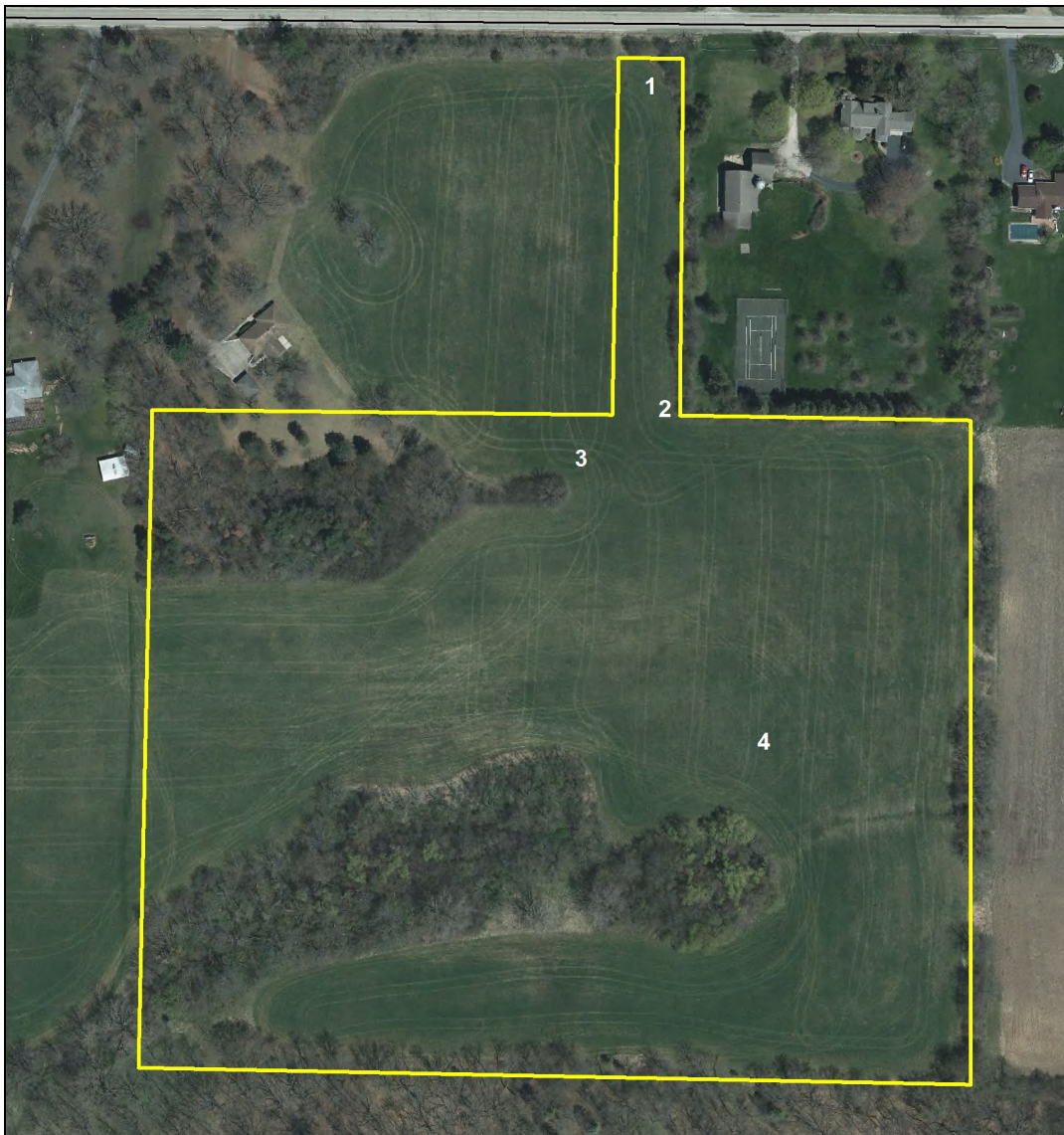


Photo Locations (1-4)



Picture 1: Looking south from the parcel entrance.



Picture 2: Looking south, south of access lane.

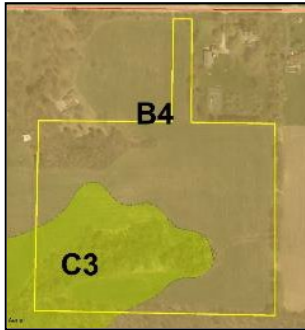


Picture 3: Looking west at woodland area.



