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## **VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT**

**Date: October 23, 2019, Revised February 13, 2020**

**Project: Herrington Solar**

### **BACKGROUND**

Herrington Solar, LLC is proposing the development of a 7.5 MW (DC) solar array on a 144.4 +/- acre parcel of land located along Bracken Road in the Town of Schaghticoke. The Applicant submitted site plans to the Planning Board on September 16, 2018 and revised vegetative buffer were shown at the subsequent Planning Board Meetings. During the initial review of the project the Town requested that the applicant complete a visual assessment report. The following provides a summary of the selected vantage points, methods used and results of the visual assessment.

### **VISUAL ASSESSMENT VANTAGE POINTS**

The vantage points were reviewed with the Planning Board during the October 2, 2019 meeting and the Planning Board did not request any additional vantage points. During the January 8, 2020 Public Hearing there were adjoining property owners to the north and northeast of the site that indicated the site would be visible from their properties. The visual assessment includes the following vantage points:

1. Route 40 southeast of the site
2. Route 40 & Bracken Road intersection southeast of the site
3. Route 40 southeast of the site
4. Bracken Road due east of the site
5. Bracken Road looking southwest.
6. From the project site looking northeast
7. From the project site looking northeast
8. From the project site looking north

### **VISUAL ASSESSMENT METHODS**

The proposed solar array is expected to include solar panels installed with a maximum height above existing grade of approximately 8.5 ft and extend over an area of approximately 35 acres. In addition to the solar panels themselves, the facility will include 15.5 ft tall poles located at the corners to support security cameras. In an effort to assess the potential visual impacts 3 ft diameter balloons were flown at each of the primary corners of the array, to act as visual sight beacons, and photographs were obtained looking toward the array from the noted vantage points. The balloons were installed at a maximum height of 15 ft to provide a location reference.

The photographs obtained from each of the requested vantage points were studied for potential visual impact and photo editing software was used to superimpose a graphical representation of the potential array visibility within each photograph. The CCTV poles will be limited and sporadically spaces such their visual impact will be negligible; therefore, the focus of this assessment is on the panels of the solar array.

**VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

For each of the requested vantage points a summary of the potential for visual impact is provided below.

**Location 1 - Route 40 southeast of the site**

Photograph location identified as Location 1 on Figure 1 was taken along Route 40 southeast of the site. The ground surface drops from an elevation of approximately 435 ft at Route 40 to 408 ft at the near edge of the array and approximately 338 feet at the far edge of the array. The edge of the array is located approximately 850 ft to the north of the existing tree row along the southern property line. The edge of the array is approximately 1,700 ft from Route 40.

The corresponding photograph of this location is presented as Figure 2. The anticipated limit of the array has been superimposed on the photograph in a dark blue color. As shown on figure 2, the existing tree row, overall distance from Route 40, will provide mitigation of the visual impact of the array which would be improved with leaf cover during the growing season.

**Location 2 - Route 40 & Bracken Road intersection southeast of the site**

Photograph location identified as Location 2 on Figure 1 was taken at the intersection of Route 40 and Bracken Road southeast of the site. The ground surface drops from an elevation of approximately 438 ft at Route 40 to 388 ft at the near edge of the array and approximately 388 feet at the far edge of the array. The edge of the array is located approximately 1,500 ft from Route 40.

The corresponding photograph of this location is presented as Figure 3. The anticipated limit of the array has been superimposed on the photograph in a dark blue color. The overall distance from Route 40 and the existing tree row will mitigate the visual impact of the array as shown on Figure 7. The proposed connection poles are shown on figure 3 and the existing tree row and vegetation provide screening and the result is a filtered view of the proposed connection poles.

**Location 2A - Route 40 & Bracken Road intersection southeast of the site**

Photograph location identified as Location 2A on Figure 1 was taken at the intersection of Route 40 and Bracken Road southeast of the site. The ground surface drops from an elevation of approximately 438 ft at Route 40 to 388 ft at the near edge of the array and approximately 388 feet at the far edge of the array. The edge of the array is located approximately 1,500 ft from Route 40.

The corresponding before screening photograph of this location is presented as Figure 5. The anticipated limit of the array has been superimposed on the photograph in a dark blue color. A proposed vegetated buffer along Bracken Road along with the overall distance from Route 40 will mitigate the visual impact of the array as shown on Figure 6.

**Location 3 - Route 40 southeast of the site**

Photograph location identified as Location 3 on Figure 1 was taken at a vantage point along Route 40 southeast of the site. The ground surface increases from an elevation of 439 ft along Route 40 to a highpoint of approximately 446 ft northwest of Route 40 before dropping to an elevation of approximately 362 ft at the edge of the array.

The corresponding photograph of this location is presented as Figure 7. The photograph and topography suggest that the array will not be visible from this vantage point.

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**Location 4 - Bracken Road due east of the site**

Photograph location identified as Location 4 on Figure 1 was taken along Bracken Road due east of the site. The ground surface drops from an elevation of 389 ft along Bracken to 357 ft at the near edge of the array and increase to approximately 388 feet at the far edge of the array. The edge of the array is located approximately 750 ft from Bracken Road.

The corresponding before screening photograph of this location is presented as Figure 8. The anticipated limit of the array has been superimposed on the photograph in a dark blue color. A proposed vegetated buffer along Bracken Road along with the overall distance from Bracken Road will mitigate the visual impact of the array as shown on Figure 9.

**Location 5 - Bracken Road northeast of the site**

Photograph location identified as Location 5 on Figure 1 was taken along Bracken Road northeast of the site. The ground surface undulates from an elevation of 367 ft along Bracken to 357 ft at the near edge of the array and increase to approximately 390 feet at the far edge of the array. The edge of the array is located approximately 720 ft from Bracken Road.

The corresponding before screening photograph of this location is presented as Figure 10. The anticipated limit of the array has been superimposed on the photograph in a dark blue color. As shown on figure 10 and 11, the existing trees and vegetation and overall distance from Bracken Road, will provide mitigation of the visual impact of the array which would be improved with leaf cover during the growing season.

**Location 6 – Project site looking northeast**

Photograph location identified as Location 6 on Figure 1 was taken from the project site looking northeast toward the adjoining properties. As shown on Figure 12 substantial forested buffer exists between the project site and the residences to the north and northeast. At the thinnest point this existing buffer is approximated 190 feet wide. The edge of the array is located approximately 500 ft from the closest residence. Any visual impacts would be improved with leaf cover during the growing season.

**Location 7 – Project site looking northeast**

Photograph location identified as Location 7 on Figure 1 was taken from the project site looking northeast toward the adjoining properties. As shown on Figures 13-14 substantial forested buffer exists between the project site and the residences to the north and northeast. At the thinnest point this existing buffer is approximated 300 feet wide. The edge of the array is located approximately 600 ft from the closest residence. Any visual impacts would be improved with leaf cover during the growing season.

**Location 8 – Project site looking north**

Photograph location identified as Location 6 on Figure 1 was taken from the project site looking northeast toward the adjoining properties. As shown on Figures 15-16 substantial forested buffer exists between the project site and the residences to the north and northeast. At the thinnest point this existing buffer is approximated 500 feet wide. The edge of the array is located approximately 800 ft from the closest residence. Any visual impacts would be improved with leaf cover during the growing season.

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