

8/8/18

City of Columbia
Attn: Rusty Palmer
701 E. Broadway
Columbia, Missouri 65205-6015

Re: Truman Solar Screening Justification Letter

Dear City of Columbia,

As discussed with city staff, please accept this as a formal request to be granted relief from City requirements found in Sec. 29-4.4 of the Unified Development Code requiring a level 3 buffer as well as street tree plantings. By these requirements, the Truman Solar site would require a level 3 buffer along the southern boundary of the site, consisting of an 8' tall screening device accompanied by a 10' wide landscape buffer on the applicant's side of the screening device. In lieu of this, we would like to propose installation of an 8' tall wooden screening device only along the southern border of the project area. We also propose extending this 8' tall screening device to cover the portion of our site where it abuts residences to the west. Additionally, these code requirements stipulate the planting of street trees along our frontage at Interstate 70 Dr SE. We request exemption from this requirement.

The reason we are seeking relief from the level 3 landscape buffer requirement is due, in part, to the prohibitive cost associated with the landscaping required. When the power purchase agreement was originally negotiated with the City of Columbia in 2017, city staff indicated that minimal to no zoning would be required for this project. Pursuant to this feedback, the energy price was negotiated without budgeting for extensive landscaping activities. As such, under the current power purchase agreement, the project simply cannot bear the additional cost burden associated with a 10' landscape buffer that would be required across approximately 1200' of our site. Furthermore, the buffer's location, suggested to be on the inside of the privacy fence, would add complexity to vegetative maintenance of the site without the benefit of viewshed improvement.

We do, however, plan to preserve the existing vegetation along the southern and western boundaries of the project to the greatest extent possible, as well as elsewhere on our site, which is demonstrated in our Tree Preservation Plan and Significant Tree Plan. This, along with the installation of an 8' tall screening device along the southern and southwestern project boundaries, should ensure that we alleviate viewshed concerns.

Similarly, the street tree requirement places an undue financial burden on the project that was not foreseen at contract execution. Further, this requirement seems consistent with more urban use planned areas of the city, whereas our site right-of-way section is not a typical city street but rather a collector immediately adjacent to Interstate 70.

Finally, while we acknowledge the potential benefit of the level 3 buffer and street trees provisions for traditional industrial development, we also believe that solar is a uniquely low-profile, low-impact use, relative to other uses that may have been in mind when these ordinance requirements were developed. Based on the above points, we believe that the granting of this relief will not adversely impact the community and their enjoyment of their property. We request your consideration and understanding in this matter.

Thank you,

Shane Shields
Associate Developer
Cypress Creek Renewables