Picture 4: Looking southwest at wooded wetland area.

Groundwater Contamination Potential and Recharge Areas:



Aquifer Sensitivity Map (*This is the area beneath the soil profile down to bedrock)

The Geologic features map indicates the parcel is comprised of 13.34 acres of B4 and 6.69 acres of C3 geologic limitations. B4 has a moderately-high aquifer contamination potential and C3 has a moderate aquifer contamination potential.

Sensitive Aquifer Recharge Areas (Includes the soil profile and underlying geology).

The Sensitive Aquifer Recharge Map indicates the parcel is not within an area designated as Sensitive Aquifer Recharge.

Soil Leachability Map (This is only the soil profile within the parcel from the surface down to approx. 5 feet).

The Soil Leachability Index indicates there are no high leachable soils, for fertilizers, on the parcel.

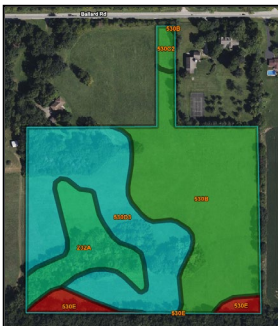
Soil Permeability Map (This is only the soil profile within the parcel from the surface down to approx. 5 feet. Soil permeability is a reflection of the speed in which water (with or without pollutants) can move through the soil profile.)

The USDA-NRCS Soil Survey Map of the area indicates there are no highly permeable soils on the parcel.

Soil Limitations (This evaluates the parcel from the surface down to approximately 5 feet.):

Erosion Ratings

The NRCS Soils Survey indicates 8.7 acres or 43.4% of the parcel contains highly erodible soils.



Prime Farmland Soils

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Survey indicates 8.9 acres or 44.6% of the parcel is comprised of prime farmland soils and 2.7 acres or 13.6% of the parcel is comprised of prime farmland if drained soils (identified in shades of green).



Ground-Based Solar Arrays

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Survey indicates 3.6 acres or 18.1% of the parcel has very limited soils for ground-based solar arrays (identified in red).



Hydric Soils

The NRCS Soil Survey indicates 2.7 acres or 13.6% of the parcel contains hydric soils (identified in orange).

Floodplain Information:

The Flood Insurance Rate Map

Indicates the parcel is outside of the 100-year floodplain.

Flood of Record Map (Hydrologic Atlas)

The Flood of Record Map for this area indicates the parcel has not previously flooded.

Wetland Information:



USDA-NRCS Wetland Inventory

The NRCS Wetlands Inventory identifies 1.70 acres of NIH: Non-inventoried Hydric Soil on the parcel (identified in purple).



ADID Wetland Inventory

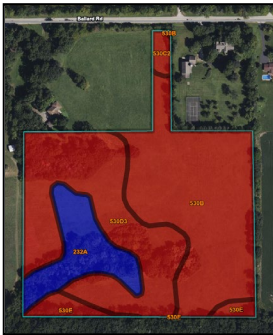
The ADID Wetland Study identified 1.70 acre of wetland K1135 on the parcel.

*As we were not provided a site plan, it is unclear whether this area will be impacted. The site visit conducted indicated that this area contains willow trees and elderberry. A wetland delineation is recommended if work is planned within this area. Permitting requirements from the McHenry County Department

of Planning and Development and the US Army Corps of Engineers may apply.

Flooding Frequency

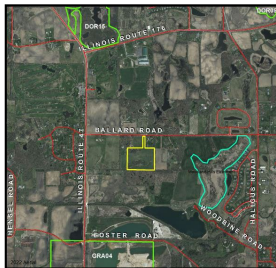
The NRCS Soil Survey indicates that flooding is not probable on the parcel. The chance of flooding is nearly 0% in any year. Flooding occurs less than once in 500 years.



Ponding Frequency

The NRCS Soil Survey indicates that frequent ponding occurs on 2.7 acres or 13.6% of the parcel. Frequent means that ponding occurs, on average, more than once in 2 years. The chance of ponding is more than 50 % in any year (identified in blue).

Cultural Resources: Office maps indicate there are no known cultural/historical features on the parcel in question.



Preserved or Recognized Ecological Sites: Office maps indicate there are two McHenry County Natural Area Inventory sites near the parcel (identified in green).

Route 14/176 Marsh is an unprotected basin marsh, which it threatened by cattail expansion and Reed Canary Grass.

Foster Road Hawk Site is an unprotected site which is threatened by development.

Additionally, The Land Conservancy of McHenry County's Woodland Hills Easement is east of the parcel (identified in blue).



Woodlands: The McHenry County Conservation District's Remnant Oak Woodland Study indicates 0.24 acres of the northwest corner of the property contains a remnant oak woodland (see picture 3). There are additional mature trees surrounding the remnant woodland and in the central portion of the parcel (see picture 4).

*As we were not provided a site plan, it is unclear whether these woodland areas will be impacted. We recommend that these areas be avoided.

Agricultural Areas: Office Maps indicate there are no State designated agricultural areas on the parcel in question.

Land Evaluation Site Assessment (LESA)

The Land Evaluation Score for the parcel is 72.22. A Site Assessment was not completed due to the Agricultural zoning on the parcel.

Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement: We have received notice from the Illinois Department of Agriculture that an Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement has been filed.

ADDITIONAL CONCERNS

The Board recommends that areas between panels and within the buffers be planted to a native prairie mix to help increase water infiltration and reduce runoff from the site. It is recommended that a planting and maintenance plan be developed with the landowner to ensure that noxious weeds are controlled, and native plantings are properly installed and managed. The petitioner should refer to the planting requirements of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and McHenry County Department of Planning & Development.



NATURAL RESOURCE INFORMATION REPORT (NRI)

NRI Report Number	25-051-4712		
Applicant's Name	Skystone Solar LLC		
Size of Parcel	26 acres		
Zoning Change	Solar Facility		
Parcel Index Number(s)	18-04-200-005		
Common Location	Undefined		
Contact Person	Paul Bottum		
<i>Copies of this report or notification of the proposed land-use change were provided to:</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>	
The Applicant	x		
The Applicant's Legal Representation/Consultant		x	
The Village/City/County Planning and Zoning Department or Appropriate Agency	x		

Report Prepared By: *Spring M. Duffey*

Position: *Executive Director*



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

One Natural Resources Way Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271
<http://dnr.state.il.us>

JB Pritzker, Governor

Natalie Phelps Finnie, Director

April 24, 2025

Paul Bottum
Skystone Solar, LLC
30 W Hubbard St
Ste 400
Chicago, IL 60654

RE: Skystone Solar, LLC
Project Number(s): 2512270
County: McHenry

Dear Applicant:

This letter is in reference to the project you recently submitted for consultation. The natural resource review provided by EcoCAT identified protected resources that may be in the vicinity of the proposed action. The Department has evaluated this information and concluded that adverse effects are unlikely. Therefore, consultation under 17 Ill. Adm. Code Part 1075 is terminated.

However, the Department recommends:

Establishing pollinator-friendly habitat as groundcover wherever feasible. Solar Site Pollinator Establishment Guidelines can be found here:
<https://dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/pollinatorscorecard.html>

The site should be de-compacted before planting.

Long term management of the site should be planned for prior to development to ensure successful native pollinator habitat establishment and prevent the spread of invasive species throughout the lifetime of this project. An experienced ecological management consultant should be hired to assist with long-term management.

Required fencing, excluding areas near or adjacent to public access areas, should have a 6-inch gap along the bottom to prevent the restriction of wildlife movement. Woven wire or a suitable habitat wildlife friendly fence should be used. Barbed wire should be avoided.

Trees should be cleared between November 1st and March 31st. All night lighting should follow IDA guidance.



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This consultation is valid for two years unless new information becomes available that was not previously considered; the proposed action is modified; or additional species, essential habitat, or Natural Areas are identified in the vicinity. If the project has not been implemented within two years of the date of this letter, or any of the above listed conditions develop, a new consultation is necessary.

The natural resource review reflects the information existing in the Illinois Natural Heritage Database at the time of the project submittal, and should not be regarded as a final statement on the site being considered, nor should it be a substitute for detailed site surveys or field surveys required for environmental assessments. If additional protected resources are encountered during the project's implementation, you must comply with the applicable statutes and regulations. Also, note that termination does not imply IDNR's authorization or endorsement of the proposed action.

Please contact me if you have questions regarding this review.

Isabella Newingham
Division of Ecosystems and Environment
217-785-5500